OLDHAM AMATEUR RADIO CLUB

G1ORC **G4ORC**

OLD HAMS NEWS

The Journal of the Oldham Amateur Radio Club

January 2008

RSGB Affiliated Society

OARC ON THE MOVE

For some time now, both past and present officers and members of the committee have been aware of the ATC at Royton looking for ways to ensure their long term financially and sustainability. In the past few months there have been some developments.

At the beginning of October the three officers of the club had a meeting with the head of the ATC unit Flight Lieutenant Mark Hamilton. At this meeting he briefed us on developments regarding the current location of the club and ATC. The ATC had received an offer for the land which would mean some major changes to the existing site or relocation. Two sets of plans were submitted to Oldham Metropolitan Borough Council (OMBC) for consultation.

Plan 1:

This is for the ATC to stay at its current location. The land from the drill hall to the far side of the football pitch would be sold off to a builder for housing. Currently where the mess hall (canteen) and offices are to the back of classroom block is currently located, a two storey building would be built, in which the radio club would be allocated a similar area to what we have in the cabin we have now. The existing cabin would be disposed of. This plan was rejected by OMBC.

Plan 2:

This is for the ATC to sell all of the land and to relocate. The builder who is currently in negotiations with ATC also has acquired another piece of land in the Royton area. This is a piece of derelict land at the junction of High Barn Street and Edge Lane Street. (See map below).

This would mean that a purpose built building would be built for the ATC, and the radio club would have its own exclusive area within the building similar in size, design and layout of our cabin. Within this building the club would have access to most of its facilities on a Thursday evening which would include several classrooms, and an IT suite. Also it is proposed that there will be a multipurpose hall which would be the size in excess of an indoor football pitch, which maybe suitable to hold a mini-rally in the future.

This plan was accepted by OMBC, and at the moment there is a consultation period from October until late March in order for any local residents to raise concerns or objections et al.

Plans of the layout of the proposed building were given to us, which we discussed. The plan for the radio club's area is to be located in the building nearest to the road yet the club tower would be located at the far end of the building. (These are the plans circulated to club members who came to the club during October). But it was agreed at this meeting, the club area could be placed within the building in close proximity to the club tower (see revised plans on the few next pages).

Figure 1 Map showing existing and proposed location of the ATC

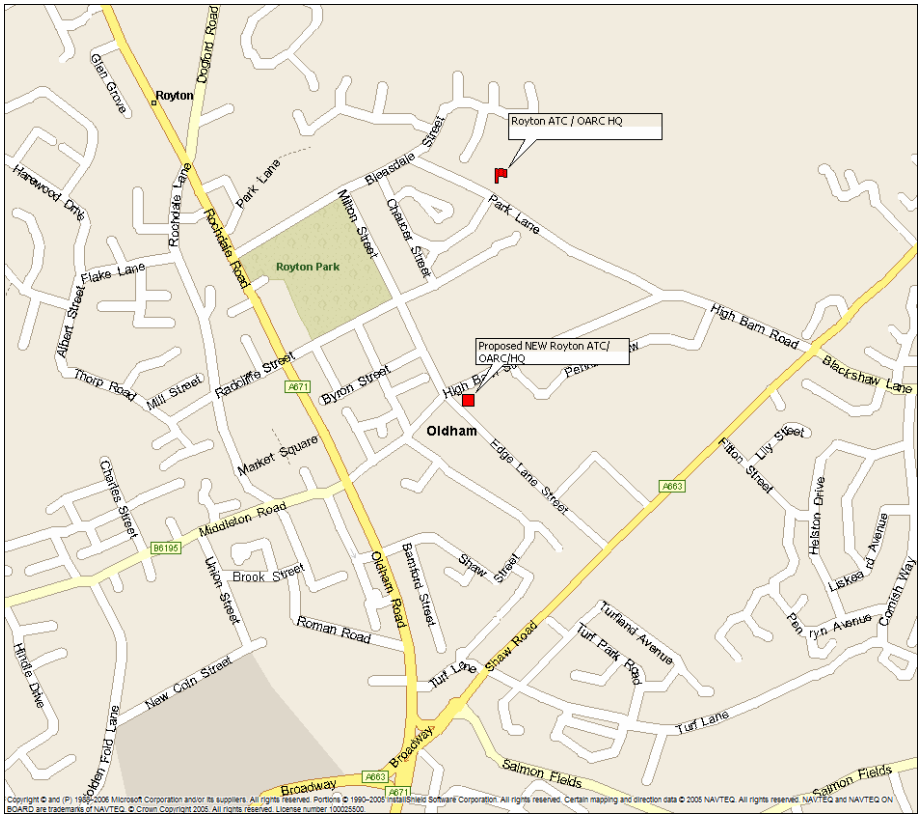


Figure 2 Showing the proposed new site of ATC (not to scale)

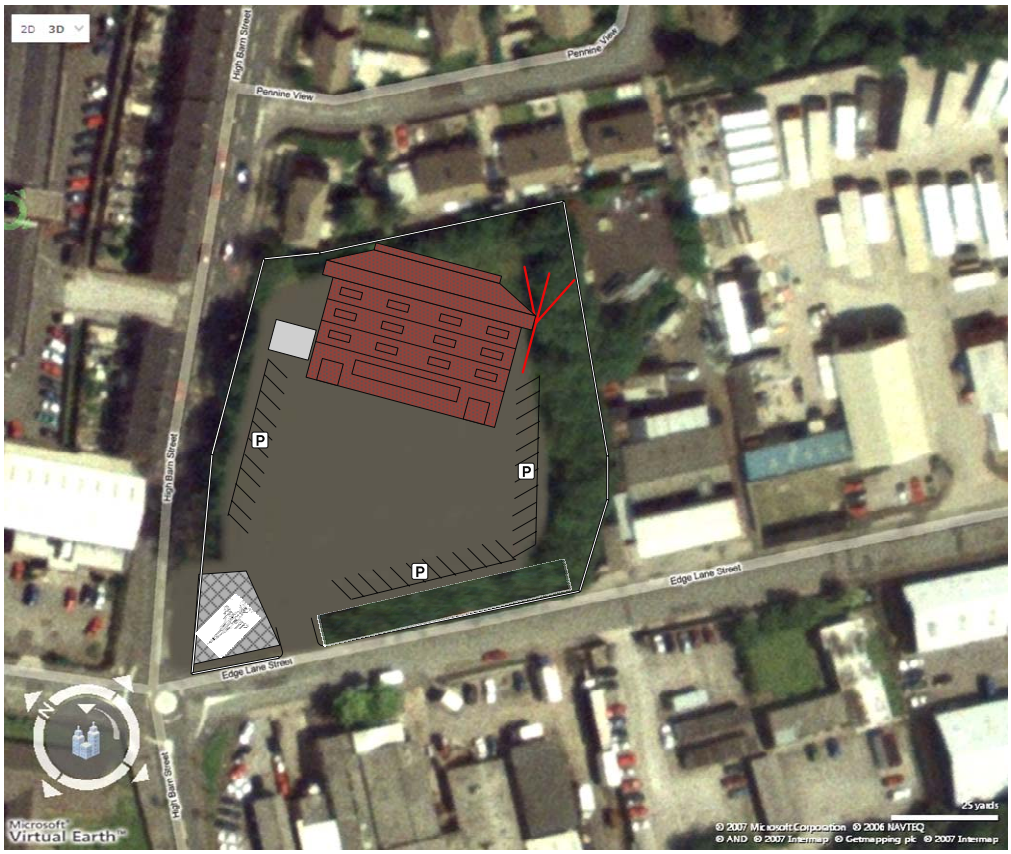


Figure 3 Proposed building layout for the new ATC building lower floor

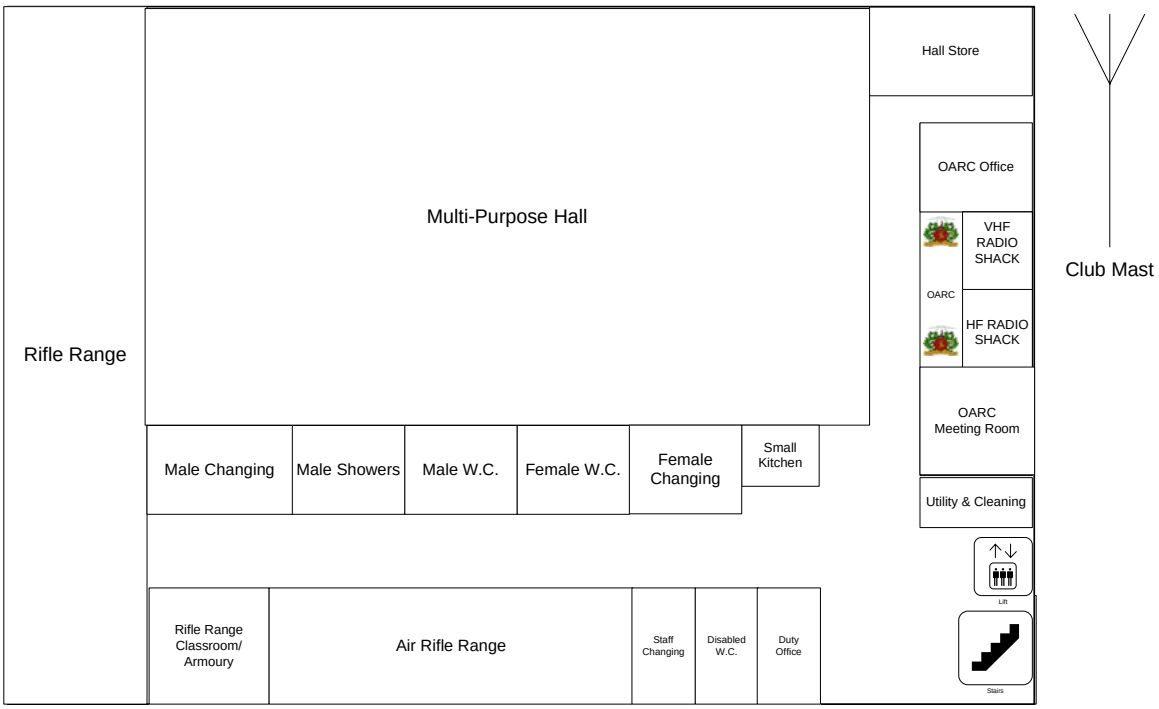
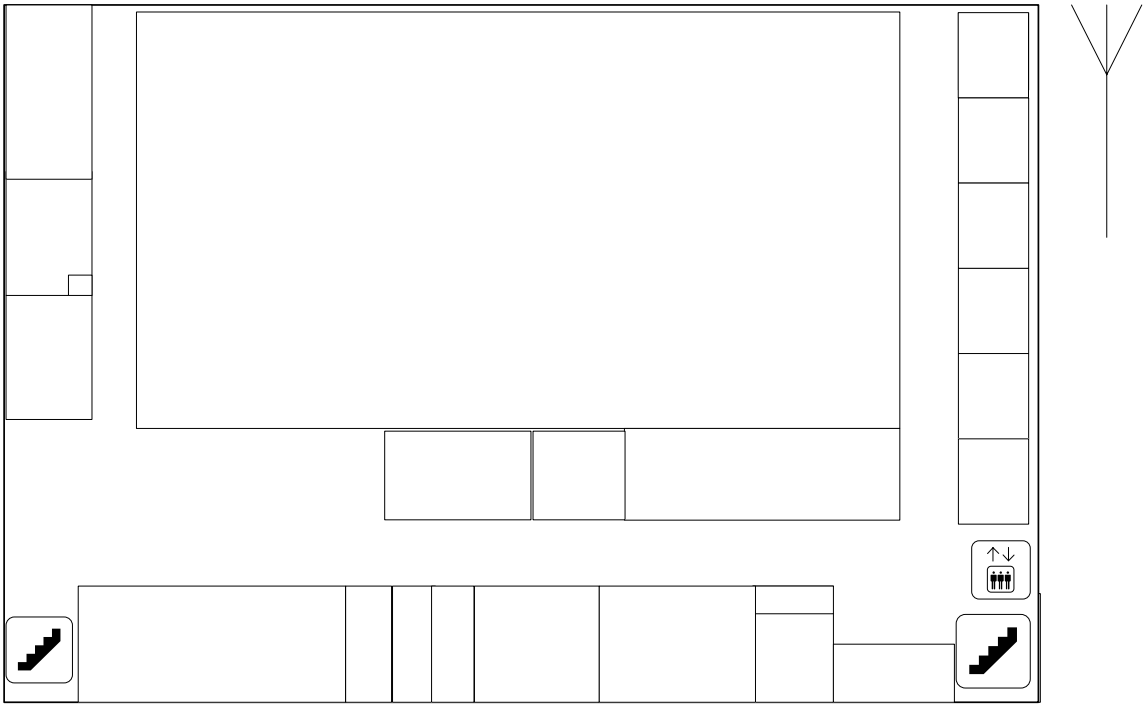


Figure 4 Proposed building layout for the new ATC building upper floor



If the planning application is accepted, building work would commence early summer, with a view to completion sometime in November 2008.

However if this was to go ahead, the radio club may have to make a contribution towards the bills such as electricity, due to only partial funding of running costs for the building by the ATC Wing. To prevent this, the ATC is looking at alternative sources of income such as hiring out the facilities, and the club committee is also reviewing the situation, by holding bi-weekly raffles on a Thursday evening, and possibly staging a small rally in the multi-purpose hall at stage in the future.

The club cabin has been recently inspected and it is anticipated that it will require major refurbishment or replacement within the next 3-4 years which the club doesn't have the funds to commit to this. This project could also see the club prosper and survive as well as being one of the best equipped radio clubs in the land.

The officers will keep the committee and the rest of the club informed of any developments.

Ian - G8ZHC	Chris - G7OOD	Peter-G7PMZ
Chairman OARC	Secretary OARC	Treasurer OARC

By Ian Moth G8ZHC
Chairman OARC

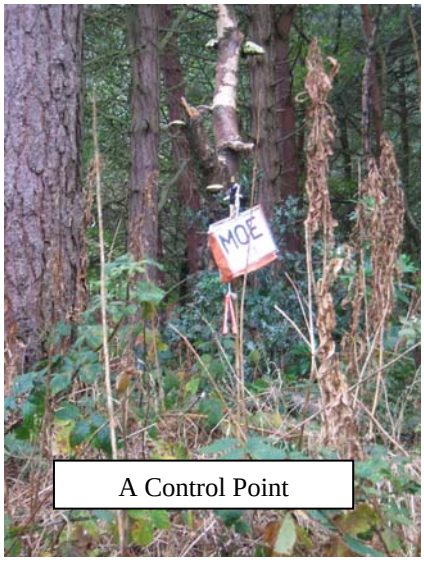
OARC ARDF EVENTS

As you are now aware from previous editions of Old Hams News we have become involved in Amateur Radio Direction Finding (ARDF). Now our club is on the National ARDF map so to speak and an article about our activities was requested by Practical Wireless magazine. Not wanting to waste such an opportunity the following text was submitted to PW for consideration for publication in the said periodical. There are slight alterations to suit our Journal but basically it is unchanged and was co written by Phil Ellis M0GIE and Geoff Oliver G0BJR.

It all began after Bertie Whitcher G7JUL, wrote an article in the April edition of Old Hams News, our club newsletter suggesting that ARDF (Amateur Radio Direction Finding) could be investigated by members as a possible project. This was taken up by Phil Ellis M0GIE whose enthusiasm for the project resulted in a few members going to an ARDF symposium in Wakefield to find out how it is done. That most excellent day, organised by Bob Titterington G3ORY finished with a hope that some northern clubs might organise a contest or two as there was no ARDF activity north of Birmingham. So members of Oldham Amateur Radio Club took up the challenge and decided to do something about it.

Phil took this to the next phase by amassing all the parts together to make six 80metre QRP transmitters of the design by ON7YD as published in the RSGB ARDF Handbook which uses a simple oscillator and PIC to generate the RF and Morse characters. Dave Dean G3ZOI produced 6 PCB's & PIC's and junk boxes were raided for the rest of the components. The transmitters, each constructed by a different club member cost about £8 plus batteries to produce. The antenna is a simple long wire with a counterpoise. The antenna can be easily hidden in a tree and the counterpoise in the undergrowth. The photo shows the original TX construction with all the bits housed in a diecast box.

OARC is fortunate in having its HQ at the local Air Training Corps which has large grounds. This afforded the opportunity to set out the transmitters for test purposes. Several tests were made around the ATC compound by sneakily secreting the transmitters and asking other club members to find them. Other tests showed that the transmitters worked well enough to be received at about 1 mile distant.



A Control Point

Technically equipped, we now also had 6 spare Rx's, the next step was to make contact with the local Orienteering Clubs in the hopes of co-promoting an event with one. Three local clubs showed interest and an ARDF demo evening was set up at the ATC to which hams and Orienteers flocked (well about 12 came!).

It transpired that South East Lancashire Orienteering Club (S.E.L.O.C.), were holding an 'introduction to Orienteering Day at Tandle Hill Country Park in Royton, Oldham to which we were invited to add a Radio Course. This was to be the training ground for Phil M0GIE and Geoff G0BJR to organise an ARDF event. The beauty of arranging an event with an Orienteering Club was that they already had proper orienteering maps of the area as well as the pin punches and flags needed for placement at the transmitter sites. After several walks round the park 5 suitable trees were selected to hang aerials on.

It was decided that the mechanical design of the transmitters was very cumbersome as every time the transmitters were synchronised or the batteries needed recharging they had to be pretty much dismantled and then re-assembled. To make this easier and faster a change of design was deemed appropriate.

So the innards were removed from the diecast boxes. The coding dip switches and leds were removed from the pcb and mounted on an aluminium plate along with a power switch, a socket which enabled easy charging of batteries in situ and easy synchronisation, a simple system for adjusting the in built ATU and more switches to externally activate the transmitter for antenna tuning purposes. The whole assemblage was then fitted into an appropriate length of plastic drain pipe and to make it weather proof a cap was fitted over the control panel.

Paperwork was organised including requests for permission to use the Park for the event and Risk Assessment forms for our local council whose park it is. Orienteering Maps were obtained and e-mails were sent out to all the local Radio Clubs and all who had attended the Wakefield Seminar plus an article went off to the local paper. As the day drew near, what would go wrong? What had we forgotten?'

As it happened we hadn't forgotten anything. The Tandle Hill Country Park event was scheduled for Saturday 27th October and Friday 26th was aerial hoisting day, no problems were encountered here. And at 08.00hrs local on the Saturday two bodies were to be seen scuttling from tree to tree in the park, connecting and hiding Tx's. At 09.30hrs the Tx's were due to activate, and we listened! Tx 1 OK, Tx 2 OK, silence, then 4 & 5 OK, But no, Tx3 was there but on top of 5. Of course this had to be the one furthest from the start so off we ran to it and re-synchronised it manually.

Geoff Oliver G0BJR hiding a Transmitter

As we returned to the start, club members were arriving to help with the administration of the event (see front page photograph). All we needed now were people willing to take part in the event.

We sat back and waited, and waited, and an entry arrived John Martin G8JGM a member of the Manchester and District Orienteering Club (MDOC) who was keen to have a go. He was issued with a map and control card and after tuning in his Rx off he went. Soon others enquired what it was all about and a few orienteers were educated in the ways of ARDF and sent on their way as well.

Phil Ellis M0GIE tuning in.

The rest of the day ran smoothly, the weather was quite kind being dry but overcast and when the event closed we ran round the site collecting the transmitters and antennae with minutes to spare before the rains came.

Our only disappointment of the day was the final result: Orienteer entries many, Amateur Radio entries 1.

We were warned before we started that response would be slow but just one amateur radio entry??? Where were all the people spoken to at the Seminar who were so keen to have a go? Perhaps we will have a better response at our next event at Lever Park, Horwich, near Bolton.

Phil M0GIE would also be happy to hear from any other northern clubs interested in

staging an event, we have the equipment which we will be happy to loan out, and the know how and will be happy to advise and help. Is it only the southerners who can find their way in the dark while the north fears to step out in the daylight?

For further information, contact Phil Ellis M0GIE1@ntlworld.com

For more details on ARDF visit www.oarc.org.uk and www.ardf.btinternet.co.uk

With thanks to the following:-

Phil Ellis M0GIE Geoff Oliver G0BJR Alan Burgess G4GLV
Sue Burgess G0RKE Chris Mackay M0TVL Bertie Whitcher G7JUL
John Williamson M3UXW Peter Rushton G7PMZ

Photographs were supplied by Alan Burgess G4GLV and Chris Mackay M0TVL

After that practice event we did the real thing in Lever Park, Horwich just north of Bolton. It is a huge area owned by United Utilities comprising mixed type of terrain ranging from open grassland to thickly wooded areas bounded on its western side by a large reservoir and its eastern side by Winter Hill surmounted by the massive TV transmitter mast.

The event was scheduled to take place on Sunday 25th November 2007 and once again it coincided with a normal Orienteering event organised by SELOC. Like the Tandle Hill Park event there was a considerable amount of preparation necessary before it could go ahead. Phil Ellis M0GIE made several visits to the park to familiarise himself with it and proper accurate orienteering maps were obtained from SELOC so that the layout of the transmitters could be planned. Incidentally SELOC had already gone through the correct procedure for arranging land usage with United Utilities and had paid the appropriate fees. They also produced the special map of the area. Consequently there were financial obligations for us so an entry fee of £6 per competitor had to be levied.

Unfortunately a large portion of the site suddenly became unavailable to us due to the discovery of a disease in the Oak trees in the eastern area so some of the planned transmitter sites had to be changed. This became a problem with spacing and in the end the minimum distances between some transmitters was borderline. Eventually a satisfactory course was planned on the map amounting to a 4.4Km distance. Another trip to the park was made by Phil but this time accompanied by Geoff Oliver G0BJR to select appropriate trees in which to hide the antennae. This included erecting a test antenna and transmitter in the furthermost part of the park to make sure that this could be received around the full course.

On the Friday before the event Phil and Geoff returned with all the antennae and installed them in the selected locations. Even at this late stage one transmitter site was found to be very close to 2 of the normal orienteering course control points so to avoid confusion we had to find another suitable tree in a different location. It was interesting to note that at each antennae site we were accompanied by a rotund Robin who was so curious about our activities that sometimes he was “in the way”.

After all this preparation would we actually have any competitors? The response to our practice event was very disappointing; could we be doing all this for nothing? Well the response from pre booked entrants had been very encouraging. We expected at least 7 and hoped for 10. If this turned out to be true we would have a good day.

Phil Ellis M0GIE sets up the Finish Beacon Antenna

On the day of the event Phil, Geoff and Peter Rushton G7PMZ gathered just before dawn at the park to set up the transmitters and control points. Our first stop was at the southern end where the transmitters were synchronised. Geoff was then loaded up with 3 transmitters and he trudged off into the wet gloom while Phil and Peter moved off northwards to set up the registration and start positions and the northern transmitters. Peter organised the registration and start whilst Phil did the transmitters. A Finish beacon was also set up on a different frequency so that competitors could find their way back there. Unknown to us this developed a fault during the event and its battery pack melted thus making it inoperable.

As Geoff was heading out toward his first site he was almost bowled over by 3 Deer gambolling through the woods. Phil experienced no such pleasures other than the persistent attentions of the Robins.

With all the transmitters installed and back at the start we tuned in a receiver to hopefully hear the transmitters which were programmed to start at 09:15. Yes we could hear No.1, No. 2, and No. 5. Where were 3 and 4? Of course these were the furthest from the start so Phil set off to find out what was wrong whilst Peter and Geoff manned registration in case any competitors arrived.

The group gathering at the registration point

As Phil started to walk to the opposite end of the park, he came across Sue and Alan Burgess G0RKE and G4GLV. Their arrival could not have been timed better. They transported Phil as far as possible by car which saved at least an hour of lost time. Transmitters 3 and 4 were found to be lazing in standby mode and had not bothered to switch on at the appointed time. Phil woke them up and synchronised them manually. However these 2 could still not properly be heard from the start position. It didn't help that a G4 station was calling CQ on the same frequency as well. Thankfully he disappeared just before the event was scheduled to start.

Just before Phil's return the competitors arrived. Not in dribs and drabs, oh no, they all arrived at once. Consequently it was a pleasantly chaotic situation at the registration point. In all there were16 entrants but as 3 of these were a family group and could only be counted as one there were 14 who eventually set off round the course. As they could only be released from the start at 5 minute intervals the later arrivals had quite a long wait but they filled in their time in the nearby café until their start time. Amazingly they had travelled considerable distances to take part. The nearest had come from Southport and the furthest from Gatwick and Dumfries. One participant was Bob Titterington G3ORY who heads up the ARDF effort nationally. We felt privileged to have him test us out.

Michael Dunbar
"The Winner"

Geoff handled registration, Sue and Alan administered the Start/Finish and Peter was the timekeeper. Phil flitted between points in a management capacity.

All starters completed the course with varying degrees of success which suggests that the course difficulty was pitched about right for 11 radio entries, 5 newcomers, and 3 Orienteers.

The winner was Michael Dunbar. He had travelled all the way from Frimley to take part. He obviously thought it was worth it.

The rest of the results can be seen below.

Pos.	Name	Tx's.	Time	Start	Finish	Class
1	Michael Dunbar	5	0-45	11.15	12.00	M40
2	Robert Vickers G3ORI	5	0-50	11.20	12.10	M60
3	David Williams M3WDD	5	1-08	11.25	12.33	M40
4	Jim Smith G4DZL	5	1.27	11.00	12.27	M50
5	David Heale G6HGE	4	0-52	10.55	11.47	M40
6	Stuart Tyler G1ZAR	4	0-56	11.05	12.01	M40
7	John Martin G8JGM	4	1-10	10.35	11.45	M50
8	Tom Mitchell GM0JHF	4	1-17	11.30	12.47	M50
9	Bob Titterington G3ORY	3	0-41	11.10	11.51	M60
10	Keith Mahood M0OXV	3	1-18	10.30	11.48	M40
11	Stuart Cartlidge G0MJG	3	1-28	10.20	11.48	M40
12	Richard Newstead G3CWI	2	1-07	10.50	11.57	M40
13	April Jones	2	1-19	10.45	12.04	W35
14	Neil Jones M0NBJ	0	1-36	10.40	12.16	M50

Taking a bearing??
Or just lost

At the conclusion of the event another trip round the site was necessary to collect the transmitters, antennae and control points. A final settling up of finances with SELOC was completed and the team wearily set off home.

Incidentally SELOC had approximately 180 participants taking part in their event.

Finally my thanks go to Geoff Oliver G0BJR my co-organiser, Pete Rushton G7PMZ, Sue Burgess G0RKE and Alan Burgess G4GLV who supplied photographs of the event, Bob G3ORY, Dave M3WDD and Dave G3ZOI for dropping me in this situation in the first place. Without your individual contributions, Lancashire would still not know what ARDF was. Now what about some activity in Derbyshire and Cheshire and what's that other county over the Pennines called??

By Phil Ellis M0GIE and Geoff Oliver G0BJR

The following comments have been taken from the ARDF web site about the event.

1. The results format does not do justice to some of the performances. Michael Dunbar travelled all the way up from Frimley to race round all five transmitters in just 9 TX cycles, to show what can be achieved with plenty of practice and good speed over the ground. Even more impressive was the third place of M60 Robert Vickers who managed to bag the lot in just 50 minutes, even though he was only expected to find three of them as an M60.

2. John Martin of MDOC headed the newcomers with a very respectable 70 minutes for his allotted four transmitters.

3. We actually had two ladies competing. April Jones bagged two transmitters and was comfortably inside the time, while Richard Newstead took his daughter Mai Ling and son Lewis round the course.

4. Very few of the allegedly 'experienced' competitors ever managed to find all their allotted transmitters on their first time out. There is simply too much to master all at once. You need to become familiar and adept at using the receiver, there is the sense problem to master on 3.5 MHz and then there is zooming up the learning curve of basic tactics. It takes a few events before it all starts to run smoothly and after that, well it is all such good fun.

5. Phil M0GIE, was really quite brave to run an event for a radio sport he has only done a couple of times himself. Phil was being typically modest as you all thanked him and his team for their efforts on Sunday. It was certainly very much appreciated by all the competitors.

By Bob Titterington G3ORY

A Competitors Blog

What struck me in retrospect, were the enormous errors on several bearings, which are not usually a problem on 80m. I can only put this down to the proliferation of power lines and fences, though years of experience have taught me to keep well away from these when taking bearings on the lower frequencies.

Looking at the map, it was a safe bet to get some distance down the eastern side of the area during the initial cycle. I deliberately stopped to plot a bearing on Fox 1 in the middle of the open ground between the start car and the fence by the start flag, but this turned out to be the worst bearing of the event, causing me to estimate its location on the lakeside southwest from the start. This error caused me to lose some time later on. Signal strength persuaded me that 3 and 4 were well south, 2 was stronger and to the west but probably best left until I was heading back to the finish, whereas the strong 5 lay to the east and was quickly found (although the flag was largely concealed by the vegetation until I was on top of it).

Leaving 5, I was still unsure whether I would take 3 or 4 next since my initial bearings had been very close together, and both were now giving similar bearings to the west, albeit 3 was stronger than 4. I found I was going too far down the main track and needed to get to the west side of the out-of-bounds areas, but a high wall confronted me and I needed to backtrack a bit to get round it. When 3 came up, it was obviously within range and running in a straight line brought the flag into view shortly after the end of the transmission.

I was now confident that 4 was by the ruined castle, but searching the likely looking wood to the south failed reveal it until the signal came up.

Recalling that I had placed 1 by the lakeside southwest from the start, not far from the buildings and big car park, I headed to that point - although I was now puzzled about the possible site of 2, which also seemed to be near to those buildings, but was difficult to reconcile with the published 600m exclusion zone from the start. Once in my selected search area, comparative signal strengths and bearings made it clear that 1 was much further north than estimated, whereas 2 was much closer and to my east, so I made a change of plan and ran 2 to ground on the next transmission.

It was not easy running 1 to earth, because it was close to the road and to power lines. It was probably re-radiation from these which had given me such a bad first bearing. However, a vague bearing along the power line got me to the approximate site and when the signal went off, I was unhappy at the prospect of a "headless chicken" search in such a lot of undergrowth. For once, luck was on the side of this particular headless chicken when the flag appeared magically, and all I had to do was head for home with a full bag of foxes.

It was great to have been part of this historic event, the first in the north of England, and I have to thank the guys from Oldham Amateur Radio Club (with the valuable support of SELOC) for having the courage to start from scratch, and succeed so convincingly in putting on an event which provided so much enjoyment for a good field of participants, novice and "expert" alike.

Robert Vickers G3ORI (Stourbridge ARS and Harlequins OC)

CONGRATULATIONS

Congratulations are due to John Williamson. He has been successful in passing the Foundation Course and Exam and now has the callsign M3UXW.

SPECIAL EVENT STATION GB4RL

Over the past 3 years our club has hosted a series of Special Event Stations as guests of the Royton Local History Society during their hugely ambitious excavation projects at the site of the former Royton Hall. The overall project title was “Royton Lives through the Ages” and its intention was to cast light on the way of life of Royton’s people from its earliest times.

The earliest recorded details show a settlement in Royton in the year 1212 and very soon afterwards a building was recorded as having stood at the now known location of Royton Hall. Through the eons of time the structure was augmented and altered as each occupant desired according to their requirements until its eventual demolition in 1939 due to its considerably dilapidated state.

One of the longest occupants of the building was the Byron family whose main claim to fame was the sixth Lord, John Byron the poet. But he did not arrive on the scene until many years after the family had relocated to Newstead Abbey near Nottingham, although it is said that he visited Royton Hall on several occasions.

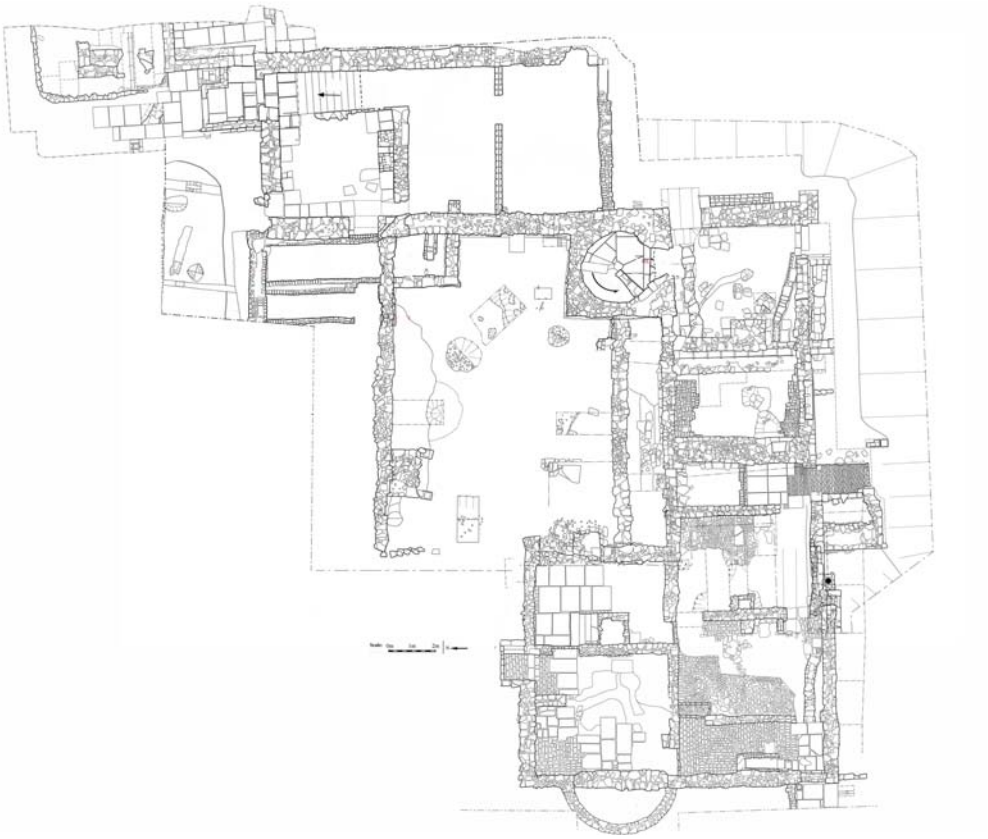
In 2002 the members of the fledgling Royton Local History Society decided that to excavate the site of Royton Hall would be a good project for both the Society and the Town and began a fund raising scheme to make it possible. In 2004 a test excavation was made in conjunction with the Manchester University Field Archaeology Unit to ascertain whether or not there were any viable remains of the Hall thus making a full excavation a worthwhile proposition. Of the 3 trenches that were dug 2 were fruitful and it was decided to go ahead with a full scale excavation.

Digging began in 2005 once again under the expert supervision of Archaeologists from Manchester University, when the rear of the 16th Century section of the Hall was unearthed. This revealed a rare spiral staircase in a square tower along with cellar windows and an 8 step staircase leading down to the cellar from a rear entrance. In 2006 the area opened up began where the 2005 dig ended and moved more toward the front of the Hall. This revealed the southern central frontage of the Hall including the main entrance, various rooms including doors, windows, fireplaces and an interesting drainage system. The third year’s project in 2007 once again carried on where the previous year had finished and concentrated on the more recently built western end including the remaining section of the southern front elevation. This revealed more cellar rooms each with different types of flooring and an unusual Bay Window construction not shown on any drawings or photographs. Throughout the 3 years work many artefacts were discovered including pottery, glass, and bone fragments.

The project was opened to the community of Royton and the majority of work after the digging machines had roughed out the area was undertaken by volunteers some of whom were children who were invited to take part as a schools project and approximately 1000 children

were involved. In fact the children became so involved and entranced by the project that they, without any prompting or suggestion, unanimously voted to name a new school soon to be constructed in Royton the “Royton Hall Primary School” which will replace the present Byron Street Primary and Highbarn Junior Schools. Some 202 adult volunteers worked long and hard to achieve the desired result along with another 30 who acted as welcomers, guides and administrators.

To give some idea of the extent of the total excavations please see the picture below. This has been created by the Manchester University Archaeological Team Leader, Adam Thompson.



For orientation purposes area at the top of the image was revealed in 2005 and is the earliest part of the Hall. The base of the spiral staircase can be seen in the centre towards the top. The right hand side is the southern front façade of the Hall with the main entrance roughly in the centre as can be seen in the photograph at the start of this article. This was excavated in 2006. The 2007 revelations are at the bottom.

At the end of each successive excavation the “hole” had to be filled in, once again burying the remains. This was necessary to protect the site from deterioration from weather and to prevent vandalism. Just before this was carried out the History Society held ‘Open Weekends’ so that the general public could see the history and heritage of the town and it was at these weekends that we were invited to take part.

At each successive event our station set up was much the same. Our tent was erected along with a G5RV antenna for HF and a dual band collinear for VHF. The transceivers were our trusty Yaesu FT990 and FT847. Slow scan TV was also put on and it was this that appeared

The completed 2007 excavation

to catch the imagination of members of the public who visited our display. For the years 2005/6 we were able to operate on both days of the event but the 2007 event took place in October instead of June/July. This change of date meant the event clashed with the last GQRP club rally to be held in Rochdale and as many members were already committed to visiting that we could only support the Royton Hall event on the Sunday.

The weather was very mild and pleasant and in this respect it was fortuitous that the event took place in October because the extremely foul weather conditions endured throughout the June/July period would have ensured that the whole event was a washout.

Being filmed again for the next DVD production

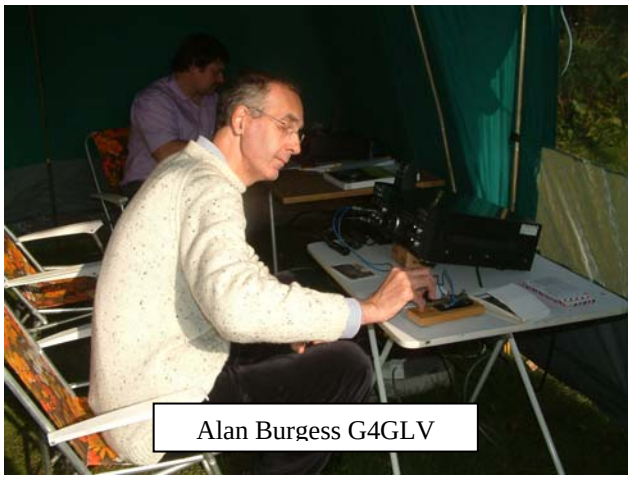
Besides our presence at the 'Open Weekends' our club has also been able to assist the History Society in other ways in addition to publicising their activities to an international audience. We have been a financial sponsor of the dig, we have been able to supply other 'Open Weekend Exhibitors' with electrical power from our generator, some members actually "got down and dirty" and did some digging. Our

former Chairman now President has produced two very successful DVD presentations of the digs which have sold around 1000 copies, the proceeds of which have gone directly to funding the excavations. Our station was featured quite extensively in one of the DVDs with the description and introduction presented by Sue Burgess G0RKE. We know that some of the DVDs have been sent to Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Other members have supplied all their photographs of the excavations to the Society for their records.

Sunday morning came and at 9am the club members started to arrive at the dig. The access would not be open till then and this would only give us an hour to set up. Chris Cunliffe G7OOD had already been up on the Saturday to have a look and see which area would be the best for the antenna system. An area had been picked to the left of one of the dig areas. The tent was quickly removed from the car and placed out on the ground.

While some members assembled the tent others started on the mast and antenna system. A simple system with a full size G5RV and due band vertical would be used. In the past a full size G5 would tune on 50 MHz so this antenna would work if needed during the event. 30 feet of mast was quickly thrown up with the co-linear mounted on top. The full size G5RV would be more of a problem due to the public walking around the site. Putting the centre in the middle of the mast and running one leg behind the tents and display stands. The other leg could be run over the top of the dig and tied of to one of the trees that surrounded the entire site.

The coax could be run easily around the back and under the tent sides. Inside the tables and chairs had been placed in position and the radios set up. When a few people help it is surprising how quickly this can be done, and within 45 minutes the station was up and running. By 10am everyone was listening into the GB2RS news. HF was run by Alan Burgess G4GLV at first with a few contacts being made on CW. VHF was run by Chris G7OOD and Sue Burgess G0RKE made herself busy meeting and greeting the public. When running a special event station this is probably one of most important jobs.



Alan Burgess G4GLV

Alan was making good progress working Europe while on 144 MHz only contacts inside the Manchester area could be heard. After the GB2RS news a contact into Preston was made so this kind of distance was possible. After an hour it looked like HF would be the main band for operation and with only 6 contacts being made on VHF it was decided to change the mode to SSTV and the laptop was set up.

Last year saw the first time that SSTV had been used at a special event with any success for the club. On the Saturday Chris G7OOD had been around the dig and had taken a few pictures to get things going. On Sunday some club members had taken a few more pictures and these were added to the collection. After quickly setting up the leads a station was worked in south Manchester and then over the next hour two more station sent pictures from Irlam and Bolton. In all 23 pictures had been transmitted by the station showing different parts of the dig.

Chris Cunliffe G7OOD & Ian Firby G7VCG

By now it was 2:15 and the open day had set to finish at 4pm and we had to be dismantled before then. HF had gone quiet so a quick change of antenna and the FT847 was up and running on 50 MHz. This band looked like it had been open for a while and within 30 minutes 10 contacts had been made around Europe. By now it was getting close to the time that we had set for dismantling the station and as the sky had gone very dark and as it looked like it was going to rain everyone agreed to start pulling the antenna down and dismantle the tent.

It's funny how everything comes apart much faster than putting it together. By 3:30 all the equipment was being carried to the cars ready for transportation to the club. Some club members had not been on the guided tour around the dig and the early finish gave everyone a chance to catch the last tour. It was then that a few of us noticed that Chris Mackay M0TVL had a hard hat on and was down in the dig area taking pictures. Chris is very good at photography and in an attempt to get some good pictures for the club to use had asked if he could get closer. They let him in under the condition that the pictures could be shared with the Historical Society.

Peter Rushton G7PMZ operating

At the end of the day all the members that attended had a great day. Everyone thought it a shame that this would be the last dig but there is not much chance of another. For the second time it had been good to see SSTV working from a portable site and all the bands being worked.

Many thanks to everyone who helped out both on the day and beforehand in the preparation stage.

Photographs by Chris Mackay M0TVL and Geoff Oliver G0BJR

by Chris Cunliffe G7OOD and Geoff Oliver G0BJR

CONTESTS REPORT FOR 2007

144 MHz Activity Contest

This year has seen lots of activity in the club when it comes to contesting. The year always starts with a slow January and February with only the Tuesday night contests running. This year it was decided to do the Tuesday night 144 MHz activity from the club. With the club facilities this would mean that operators could work in comfort and warmth.

The 144 MHz activity contest (held on the 1st Tuesday of each month) is a good one for club members who want to help the club but at the same time operate from home. In this contest the entrants can put there own entry in under the single operator section but can also declare that it is part of Oldham Amateur Radio Club and the entry score will be added to the clubs. This can boost the score by a considerable amount.

For most of the year the club station was run by Peter G7VCG and myself. On many occasions Keith M0KGM joined us. In August the club station was manned by Peter and Geoff (M0AUG). All year the club has been taking part in this contest and compared to last year we have done very well. In 2006 we managed a good 53rd out of 67. This year we have managed to get to 16th.

This position is a vast improvement on last year and was mainly achieved by two stations helping out by putting in their own entry under the single operator section and declaring it as an entry for the club. This nearly doubled our score. Many thanks to all who helped out throughout the year. Hopefully in 2008 we will do better and get even higher on the final score table.

432 MHz Activity Contest

On the second Tuesday of each month the club has been taking part in the 432 MHz activity contest. Last year the club entered this contest from Moss Moor and managed a good position finishing 11th out of 22.

This year the decision was made to operate from the club and enjoy the comfort that we had been getting used to. The contest scoring is 1 point per KM so hopefully the larger antenna system now installed at the club would help to rack the score up. Peter, Keith and I would man the station over many months. But for some months it was not possible to take part in the contest due to holidays.

Last year the club managed a good 7th place and this was with just taking part in 7 out of the 12 contests. This year we are down to 8th. Only a drop of one place but when only 15 stations take part in the open section every place counts. Unfortunately there is not a club section in this contest so every point is worth a lot. Many thanks to all members who gave the club points.

Last year club member Phil Ellis won the novice section in this contest. At time of writing this the results for the final year were not available but it looks good for him to win this section again. Hope you do well Phil and the best of luck.

2008 could see the club going back to Moss Moor and trying to beat 7th from last year so if you can listen out for us and give us some points then point your beams NE out of Oldham towards Saddleworth moors and help the club to achieve this.

50 MHz Activity Contest.

At the start of 2007 we took part in the 50 MHz activity contest held on the last Tuesday of each month. This year the club had been doing these contests from Tandle Hills as G1ORC/P. One nice thing about this contest is the fact that the results are usually announced before the next contest is due. This allows everyone to see how well they are doing and try to improve their performance if possible. After nearly 5 months the results had not been published so a decision was made not to carry on with this contest and concentrate on the other contests in the year.

At the time of writing this the results have still not been published so I can not give a progress report on the 50 MHz activity contest for 2007.

144 MHz Backpackers Series

For nearly 3 years the club has not taken part in the 144MHz backpackers for various reasons. This year we decided to try the contest again. Moss Moor would the spot. This has worked well for us in the past. The first was more a trial and test of the equipment to see how it all worked after all this time. Most of it had been in storage for nearly 3 years. There was also the fact that a new car had been obtained and trying to get the equipment in would be a challenge.

Ian Moth G8ZHC

The first went well but a couple of problems arose in that the laptop power supply ran down in 3 hours, this is a 4 hour contest. The new FT817 worked without a fault and the Maspro antenna system had no problem. Only one antenna was used. As time goes on and the system is tested more we can start to build up the antennas back to the 4 stacked and bayed.

Due to the laptop power supply problem the first contest only lasted 3 hours and the then we dismantled and came home. The second contest runs in conjunction with the Practical Wireless QRP contest and this was going to be done from the club. The second would be missed and this gave us time to prepare for the third. On the third the weather was terrible. When starting of it was overcast and breezy. By the time we got up to the car park on the moor the breeze had turned into a gale. The antenna could only be put up at 22 feet and this would make it easy to turn in the wind. By the time the antenna was up it had started to rain and this gave us our next challenge - how to operate and keep dry.

During the first contest we had operated from the boot with chairs outside, with the weather being nice this had worked well. Everyone decided that it would be best to work from inside the car. This worked well till I got home and found the car full of mud.


Backpackers Antenna

During each contest we had encountered problems and the fourth would be no different. Everyone arrived at the car park for 11:30 and started to assemble the antenna system. This went fine with no problems; the radio was working well and the bands busy. The problem lay with me. I had woken up with a bad headache and was hoping that the fresh air would clear my head. This was not to be. As the day went on my head got worst and after 1 hour I was seriously ill. The others decided that the contest should be stopped and the station dismantled. Many thanks to them, by 4pm I was very ill and finished up missing work for 2 days.

The last one would be the best because there were no problems. The station worked without any problems. After the first 30 minutes the rain started and did not stop for the next 2 hours. This meant everyone got wet taking it in turns to move the beam. The laptop worked from a battery pack and the contacts came in thick and fast. This was the highest number of contacts that we had made all year in a contest.

At the end of the series the results were published and there would be a pleasant surprise. The club had come 1st in the first contest, 1st in the third contest, 2nd in the fourth contest and 1st in the fifth. This would put us in 2nd place on the championship board. A great result when you think that the club had not taken part in this contest for so many years.

Hopefully 2008 will be as great as success. Many thanks to everyone who helped to make the 144 MHz backers a great success.

50 MHz Backpackers

We missed the first 50 MHz backpacker due to problems with the antenna system. For the next few weeks a considerable length of time was spent trying to rectify the problem. The gamma match just did not want to work. Eventually we managed to tune up the antenna and we were ready for the second. This second contest was done from Moss Moor and on the day the weather was kind. No wind and sunshine.

On assembling the antenna the signals where checked and all worked fine. The contest started and all was going well for the first hour and suddenly the SWR shot up. A quick look and the problem could not be fixed so the station was dismantled. This was still enough for the club to win the section we entered.

Sadly it was announced after that there would be no more 50 MHz backpackers due to the lack of support for the contest. This is a good example of why you should try and get on the bands and support these contest. A few years ago the 432 MHz backpackers were lost and now these have gone. Some people think contests are no good but they help keep the bands going.

70 MHz Contests

2007 has seen some experimenting with the 70 MHz bands. We entered two of the 70 MHz activity contests this year but unfortunately the antenna system has not been correct so we only managed last place in both. This is only a testing time and in 2008 the antenna system should better, so as they say watch this space.

By Chris Cunliffe G7OOD

OLD HAMS NEWS

The editor would like to thank all contributors to this edition of Old Hams News. The next edition is due to be issued in April 2008. Any contributions for this edition should be forwarded to the editor, Geoff Oliver G0BJR on or before Thursday 17th March 2008 to ensure inclusion.

Articles will be accepted on many formats, by email to "news@oarc.org.uk", by word of mouth, hand or type written notes, or as a .txt file on a CD ROM or 3½-inch floppy disc. Photographs, drawings, circuit diagrams and other graphics to enhance your article will also be most welcome.

An edited version of Old Hams News is available on the Internet at the following URL
www.oarc.org.uk
then click on the "Club Journal" hyperlink.

If you submit an article for inclusion in Old Hams News and you do not wish it to be included in the Internet edition you must state your wishes at the time of submission. Otherwise the editor reserves the right to include/exclude your article as he sees fit.

For reference the officers and committee members are listed below and will be happy to help with any enquiries you may have.

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Written, edited and produced by Geoff Oliver G0BJR
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