

The

Modulator

Newsletter of the Newport County Radio Club, September 2015

Using the Club Call W1SYE

Thinking about an activation of your own? Usually special event activators, like the Bay Island guys, choose to use the club call, W1SYE—how do they do that? The first step is to request permission from the call Trustee, John Mills, K1JMS. Although easily done, this is a formal requirement and John would expect that the requesters include some who are experienced HF operators.

Before the Activation

Consider publicizing your activation. This puts you, your club, and Amateur Radio in general before the public. For example, the Bay Island Activations are listed in QST and on the club web site. Contact your club officers for help with this.

Are you activating an island, light, or other significant location for the first time? Check to see if it is part of one of the specialty programs—you could become a first activator! Again, your club officers can help with this.

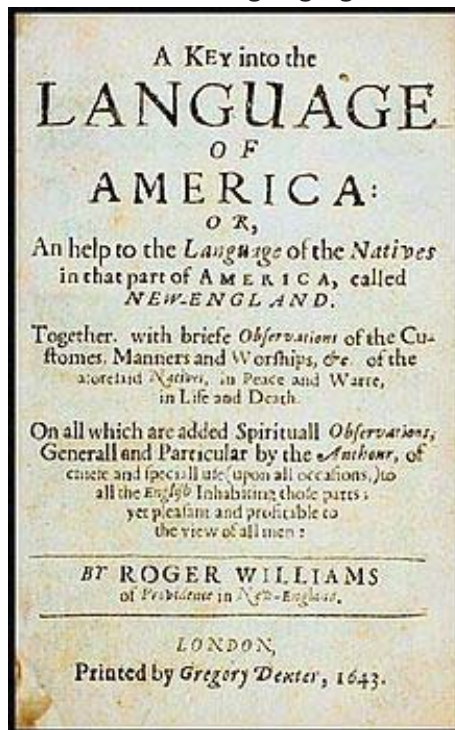
After the Activation

Use of the club call will generate requests for QSL cards. Download a log sheet template from the club web site, then review your completed log sheets for clarity so that the entries can be read by the QSL manager. Forward these to Jim Sammons, KA1ZOU.

Bay Island Activations—Despair Island

Roger Williams and the Miantonomi Gift

Roger Williams is a fascinating figure in the history of southern New England. He believed that the King had no right to grant title to Native American lands without their permission. Williams interacted extensively with the Narragansett and Wampanoag tribes as a missionary, friend, and trader. He learned their language and produced the first language guide.



In recognition of his friendship, Miantonomi, Chief Sachem of the Narragansetts, gave five bay islands to Williams. Devout Williams named the islands for human emotions. Early school children

learned their names with a ditty:

“Patience, Prudence, Hope, and Despair, little Hog Island right over there.”

The gift islands have been a continuing theme in our Bay Island activations.

Despair Island

The easy islands were the first to be activated. This August we tackled the trickiest—Despair island. At the time of the gift, it’s likely that there was more dry land that has since been lost to storm over wash.



This is all that remains at spring high tide. Fortunately the Bay was calm on August 1st and we didn’t get swept away.

US Islands RI-020S

Fortunately the hamming was great and we easily qualified Despair as RI-020S. Sound like an adventure to you? Get in touch—we’re looking at Gooseberry Island next!

Field Day in the Future

Field day is arguably the biggest and most inclusive event that NCRC operates. Together with the Christmas Party, these events are the only time that our membership comes together. Field Day is also a point of pride for NCRC. For a modest-sized club we consistently put out a BIG signal!

But will we continue to be as successful not only in earning points, but in attracting people to NCRC and ham radio?

Field Day is powered by volunteers, but one volunteer is noteworthy—Willy MacLean, W1LY. Willy has put forward huge amounts of time, energy, and sacrifice toward Field Day each year. In particular, Willy has provided the services of his employee, Hendricus, to do a lot of the heavy set up and break down work.

At the request of your president, your Executive Committee considered and agreed that:

1. Willy be paid \$500 as a one-time partial reimbursed for Hendricus' time.
2. A budget item be developed for future Field Days.

The first item, reimbursement, will be put before the membership for discussion and vote at the September meeting. The second item, budget, will be presented after the Executive Committee has developed a recommendation.

Please note that the above was brought forward by several members and that Willy did not take part in any of the discussions.

Fox Hunting Update

What's a Fox Hunt?

In case you are unfamiliar with fox hunting, it is the search for hidden low power transmitters. Not long ago you could buy kits from Ramsey and others to make these dedicated transmitters, but that apparently has dried up. However there is a company that makes a very versatile unit that is ideal for fox hunting. Five of our members have bought Fox-15 units for this purpose.



At our last meeting, two antennas, a plastic loop and a tape measure Yaggi were displayed. Willy, W1LY, suggested that we try them out and it was decided to meet at the end of the day at Beavertail State Park for that purpose.

On the table are the two antenna types. Rob, KB1ZZU, is holding one of the Fox-15s. In your hand

it would look like a toothbrush holder with a springy 8-inch whip at the top.

Hunting the Elusive Fox

This was to be a trial run, so the transmitters were placed much closer than would be in a real hunt. It was clear early on that the real challenge was the in-close direction finding. At fifty yards a fairly good sense of direction could be found by using your body as a signal shield. But in close, more sophisticated techniques are required.



Rob, KB1ZZU, works the loop

We are now looking into options for in-close work. In the mean time, we are locating sites that will allow the membership and guests to try this fun activity. We plan to offer a hunt to the Boy Scouts at JOTA in October.

Welcome aboard newest members

Evan Bowen, KC1EFE
Al Paolantonio, NN1U

I first met Evan at the Field Day GOTA tent this spring. Then Evan joined us for Dyer and Hope

Islands—a natural operator!

NN1U—Al Paolantonio... I have a personal card from my Volunteer Examiner #4491 congratulating me for becoming a Tech Plus dated 14 December 1991, signed—Al Paolantonio!

That Time of Year

Like all clubs, the engine of our club is volunteers. Although elections are several months away, the Nominating Committee is already beginning the task of preparing a slate of candidates for our various offices.

In the past year we have seen a healthy infusion of new members and that bodes well for new ideas to keep things fresh. Give that some thought; if you might like to serve in a club position, be in touch with a Nominating Committee member or one of your club officers.

QSL Transcribers

The task of responding to requests for QSL cards (See page 1) is fairly simple because activation records are computerized and completing cards is a matter of a few key clicks.

But there is a catch. Most W1SYE activators are unable to keep computer logs in the field and so record on paper log sheets. Transcribing these paper logs to the master computer log is tedious and time-consuming due to the large number of contacts.

We would like to try volunteer transcribers, a group of people who would be willing to receive an email with images of a page or two of contacts and a pre-formatted Excel worksheet to be transcribed and emailed back. Contact Jim Sammons, KA1ZOU, if you would like to become a volunteer transcriber.

Short Twilights and the Gray Line

The Equinox

As Earth orbits the sun, we experience seasons due to the tilt of our planet. Winter and its cold is caused by Earth being tilted away from the sun, summer because Earth is tilted toward the sun. But in spring and fall, there is a point when Earth's tilt is exactly sideways to the sun—the equinox.



Autumnal Equinox, sun to left

Note that the terminator, the line between night and day, lies along Earth's axis and divides the planet into two equal halves. This produces three effects:

- Day and night are equal in length—equinox—*equal night*.
- Sunrise and sunset occur at the same time at all points at the same longitude.
- The sun appears to rise straight up and set straight down.

The Gray Line and DX

Long distance communicators, DXers, pay particular attention to the gray line, a narrow band along the terminator. In this region the ionosphere is changing as the sun fades, producing various propa-

gation effects that can stimulate good DX conditions. So how is gray line propagation effected at the Equinoxes?

Location of the Gray Line

Consider the alignment of gray line at equinox. Assuming a propagation boost for your band, what stations might you expect to hear at twilight? South America is a good bet, but Europe not so much because it does not lie *along* the gray line. Sometimes, DXers will try to make contacts *across* the gray line when it lies midway between them and the desired station, earlier in this case.

The Gray Line Moves Fast

The Sun appears to move across the sky at about 1 degree every four minutes. Full darkness occurs when the Sun is 18 degrees below the horizon. Because the Sun appears to be heading straight up at sunrise and straight down at sunset, that works out to 72 minutes from sun's up to full night.

But civil twilight, what we think of as twilight, is one third of that—less than a half hour! In other words, compared to the sliding movement of the rising and setting sun in summer and winter, twilight is shortest at the equinoxes.

We're all aware that the days are rapidly getting shorter, but as we approach September 21st, check out how fast night falls and soon after, work the gray line.