

# NARS NEWS



| An occasional Newport Amateur Radio Society newsletter |

## A Hiatus....

Welcome to the latest NARS newsletter. I thought I would start the newsletter again to carry on where our late Steve GW4BLE left off. A short one this time, just to catch up with what has been going on. I would appreciate any articles, pictures or items of news. It can be scribbled on a back of an envelope or sent to [info@gw4ezw.org.uk](mailto:info@gw4ezw.org.uk)

## Christmas activities

Well it seems ages ago, but we had a couple of Christmas activities. A fun and raffle night with a very nice buffet. Also a feast just after the new year at the local Toby here in Newport. There are a couple of articles on the NARS website ([www.gw4ezw.org.uk](http://www.gw4ezw.org.uk)) covering these events.

## Upcoming Events

We need to get a plan of events arranged again, as there seems to be little planned at the moment. Lighthouses on the Air and Railways on the Air later in the year.

**We have been invited by Ken (MW0YAC) to pop in and grab a burger when Cwmbran DARC operate a special event at the Llanyrafon Mill on the 13th/14th May for Mills on the Air weekend.**

## Goings on...

We have had a number of activities over the last couple of months. The talk from Ross on coal fired power stations, or was it coal powered fire stations, was very interesting. We also had a 3d printing demo evening where Dale brought in his printer. The postponed JT65 evening went well, I didn't hear any snoring at least !

We had a quick visit at the end of January from an amateur from over the pond, Bryn N4VM. He donated his late father's (GW7SNF) radio equipment to the club, which was a very nice gesture.

At the end of 2016, Steve GW40G0 was awarded a contest win for the low power ssb section of the UK/EI Contest SSB 2016. Congratulations! I have a feeling he might have done quite well on the recent UBA PSK63 prefix contest as well.

Spring seems to be arriving, although it has gone a bit colder recently. I noticed the sound of lawn mowers here in Magor, so that is a sure sign we are moving towards the warmer months.

## Stations in Magor...

Ross GW3NWS is now back on the air on 80m after one end of his doublet was taken down due to the removal of tree. Ongoing building works in his front garden are moving forward, and a porta-loo stands proudly at the drive entrance. S8 of noise on 80m is still plaguing Ross' station and a total power down of his QTH did not reveal any local QTH issues.

Steve GW40G0 reports that he has worked 5U5R six times now, on various modes from CW through to PSK63. His hex beam seems to be doing the business !

Richie MW0LGE operated VHF portable/mobile on Sunday afternoon from the Coity Mountain. Also some tropo conditions on the evening of the 13th March where he worked 2E1KJB on the Isle of Wight, just outside Cowes. Richie was at the top of Caerlicken Lane, the south west corner of Wentwood forest @ 205m ASL. 90 or so miles from 1/4wave on the landrover running 50 watts on 2m cant be bad. He also reports that he has set up a vertically polarised 4m dipole to try out another band, and his 6m beam will be up shortly.

## Margaret back home

It was great to see Margaret at the club recently and was looking in fine fettle. As you all know she has been in and out of the RGH recently. We wish Margaret a speedy ongoing recovery !



## Good luck Declan

Declan is a week or so away from sitting his Foundation license exam. We all wish him the best of luck and will hopefully report some good news in the next news letter.

## Mayor of Newport

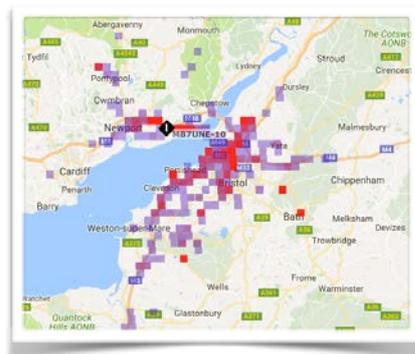
Ross recently found this picture, where the Mayor of Newport visited the old clubhouse at Brynglas House. Taken in 2011.



## MB7UNE - APRS gateway and balloons

A couple of months ago I decided to setup an APRS system here in Magor. Automatic Packet Reporting System (APRS) is an amateur radio-based system for real time tactical digital communications of information of immediate value in the local area. APRS mostly operates on 144.800MHz here in the UK and if you listen in you will often hear bursts of digital packets, operating entirely in an unconnected broadcast fashion, using unnumbered AX.25 frames. Digipeaters enable the 'packets' to spread out, and we now have I-Gate connections where these APRS packets can be injected into the internet, and taken from the internet and put out over RF.

I had noticed that there was a large 'dead spot' from just this side of Chepstow, along the M4 corridor towards the Brynglas tunnels. I ran a listen only system for a couple of weeks using a software modem (Dire Wolf) solution on a Raspberry PI. I also brought to life an old 1990's Kantronics KAM terminal node controller and together with some Raspberry PI software (YAAC) handled the APRS packets. These software solutions seemed to be somewhat unreliable so I decided to invest in a MicroSat WX3in1 Plus 2. This small 'black box' solution from SQ3PLX in Poland is now installed and working extremely well. A connection to the radio, and to the LAN here is all that is required. I applied for an NoV and now have a gateway setup here, digipeating and providing the internet connection both ways. The coverage over the last two weeks is shown on the map and have so far heard 35 or so unique callsigns.



Along with the WX3in1 Plus 2, the system consists of a Yaesu VX2000 'commercial' radio, reprogrammed and aligned for 144.800MHz. Running only 3 watts from the back of it into an X300N collinear antenna at approximately 8m agl.

When looking through some data the other day I noticed a balloon had passed over the UK on the 4th of March. KK6PNN - 5 seems to have been around the earth at least once on its journey so far.

I had received quite a number of APRS packets from the balloon through MB7UNE, picking it up initially above Llandrindod Wells and last hearing it when it was above Northampton at roughly 40,000ft. A quick google search revealed it was released from the University of California, San Diego, on the morning of 12/02/17. A near-space balloon with an APRS pico payload on SBS (scientific balloon solutions) balloon with H2.

So, MB7UNE continues to operate here in Magor, providing some APRS coverage to the local area. It will be interesting to see over the coming months how effective it is. - MW0LGE