

The

Modulator

Newsletter of the Newport County Radio Club, October 2017

When all else fails...

As has been observed many times, there are many facets to ham radio, but the one that stands tallest is emergency communications.

Sometimes you hear dismissive remarks that suggest that modern communication equipment has made ham radio an anachronism. But then along comes a hurricane that obliterates all infrastructure as it did in Puerto Rico. Then you discover the value of having a distributed network of trained hams who own their own transmitters, antennas, power supplies, and all of the other bits necessary to get the signal on the air.

Dave Brown, KC1AAA sends this from *New England Public Radio*:

<http://nepr.net/post/amateur-radio-operators-stepped-help-communications-puerto-rico>

And here's another from *The Takeaway*:

<http://www.wnyc.org/story/the-takeaway-2017-09-29/>

Click the second segment, *Connecting Disaster Survivors With Radio Waves*.

Stand tall, you have every reason to be proud of our hobby and in yourself as a ham radio operator!

NCRC Twentieth Island Activation

(Little) Gould Island

The Island Activators successfully mounted a first activation of Gould Island on September 10th. Gould was special in several ways: First, it is the last major Narragansett Bay island that had not been activated by any known *US Islands* operation. Second, it is a seabird rookery and its owner, the Audubon Society of Rhode Island, does not allow landing by the public.



Two of the many bird nests

After several unsuccessful attempts to reach out to Audubon, we discovered that we had an undiscovered emissary in Pete's, W1LAB, niece Heidi who is on the Board of Directors of Audubon. After outlining our minimal impact operation, permission was granted for a one-shot operation at the end of sea bird breeding season.

After the obligatory pre-op breakfast of Pete's world-renowned Eggs Benedict at John's, K1JSM, nearby home, guests and operators departed for Gould in

Goblin and Turmoil, the RIBs that have served us so well in these operations.



W1SYE on (Little) Gould Island

Setting up a beach HF station has become a near automatic task with many knowledgeable hands working together: pound in the pipe, strap on the vertical, fling out the copper plate ground plane and call CQ.

In the proud tradition of Ham experimentation, we tested a new and untried propagation mode, IVP—Inverted Vertical Propagation. Unfortunately, as Bob, WB4SON, soon reported, our usual strong signal was barely readable at his North Kingstown QTH. We reverted to our usual setup and completed our activation.

This description of the IVP experiment is the official public version. The back room version is that we mounted the trapped middle section of the vertical upside down (inverted?) putting the 20-meter trap at the bottom. That makes for a tight squeeze up a short pipe for a 40-meter signal.

Change to the By-laws

As outlined in the September *Modulator*, the Executive Committee has concluded that we need a formal Membership Chair. The purpose of this Chair will be to facilitate the new member process, ensure applicants are vetted, have the proper paperwork completed, then help integrate them into various club activities. The proposed changes to the By-Laws, in red below, had a first reading at the September meeting. A second reading is scheduled for the October meeting with voting at the November meeting.

Article 1, Section 2

“The Vice President shall assume the duties of the President during an absence. The Vice President shall be in charge of all club social activities and other activities as assigned by the President. **The Vice President shall also serve as the Chair of the Membership Committee and may enlist other members to serve as needed. The membership Chair shall maintain a current roster of all members in good standing, receive applications for new membership and facilitate their transition through vetting to new membership, and encourage and engage new members in club activities.**”

Article One Section 3

Paragraph 4: **Correct typographical error**, The Treasurer shall be responsible for all filings with the Rhode Island Secretary of State.

Paragraph 5: **Delete the duty of the Treasurer to maintain the roster.**

Remote Operations Anyone?

NCRC has built and maintained multiple club stations over the years, but their use has been marginal. These stations had a common impediment—a would-be operator had to drive to the station and gain entry.

Access from your home

But what if you could access an HF station from the comfort of your home or perhaps a hotel room while travelling? Might you use such a club station?



Former darkroom (center)

We have been offered the use of a weather-tight shed near the Newport-Middletown line for such a club station. The shed has electric heat, an exhaust fan, and is paneled with dry wall. As you can see, there are plenty of trees to support a dipole antenna. Currently the artist owner has stored ceramic artwork on shelves, but has made clear that we may move anything that we wish to make space.



Plenty of shelving

Prep work

In addition to clearing some shelf space, the bottom of the door needs to be rebuilt.



Decay at the bottom of the door

The air intake in the back wall would provide an easy outlet for a coaxial cable feed and a small piece of half-inch hardware cloth would stop mice.

What needs to be done?



Remote Rig units

Not surprisingly, we need to spend some money. We have some of the components, but we're looking at *Remote Rig* control boxes as a turnkey solution. One of these boxes sits on the operator's desk and the other sits at the station—no computer involved. The initial setup should cost the club less than \$1000.

The station configuration will determine the final cost, but first we need to know if you are interested in having this option. Be in touch or contact an officer with your thoughts so that we can gauge support for this project.

Blackstone Valley ARC Consortium

The BVARC Consortium is an informal monthly gathering of hams for a radio related presentation with a Q&A session following. Traditionally the emphasis has been on basic electronics and radio skills, but QRP and new digital modes have become important topics too.



Dinner at the Asia Grill

Founded by Bob Beaudet, W1YRC, of the Blackstone Valley Amateur Radio Club, the consortium is a continuing program of BVARC.

The consortium meets on the first Monday of every month through the winter at the Asia Grill in the Lincoln Mall on George Washington Highway (Rte.116) in Lincoln, RI. The formal presentation begins at 6:30 PM and ends at 8:00PM, but many attendees arrive at 5:00 PM to eat dinner before the presentation. The next meeting will be on November 6th.

Bob Beaudet cordially invites NCRC members to join in this ninth season. This is a great opportunity to meet our upstate hams and is highly recommended. Check out their excellent website at:

<http://www.w1ddd.org>

What's This Thing?

All hams have a story about how they got into radio/electronics. My father was a communications officer in the Air Force, so I learned my electronics back when capacitors were referred to as condensers and measured in micro mikes (mmf) and all wiring was point to point.

Over the years I've moved along, but in fits and starts. Last week Franny called: "Hey Jimmy, the walk lights are out!" No problem, after all, how complex can a twelve volt AC power supply be?

Cover off and on the bench, sure enough, zero output. Hmm, that's a timer module, and there's a step down transformer...

But wait—what's this bit?

In series with one side of the secondary was a flat rectangular thing about the size of a postage stamp.



UYO—Unknown yellow object

Meter showed twelve volts upstream, but zip at the output. Clearly the stamp thing was the culprit. But after lunch, a recheck showed twelve volts at the output—rats, a damn intermittent!

Now we get to the point of this adventure: What to do? I had no

idea what the stamp thing was, what it did, and whether it was important, but I had an ace...

"Hey Bob, (Beatty, WB4SON), might you know what this stamp thing is?" Bob Beatty is an electro-wizard, a walking encyclopedia of all things electronic and I was not disappointed. "Sure, it sounds like a *Polyfuse*."

It turns out that just ahead of my learning curve there lie resettable fuses. As the name implies, these devices trip like a common fuse, but reset themselves after some time. Further, they can get squirrely with age.

After a quick Mouser order and five minutes more bench time, the lights were back on for less than a buck. The moral of this tale is that along with all of the advertised value of an NCRC membership, there comes access to a wide range of radio and electronic knowledge.

This was not an isolated incident. Among our members we have a wealth of knowledge, not just about components, radios, antennas and other hardware, but also about operating, propagation, space weather, and other topics that lie beyond the tangible stuff.

And the best part is that all this knowledge is there, with a smile and a helping hand, for the asking. Always trust that any question that you might ask will be given full consideration and do not hesitate to avail yourself of this resource.

Contest University

The Yankee Clipper Contest Club is pleased to announce a Contest University! This invitation goes out to all clubs within one hour's driving distance from Seekonk, MA.

Date: Wednesday Oct. 18

Time: 6:00 PM

Location: 1287 Newman Ave.
(Rt. 152)
Seekonk, MA 02771

Professors:

- Randy Thompson - K5ZD
- Dennis Egan - W1UE
- Charlie Morrison - N1RR

Limit: 24-28 adults

(Please consider bringing a folding chair in case we go over.)

Agenda:

- Pizza @ 6:30 PM and social hour.
- Short regional YCCC meeting.
- University Presentations.
- Q&A.

Cost: Donation suggested, ~\$5

RSVP: charles.morrison.n1rr@gmail.com
401-742-7240

Antenna farm tours will be available prior to pizza & social hour since sunset will be 6:00 PM. Tour of shack is not likely. Look for a summer event announcement in 2018.

Southcoast MiniMaker Fair

First, what is a Maker Faire? It's a gathering of fascinating, curious people, from engineers to artists to scientists to crafters, who enjoy learning and sharing what they can do.

NCRC goes to the Fair

Paul Fredette, K1YBE, organized a team of club members to present *Making Amateur Radio Real* at the South coast MiniMaker Fair in Fall River on Sunday, October 1st.



How many Presidents does it take...

The team rigged a dipole on the roof of the YMCA and dropped 120 feet of coax to the booth at ground level. Conditions weren't great, but John Mills, K1JSM, thrilled the crowd with an HF contact in Florida.



John, K1JSM, introduces ham radio

Clearly Makers are comfortable with Do-It-Yourself projects, so Paul introduced a pair of Super Pixies that had been built from kits to show an inexpensive way to get into Amateur Radio. The Pixies were coupled to dummy loads and used to demonstrate CW. Some booth visitors keyed their names with team members as control operators.



Pixie CW was a big hit

Just for fun, the team loaded up a Slinky on 40 meters. It took some diddling with an antenna analyzer to get the SWR down to 2 or so, but Mike Cullen, K1NPT, was rewarded with a booming Vienna station.

The YMCA staff was very enthusiastic about our participation and Paul expects that we may hear from some booth attendees as potential Technicians and perhaps club members.

Paul thanks everyone who helped with the setup, tear down, and sharing information and stories about Amateur Radio that made the booth a success. Thanks also to Dave Brown, KC1AAA, for photo documenting the event.

October Odds and Ends

VEs needed

How do you earn a ham license? Why, you study your buns off, practice, and then you go to a Volunteer Examiner session. But where do these sessions come from? For many years Jack Garforth, N1JK, has lead our VE team of ARRL certified VEs.



NCRC VE team in action

Although our VE sessions are often bolstered by VEs from other clubs, notably BVARC, Jack is concerned that our team is getting a bit lean.

Jack's regular VE sessions are held in Portsmouth at 9:00 AM on Saturday morning. If you are a General or Extra class licensee, consider becoming a VE. The duty is light and the reward of helping new hams become licensed is fulfilling. Contact Jack at:

k1ig@verizon.net

Winter Field Day is Coming

Paul Silversweig is seeking recruits for various aspects of this event. Last year we took first place nationally, so If you would like to be a part of this fabulous event, contact Paul at:

N1PSX@hollowsolids.com

Calling All Generals

In addition to WB4SON's superb TECH classes, there is a smaller group meeting at 6:00 PM at St. Lucy's Parish Hall Library (same place) to review subjects leading to the Extra Class license.

This is not class, but a discussion group that Paul Fredette, K1YBE, will lead to explore subjects that may be giving you difficulty. He will start with section E2 and will provide tutorial material as needed.

If interested please e-mail Paul with the 5 sub elements that interest you most, but you can attend without registering.

Some of this material overlaps the General exam and so might also be of interest to Technician class licensees. Contact Paul at:

k1ybe@yahoo.com

Beam for sale

Paul Wynn, KC1HEP, is managing the sale of Rick Brendlinger's (SK) tower with proceeds going to NCRC. The suggested price for the tower, rotator and antenna is \$750. Contact Paul at:

wynnpw1@yahoo.com

From the QSL Manager

Chuck Kesson, N1CKT, is seeing the collective W1SYE log inching up to the 9000 contact mark. He challenges members to identify who shall make that 9000th QSO. His bet is Willy, W1LY at JOTA.

Jamboree on the Air

Our annual scout event, *Jamboree on the Air*, is less than two weeks away. To provide a proper opportunity for scouts to complete their radio merit badge, we will need members who are willing to spend a few hours Saturday morning reviewing scouts as they present their requirement materials.

This is a straight-forward task—show me your stuff. At the moment we have five volunteers, but we really need eight and it would be prudent to have one or two extras for contingencies.

So giddy-yap and get in touch at:

editor@w1sye.org