

Salop ARS History

(First Published in SARS Newsletter by John Burnett G0HCU in 1988)

The SARS was born in Church Stretton out of a union between G3RRN and G3OMX (known fraternally as Doc and Old Mouldy Sox or Old Man Xmas.

Doc (G3RRN) wrote to Phil G3SES and arranged for a meeting at the home of Bill Davies (SWL BRS21607) in Harlescott Crescent, on a Wednesday evening September 11th, 1963. Those present being John Ashford (G3KYU), Stan Brown (G4LU), Ken Linney, Roy Davies (G3MVK), Bill Davies (SWL), Phil Evans (SWL), Ken Jones (G3RRN), and Stan Edwards (G3OMX).

These meetings were held at Bill's home until the membership got too large, when they moved to a new venue not too far away - the Tennis Pavilion in Harlescott Crescent - though not one of them played tennis. (I was told that nets to them only occurred on top band). These meetings were moved to Thursdays and it was noted that on 10th October, 1963, 23 people were present - call signs noted - G3RRN, G3OMX, G3KYU, G3FLD, G3UDA, G3UQH, G3VKX, G3KPP, G4PF, G3VRJ and SWL's. (Some of these call signs were not issued in 1963, I feel they were added to the minutes book later).

Old photographs indicate activity on HF 160 and 80 metres, with it was suggested 2 metres, though talking to one or two old members they seemed doubtful.

G3SRT the Society club call sign was applied for by Doc (G3RRN) and used for the first time by himself at the August 1964 Traction Engine Rally then held at Church Stretton using Doc's home brew TX, still in present day use (1988), and an Eddystone S640 RX, the band used was 80 metres, the antenna being a dipole 250ft long with open wire feeder. The call sign was also used at the 1965 Flower Show, the RX/TX (DX40 Heathkit) being supplied by G5IC.

By 1965 things had really moved on and club activity seemed to flourish. G3SES (Phil), noted for his diaries (in no way related to the Dales) that meetings were twice monthly with rag-chews on 80 metres, G4LU gave a talk on construction and operation of his 2 metre rig, and a talk by G3BA (Tom Douglas of Sutton Coldfield). What Tom gave a talk on is not noted. Visits were arranged to see the operation of Criggion Radio Station, Shrewsbury Telephone Exchange, Police Headquarters, and Buildwas Power Station.

They even found time for a Junk Sale. The auctioneer was John Ashford (G3KYU) who seemed to prefix every sale with the slogan 'Who could possibly be without it?'. How much these sales brought in at this time is not known.

The first AGM minutes I have been able to find are dated October 1965. This AGM was held at The Morris Hall, Bellstone (a somewhat unusual venue compared with all other later venues - it did not support a bar, surely a prerequisite to any AGM). The committee of those days consisted of four members, Stan Brown, John Ashford, Lindsey Smith, and Bill Davies. They agreed a

year's closing balance of £5 9s 9d (£5.48p), not bad when you think of a pint of beer costing about 1s 11d (10p). At that same meeting it was agreed:

- (1) All committee member's names and addresses should be made available to members.
- (2) Greater press publicity to be sought.
- (3) A set of chassis cutters be purchased (this was never done. I suspect this was the start of construction contests).

It was interesting to note at this time that advance information was available about lectures of a technical nature to be given in Shrewsbury by Mullard Technical Dept.

January 1966 was to see the start of RAE classes to be held at Meole Brace Secondary Modern School, instructors to be Stan Brown and Lawrence Ivin (sad to say they finished due to lack of support).

The 4th AGM was held at yet another venue, the Old Post Office, Milk Street, the rent being 5s per night (25p). Meetings were arranged and a programme for the year 1966/67 embarked upon.

Daystrom gave a talk on Heathkit Equipment. The Engineer in Charge of Woofferton talked about the operation of his station. G3LLJ gave a talk on Aerials and Parametric Amplifiers (whatever they might be). G5PP talked about 160 metres mobile and Stan (G4LU) gave a talk on 'Safari' (always said Wales was a jungle).

The Shrewsbury Chronicle and Shropshire Journal covered the activities of the club. By the end of 1967 there was a total of 43 fully paid up members, 21 being fully licensed, 8 obtained theirs during their time with the club, the remainder being Short Wave Listeners (SWL) or showing interest in Amateur Radio. Those noted for gaining their tickets include Sid Cummings, Don Goddard, Phil Mansell, Eddie Hotchkiss, and H. Linney.

It is worth noting that in the accounts to September 1966, Full Licence holders paid 17s 6d, the remainder 10s, and that the profit from the sale of teas brought in £1 16s 7d, club funds standing at £21 1s 10d.

Towards the end of 1966 the weather turned cold and wet, the brightest thing on the horizon was club funds. So it was agreed that the club RX should be supplemented with a low power TX. John Ashford G3KYU started the project using as the exciter (his words) a TU5B VFO covering 80 metres to be followed by a PA, a very modest affair. Unfortunately John could not finish it because of business commitments and G3VKX volunteered to complete PA and power supplies. The unit was finished and a station set up in a room at the Old Post Office - where G3VKX and G3UQH started slow Morse transmissions for club members wishing to gain an 'A' Licence. (It has been said the antenna, mast, and feeder waved about so much, everyone

thought it was semaphore for Boy Scouts).

G3SRT was on the air and heard by large numbers of people throughout Shropshire. Sid (G3VKX) was very happy with what was going out, but did not seem to be receiving many replies, tweaking the RX brought no improvement to the Eddystone RX358 and it was decided at the next opportune moment to get rid of it, which must have been good timing on the club's part because in March G3AG gave a talk entitled 'Eddystone'.

March 14th saw a visit to 'Western Command Signals' at Chester.

The Construction Competition has long been a club feature, and 1967 was the first. The project to be:-

(1) A 'Z' Match.

(2) A Transistor GDO

(3) Any other item.

The report I have is that G4KPP John Green won it with his (G3IPU) QRP Transceiver, which is still working (1988) in the capable hands of Peter Parker Jones. Judges:- G3KMT and G3ENY of AT&E Bridgnorth.

It was suggested that the club look at HF DF exercises in conjunction with Slade Amateur Radio Society, Nr. Birmingham. It was agreed to construct a receiver and have a go. G3OMX Stan Edwards surprised all by announcing he had acquired at a cost of 3s 8d a 5/8" Ferrite Rod Aerial - why? It's for HF DF says he (Bet in those days they didn't have QRM from CW).

The summer of 1967 showed a lot of activity in setting up stations, one of the first was to commemorate the 60th Anniversary of Scouting with a Jamboree in Attingham Park, G4LU was there (what a sight he was in shorts - but look at all his badges). Setting up the station was not easy, they had borrowed Graham Medlicott's only pole but had to find a suitable tree as the other mast, and that's where the fun started - who was going to climb the tree? No-one came forward - until Robin Hood came forward in the guise of Richard Golding G3VZG, complete with bow and arrow, fired a line into the tree and pulled the antenna into position, so saving the day. He was duly awarded the Scout Badge of Crossed Trees. The aerial was a trapped dipole on 160, 80, and 20 metres. 130 QSO's resulted.

Fired with enthusiasm the next venue for a Club Station was the lawns of Condover Hall School for the Blind, in aid of Charity. No mast problems here, no, they had the makings of a Richard Branson of Virgin fame, the antenna was fixed to a balloon - how Pop Linney blew it up is not recorded but up it went 200-300 feet - to shouts of 'Lungs of Leather' (I think). He packed up smoking after this. The sum of £200 was collected by the club on this occasion and 16 QSO's recorded.

The last Club Station of 1967 was of course the Traction Engine Rally at Church Stretton, where a station was set up on the field and a total of 30 QSO's were logged with the note 'it's not the QRM, it's the QRN that's the problem', poor lads.

Everyone agreed the Club had had a very successful summer and all were now looking forward to the Autumn Dinner Dance. 50 people had applied for tickets at £1 each. John Ashford was elected to provide entertainment/music/dancing. Ken Jones was heard to say 'We can't afford very much' and with that Phil Evans volunteered to play the piano - cum - accordion, and Bill Lindsay-Smith would sing. Don Goddard with friend was to give a dancing demonstration - it all went well, coloured a little by the beer served at the Oak Hotel, and it all ended with Phil Evans retiring to the chicken hut shack at the bottom of his garden.

1967 came to a close with a Coffee Evening organised by Mrs Linney (which one, there are so many) and XYL's to boost club funds. £13 0s 1d was raised and on the strength of this, and a bit in the kitty, to please G3VKX, a receiver was purchased. Don Goddard, with pockets bulging, went forth and came back with a STAR 550 and £33 lighter - what a year that was.

1968 started in a quiet way, two Peters, both club members for some time were given a warm welcome on the attainment of new call signs. Peter Parker G8CKM and Peter Ross G3FLD. Peter FLD later to gain the Trophy for Construction, Fred Hall G3NSY made himself known.

March was getting close and the club was to lose Stan G4LU. The long standing Chairman was being posted to Rugby Radio Station. He reluctantly handed over the Chairmanship to John G3KYU, and the Club Licence to Bill Lindsay-Smith who was then Secretary. 73's to Stan G4LU. No sooner had he gone, a Junk Sale ensued. It raised £2 7s 0d (Stan must have taken most of it with him).

John Ashford in his new role as Chairman, polished his shoes in preparation for a meeting at Shrewsbury Railway Station with G3TR, John Graham, President elect of the RSGB. Having wine and dined at the then Granada Restaurant (no pub grub in those days) he was shepherded to Club HQ, Old Post Office, where he explained all the workings of RSGB. 22 members signed in and lots of questions were asked.

In June a talk on HF DF was given by W B Simmonds of Slade ARS, and much information gained.

Contests for Summer on top band were organised using CW. It was agreed to enter MCC and AFS and an improvement over 1967 was noted. NFD did not get off the ground (lack of operators).

To celebrate 50 years of RAF Shawbury, Don Goddard set up his station, SB101 Heathkit HF Tranceiver, the rig he assembled from a kit, 100 Watts of power on 80 - 10 metres. Someone should have explained that loading trailing aerials from aircraft is not done by adding weights.

Later in the month, Ron Thomas G3KMY, organised a club visit to AT&E Bridgnorth, ably assisted by G3ENY Geoff Roberts. There was a good turn out.

As a result of G3TR visit the committee decided to assist the RSGB and a cheque was sent to Headquarters to the value of £1 2s 7d as a token gesture from a collection made on club night, and later in the year an Affiliation Fee was sent to RSGB Headquarters, and for £1 2s 0d became part of the Radio Society of Great Britain.

Club Station G3SRT was again set up at Church Stretton Steam Traction Engine Rally. Thinking back, were those members responsible for the term 'Steam Radio'?

That old stalwart Stan Edwards G3OMX made a collection from members, which he posted to G3VUC for a bed in Cheshire Home to be endowed as a memorial to G2BSA.

The year was coming to a close with a Dinner/Dance at the Beacon Hotel, the only item recorded being the cost, £1 per ticket.

A list of club equipment for 1968 was:- STAR 550 Receiver @ £33, Eddystone 358X @ £7 10s 0d, Home Brew 160-80 SSB TX @ £10, Antenna poles and wire.

Membership totalled 46, 27 licensed, 5 of which were G8's, 2 Juniors, 17 SWL's. 31 members also belonged to the RSGB / new call signs were noted, G3WVL, G3WWH, and G3WNI.

1969 got off to a bad start, the club room at the Old Post Office was hired out at a cost of £1 per room. One month two rooms were in use, one contained the club RX/TX, both were heated. The landlord proposed an increase of 75% to 35s per room/month, more than the club's income.

Michael Overy, a student at Shrewsbury School, organised a hut which belonged to the Signals Section of Shrewsbury School, to be the club venue for the coming year - but problems were foreseen.

Michael would leave school and the contact might be lost with authority - the cable providing power to the hut was totally inadequate, so much so that if a one bar electric fire was put on to heat the place, the lights dimmed - and most of all, the hut was not secure for the equipment. Finally, any student wishing to become a member of SARS had an automatic right to do so.

Only one of these items was put to right - to prevent a dimming of lights with heating, a paraffin stove was purchased costing £3.

The programme for the year was well under way; A talk on AM TV by G6KQJ/T; Meteor Scatter by G3CCH; VHF by GW3DSV; Aerials by G6CP; Bert Simmonds on Transformers; Daystrom G3HXN on Commercial Equipment and as a fill-in time permitting, Weather Satellites by Graham Medicott, aided by Richard Golding and Lee Cheney.

Visits to the Radio Research Station at Malvern were not well attended.

The usual Junk Sale in April brought in £1 4s 7d. Could the auctioneer have been G3EEN, Mike, of 'Oh it costs money don't it' fame, because a second Junk Sale was held in September, this time raising £3 5s 6d.

Bill Davies, a founder member of the Club received a card from members to mark his retirement from the Post Office, and donated a Challenge Cup for Construction, which in it's first year was won by G3FLD, Peter Ross.

Stan Brown managed to get back and give a talk on the construction of his 2 metre rig for SSB; and Weller of soldering iron fame gave a talk on their equipment.

With the increasing number of G8's coming into the Club, G3UQH/G3UDA modified a VHF TX for 2 metres and built a converter to receive using the HF rig. Pop Linney undertook the Aerial array, a 6 element J-Beam.

The Summer club activity was a first venture into NFD with the remarks 'a very creditable performance'.

MCC was entered by Rob/Ken Linney, Don Goddard, Richard Golding, Stan Edwards, and Bill Lindsay-Smith, and came 27th out of 99, with a total of 429 - the winners has 825, Stourbridge had 602 - this was very creditable for a first attempt, but just look at the line-up, all hardened pros!

In this year the club tried hard to join with Hereford and Chester clubs for excursions and contests, but with no success.

What was sadly missed in this year was the Traction Engine Rally. The club had always had a working station since its beginning, and this was the first time it was not held in 7 years. To make up for it a station was set up at the Scout's 'Challenge 69 Weekend' and some 130 QSO's passed.

Bill Davies had a short stay in hospital and resigned from his position on the committee, but still showed an interest in the club.

Bill Lindsay-Smith also resigned from committee and said his goodbyes to Shropshire, moving to much warmer climes? Hampshire, to take a new position. Thanks Bill for all the hard work you put in.

Two old members of the club were remembered, Nat Brown and Reg Farr, with the disposal of their equipment on behalf of XYL's. G2APW Mr Naraway, also passed away.

In this year the club became affiliated to the Civil Defence Unit.

Two young members of Shrewsbury School took and passed the RAE, John Hough and Colin Jones.

Financially the club had improved its bank balance due mainly to not having to shell out for the hut or electricity, which was provided by Shrewsbury School.

A Coffee Evening at Copthorne Community Centre with games was held, XYL's providing the food and drink. It seems to have been a great success. The games were of interest; 'Guessing Value Types', 'Guessing tape-recorded household noises', and Peter's (G8CKM) 'Pass the Parcel' (What was in it I don't know, something cheeky no doubt).

All in all, not a bad year, the end of the Sixties and looking forward to the Seventies, the membership now totalling 48, with more young people being involved in activities, December 1969 saw the introduction of our first SARS Newsletter (not yet found one - in 1988). Contents, I am told, include Hints and Tips, Advertising sale of equipment and xtal exchange lists. (What not synthesizers).

Looking back at the 1960's, there are going to be club members I have missed out, either because they are not mentioned in club minutes, or because members I have spoken to have hazy memories.

One I was introduced to has been a member since 1965, G3VRI, a white stick operator. I apologise Alan for the omission. Well known at St. Dunstons and better known in Shrewsbury for his sweet shop at the entrance to the old Market Hall. He took the Morse test at home in Castlefields. His rig at the time was an ATS Transceiver on 160 - 80 metres, pulling 12.5 watts into his antenna. I was more interested in how he loaded the antenna and checked his SWR. He assured me that the black box did it by listening to a changing pitch which varied with loading, highest pitch results in lowest SWR - simple really?

During the 1960's the club's main headache was the fact that it had no regular meeting place. This had to be remedied in the 1970's, membership was rising, with young members who were keenly interested in Amateur Radio, so it was with great relief that early in 1970 a room was on offer at the Harlescott Youth Centre, Sundorne, giving space, heating, and lighting with use of Centre facilities. (Tea and Biscuits). All of this for 75p a night.

New Licences in the year were: Ken Walker G8DIR (Mr TV), Mike Overy G8EEN, Colin Jones GW8DRY, and John Bond G8EHC.

In this year Pop Linney was Chairman, Ken Linney Secretary (a family affair), Peter Parker Treasurer. There were 34 Licensed (G3-G8), 2 SWL's, 2 Juniors, and 10 members a mixture of XYL's and friends, giving a total of 48 members.

John G3KYU managed to get his monthly Newsletter off the ground, enjoyed by all.

Two notable talks in the year were a talk on HiFi with a demonstration by Avon HiFi, and the other by a local well-known Radio/TV Dealer, Graham Medicott, who gave a talk followed by a working demonstration of his home-brew Weather Satellite receiver. (He still has this - 1988).

Field Day was held on the top of Titterstone Clee, a well known area to Radio Amateurs. The club call sign G3SRT was used on 2 metres and placed 50th out of 119. But just look at this line-up of operators:- G3UQH, G3VKX, G3UDA, G8CKM, G8CWK, G8DIQ, G8DIR, G8HQK, G8EEN, John Huff. A Drake HF Transceiver with a transverter to 2 metres was used.

Noted with interest was the fact that new club members did not operate the station but built up their expertise on logging or antenna rotating for at least 2 years before being allowed on the microphone (you had to earn your stripes before taking command).

The late Bill Davies (SWL) presented the club with a silver cup, it had now been decided that each year it be presented as the Bill Davies Construction Cup to the member who had built the best piece of radio equipment in the year. G3FLD was the very first member to be presented with it, Peter Ross remembers it very well. The item he entered that year was a Heathkit SB300 HF SSB Receiver. Being very keen on Heathkit, he says he also built the RA1 Receiver capable of NBFM together with a TX G5RV (not the antenna). It used a single 807 in the output or for more QRO, two in parallel. Later the SB400TX to match the SB300RX was built (he does not have any of these items now alas).

G3NSY Fred Hall was at this time a club stalwart and has remained so through the years. Chairman on a number of occasions, a very keen operator, you name it, Fred's worked it and more, he remembers it! A fantastically quick man on a contest, in seconds he can tell you if you've worked the station calling in - has been known to fall off his chair whilst having a rest, Hi! To get to club meetings he bussed into town from Pontesbury, had tea with the Linneys, was collected by G4LU for the meetings and Don G3UQH returned him home. Later either Ken G8DIR or Richard G4AZV carried on this duty.

Who remembers a young member who signed himself Motor Cycle Side Car Mobile? Talking to older members they remember it well. G8DIR it was - I am not sure if Jean sat in the side car or on pillion, great days. I was a scooter type myself.

Looking at photos of about this time, the point that sticks in my mind is young lads with very long hair (perhaps because I have very little). One such member that this brings to mind, who now has short hair, and was then a new call sign, though an old member, Richard Millington G4AZV. Licensed on 10th March 1972, had a QSO on 13th March, having first built his rig, a home brew TX using 5763's in the final PA, with low level screen modulation on AM of course, his RX being a Laffeyette KT340. The Morse test he took at Criggion. Later he purchased a Trio TS510 SSB Transceiver at a cost of £120, which he sold at the good olf Telford Rally tens years later for the same amount. Some equipment never loses its value. Using the 510 he heard a pile-up

and joined in only to find it was an expedition of PA0 in Andorra using the call C31FU (What a memory).

Equipment purchased in 1972 was an AR88 at £35, which was later sold for £30. A Hartley oscilloscope (13A?) Advance Signal Generator (AF/RF?). 6 over 6 2 metre yagi and 2 metre converter with a G8KW trap dipole, an impressive list.

A Junk Sale held at the Corbet Arms, Uffington, presided over by G3KYU John, known by all as Mr Sotherby, raised £3 3s 6d.

A Special Meeting in August was called as a result of correspondence regarding use of the room at Sundorne. It seems that the rent was to be increased from 25 pence to 50 pence. A suggestion to move Headquarters from Sundorne to Corbet Arms, Uffington, was defeated, but further troubles loomed ahead for to stay at Sundorne Youth Centre the majority of members had to be 23 or under, and this was not the case. Discussion with Shirehall gave them some breathing space, the hire of the room was allowed to continue.

A Christmas Party was arranged for later in the year, to be held at the White Horse Inn, and in order to promote the club and its activities, publicity was sought in local papers.

Construction Competition for 1972 was judged by Tom Douglas G3BA, and for the second year running was won by G3VZG, this time with his 2 metre receiver.

By John Bumford G0GTN, 1988, Salop ARS Silver Jubilee Year.