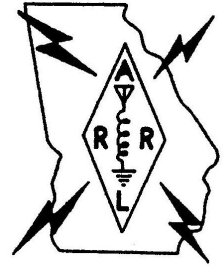




CENTRAL GEORGIA AMATEUR RADIO CLUB, INC.
P.O. Box 2585
Warner Robins, Georgia 31099
www.wa4ort.com



June 2011 Newsletter

Field Day 2011 June 25 & 26

This Friday afternoon, June 24, after 3:00 PM we will start setting up antennas and feed lines for this year's ARRL Field Day. The location this year will be the same as the past few years, Central Baptist Church pavilion at Russell Pkwy and Lake Joy Road. The contest actually starts around noon Saturday, June 25, and will continue through the night until noon Sunday, June 26. As in the past few years this is a joint activity between our CGARC and Middle Georgia Radio Assn (MGRA).

If you are available please come out and help. New Hams are especially encouraged to come out and help. You will get a great chance for a lot of hands-on experience and will learn a lot about getting on the air and plenty of time to operate real time.

We'll have free food Friday evening. On Saturday we will have a H-U-G-E cookout and covered dish supper at 6 PM at the site under the pavilion. If you can do so bring your favorite covered dish. Burgers, hot dogs, soft drinks, and water will be provided by the two clubs. If you can't bring a covered dish come on out anyway. Everyone is invited so please join us.

'PNP' – President's Note Pad

From Club President Dave Stewart, KN4DS

2011 has been a busy year so far, with 4 ham crams, Winter Field Day, our annual Heart of Georgia Hamfest and now ARRL Field Day is upon us! We're just over halfway through the year.

Upcoming events include our July meeting at Golden Corral as a kind of change of pace during the hot summertime, and we'll have a

cook-out and antenna building day on July 9, too. The Boy Scouts' Jamboree on the Air (JOTA) is coming up in the fall, and we'll have more events through the later summer, fall and into winter, too. Your ideas for club activities are encouraged! Tell us what events you'd like to see the club sponsor.

So far this year, we've seen a bit of growth in club membership. Over the last couple of years, we've had a big bump in membership, in part due to all the new hams in middle Georgia as a result of the ham crams. Attendance at the crams has been pretty low for the last 2 or 3 we've held, so those are on hold until September 10, 2011, when we'll do our next one in Montezuma, at the Macon County EOC. With the lower attendance has come lower numbers of new hams in our area.

The big news for this newsletter, though, is Field Day, coming up on Saturday and Sunday, June 25 and 26. Again this year, we're joining with MGRA to operate Field Day from Central Baptist Church in Warner Robins. We'll have our covered dish dinner around 6pm, so come on out and enjoy the fellowship with hamburgers and hot dogs and lots of great food from everyone.

During the weekend, we'll be shooting for at least 1000 contacts with stations around the country and world, operating solely on generator power. If you don't get to operate much on HF, there will be plenty of opportunity over the course of the weekend to make contacts with every state and many foreign countries (DX), too.

I look forward to seeing all of you this weekend, and at our next club meeting, July 14, 2011, at the Golden Corral in Centerville. 73!

New Club Members for 2011

Since the beginning of 2011 we have added quite a few new members. Here is the list of those joining the club this year.

Jason Bowers, KK4AGU, Bonaire
John Brown, K4SLY, Dacula
Sean McMahon, KB0VER, Warner Robins
Bob Minton, KJ4ZVP, Perry
Jim Rogers, KJ4VKX, Macon
Randall Sorrow, KJ4YKA, Warner Robins

Thanks to all our **6 new 2011 members** joining our faithful past year group we now have 74 total members.

A complete club roster is being attached along with the emailing of this Newsletter. Also, to get a complete updated list of club members anytime during the year you can go to our website at www.wa4ort.com, click on "Documents" tab (where this Newsletter is located), scroll down to "Club Documents" and open "CGARC Membership Roster.pdf". While you are on the website check out all the other neat things our webmaster Cliff (W4CDM) has added.

Four HamCram Classes in 2011

So far this year CGARC members have conducted or assisted in four HamCram classes to help a lot of folks get into Ham Radio or upgrade their license. Here is the complete list of 2011 HamCrams so far with the locations and number of students.

Date	Location	Students
1/15/2011	Houston Med Center	10
3/19/2011	Macon EOC	12
5/14/2011	Dublin	5
6/11/2011	Houston Med Center	4

Many thanks go out to some local Hams for their efforts. A few sat through and assisted all day in all of the classes. Many others came out and gave the students help, advice and needed encouragement. Many thanks go out to Dave (KN4DS) for heading up all the VE test sessions at the end of each one of the classes. There were many VE's that came in and helped administer the tests.

Since the beginning of our HamCrams in early 2009 we have had 160 Technician students study and 140 have passed their test(s). That's an 88% success rate. We've had 61 General students study and 45 have passed and upgraded. That's a 74% success rate. With 140 new licensed Technicians in a little over two years we have gotten tremendous growth in the Amateur Radio ranks. This will help guarantee the future of our great hobby. Many of the new Hams generated by all the sessions have chosen to become members of the CGARC club and that's a nice side benefit.

Squelch Tails

By Mike Besemer, WM4B

Greetings all,

Once again, I'm pleased to report that the repeater systems are in good shape with no known issues. With lightning season approaching, I've sprinkled the sites liberally with holy water, tied garlic to the antennas, and armed myself with a wooden stake and a silver bullet in hopes of staving off the offending electrical charges. But, please keep your fingers crossed too – just for good measure.

Of course, lightning isn't the only thing that rears its head this time of year – we also have to put up with the fact that the trees covered with leaves and the air is filled with moisture – both of which have an adverse impact our RF energy at VHF frequencies. I've noticed that there are more noisy spots within the repeater coverage areas, but rest assured the equipment is fine – it's just something that we experience every year around this time and, unfortunately, there's not much that can be done about it.

Another thing we experience about this time every year is Tropospheric ducting, or Tropo for short. Tropospheric ducting at VHF is relatively common during the spring and fall here in Georgia. It results from a change in the refractive index of the atmosphere at the boundary between air masses of different temperatures and humidities and can lead to

Squelch Tails - continues on page 3

Scquelch Tails - continued from page 2

some very interesting propagation when it occurs. Normally heard in the morning hours as the sun is rising, it can create a 'pipeline effect' in the atmosphere, allowing VHF signals to travel hundreds of miles. It's definitely fun to work a good Tropo opening!

This is probably a good time of year to think about refreshing your memory on the various repeater commands and operating modes. I won't go in to any of this in great depth here, but two of the special modes that all users really MUST be familiar with are WEATHER MODE (Courtesy Tone is a Morse 'W' – di dah dah) and POWER FAIL MODE (Courtesy Tone is a Morse 'P' – di dah dah dit). When in Weather Mode, periodic announcements will be made regarding the type of weather watch or warning that is active – this mode is only available on the 146.850 repeater. When in Power Fail Mode, please restrict your usage of the systems to the absolute minimum necessary, in order to help conserve battery power. It's also important for users become familiar with the other repeater operating modes and to be able to tell the difference between each mode. The codes for all of the repeater functions are listed on the CGARC website at <http://www.wa4ort.com/>. For an even more in-depth description of the various operating modes (and for the secret decoder ring that describes what the various courtesy tones are telling you) visit our legacy website at <http://members.cox.net/cgarc/>.

Speaking of websites, both repeaters are now streaming live audio onto the Internet. The live streams can be accessed from either of the club websites listed above.

Some users have commented on some extremely intermittent interference that has been heard on the 146.850 repeater. The interference sounds like somebody keying a radio several KHz off-frequency and is only present for a second or two. There is obviously some type of voice audio on the interference, but thus far it has been impossible to make out. If anybody is able to figure out what it is (and perhaps get a

recording of it) we might be able to remedy the problem. Luckily, the interference is only mildly annoying and has not caused any major disruption for our users.

Well, this should wrap up another edition of Scquelch Tales. If there are any issues with the systems or if you have questions or comments, please contact me on-the-air or via email at [wm4b\(at\)arrl\(dot\)net](mailto:wm4b(at)arrl(dot)net). Many thanks to Dan – KF8DB – who keeps a low-profile but contributes much to the maintenance of our systems.

As a last minute note, the 5K BTU A/C unit for the 146.85 repeater shack failed and was replaced at \$106.98 including tax.

Very 73, Mike – WM4B

Tailgater's Trading Corner

For Sale by Elaine, KB4KNE. Contact Bill (WR4BA) [478] 542-1620 (helping Elaine sell some of Sam's [WB4UHL-sk] equipment). Bird 43 500Watt 200-500mhz Wattmeter element for \$40.00.

For Sale by Mike WM4B: Yaesu FTM-350R 2m/70cm dual band radio which includes the internal FGPS-1 GPS and a Maxton USB programming cable and programming software from G4HFQ. Price \$465 by PayPal or \$450 cash, cashier's check, or money order. mwbesemer@cox.net.

You can also post your for sale or look for your wanted items on the club website at <http://tradenet.wa4ort.com>, thanks to our webmaster Cliff, W4CDM

You might be a Ham Operator if...

- ❖ ...you have at least 3 caps with your call sign on them.^(c)
- ❖ ...you smash your thumb while doing a project for your wife and the only thing you worry about is 'can I press my microphone PTT button'.^(c)
- ❖ ...you can't understand how some men can get so involved with a silly thing like golf.^(c)

From the rambling 'senior' mind of Bill, WR4BA
Please observe copyrighted^(c) material laws.

Hamfest 2011

By Tim Hardy, AF1G, Chairman

We had our third successful Heart of Georgia Hamfest at Byron Middle School last month. While attendance was down just slightly, based on number of tickets sold, I think everyone had a good time. I asked our vendors how they did and one said they did "OK" and another was so pleased with sales that he booked for next year before he left and asked for an additional table. I think if all things had been normal, our attendance would have been sharply up but several factors came into play this year. First: the economy. We've all heard the phrase at one time or another that "It's the economy, stupid." I think that's number one on the list. Many folks don't have the money to spend during these economic times. Second, fuel prices are up sharply and folks don't want to spend what they have on fuel for their vehicles. Third, through oversight on my part, we ended up in conflict with the Georgia SSB Picnic at Indian Springs. When we originally settled on Mother's Day weekend two years ago to hold the HOG Hamfest, we did it to de-conflict with the GA SSB Picnic. What we didn't realize at the time is that every seventh year Mother's Day falls on the first weekend of the month instead of the second, and this was one of those years.

I want to say a great big "Thank You!" to everyone who came out and helped make the HOG Hamfest happen. This event requires the support of lots of people to make it happen and all of you came through! In fact, I felt that set-up and clean-up went faster and smoother than either of the previous years. My hat's off to all of you. As I've come to expect, you all are professional in your response to a requirement, and most notably, you give without complaint. I'm proud to work with such a group of people! Bill Atkins, the CGARC Secretary/Treasurer, has reported on the income from the HOG Hamfest so I won't repeat it here. I'll just say that we stand well-funded for next year's event. Next year's Hamfest will be on Saturday, May 12, 2012.

A great big tip-of-the-hat also goes to Ms. Consuella Franklin and the AVID club at Byron Middle School for the great job they did providing food and refreshments for the HOG Hamfest. Ms. Franklin reported that they also did well, money-wise, in raising funds for their organization.

And finally, I have decided that it's time to pass the baton as Hamfest Chairman to someone else, having held the mantle for the past three years. If you are interested in taking on this task, please let me or Dave Stewart, KN4DS, club president, know.

Hamfest financial summary: There were 228 tickets sold this year versus 248 sold in 2010. He had a net gain of \$607.28 for this year.

Hamfest VE test summary: The Laurel VE session tested 20 and of those had 8 new licensees and/or upgrades.

Are you an ARRL Member?

Do you realize the benefits of ARRL membership? Are you aware of all the things ARRL does for Amateur Radio? Who do you think continues fighting to preserve our allocated frequency spectrum? Check all this out at <http://www.ARRL.org> and read about all the things our friends are doing for all of us and our hobby. If not an ARRL member just visit and click to join.



You might be a Ham Operator if...

- ❖ ...the neighborhood kids come to you to help them with their school science projects.^(c)
- ❖ ...you have a dog-eared HRO catalog in your bathroom.^(c)
- ❖ ...you spend \$12.50 for your wife some costume jewelry earrings at a Hamfest and \$362 for a used HF rig and figure everything's even.^(c)
- ❖ ...you play your FCC FRN number and call sign in the lottery.^(c)

From the rambling 'senior' mind of Bill, WR4BA
Please observe copyrighted^(c) material laws.

Tower Inspection and Safety

By Robert Tuck, AB4RT

For those of you who own a tower, now is a good time to inspect it. A little care and maintenance can prolong the life and insure the safety of the tower. Several key points to look for are as follows:

Guy Wires: Are the guy wires in good condition and properly tensioned? Over and under tensioning guy wires is a major cause of failure of radio towers. The proper tension is specified to be 10% of the strength of the guy itself. That works out to be 400 lbs for the standard 3/16" cable. The major compressive loading of a tower comes from the guy wires. A 90' tower weighs about 550lbs including the tower, antennas and rotor. Three sets of guy wires properly tensioned add 2500 lbs to the load. A 190' tower weighs 1000 lbs and 5 sets of guys add 4500 lbs to the loading. Tightening the guy wires "tight" can easily more than double the loading. If the tower has a slight bow, sway, or is leaning, then the guy wires are not properly adjusted.



Tower bow can be caused by missing and improper guy wire tension. Notice the bow caused by imbalance number of guys on this tower photo.

Have the guy wires been damaged? Is rust

present? Are the clamps tight? Have the turnbuckles been tightened all of the way in? Is there a safety loop around the turnbuckle?

Tower legs: The second major problem with towers is the condition of the first 4-5' of the legs. Is there any accumulated pine straw, leaves or dirt around the base? Material around the tower legs keeps water from draining and leads to rusting of the tower legs. Look at the tower legs. Are there any splits in the tubing? Splits occur because of improper installation. The legs are imbedded in concrete (they should protrude below the concrete) and water that condenses in the legs cannot drain out. The water then freezes, busting the leg open. Yes, freeze damage occurs in middle Georgia. A split leg is a serious problem. It reduces the strength of the leg tremendously. I will not climb a tower with a split leg without dealing with the split first. About the only way to deal with this problem (besides replacing the damaged section), is to take a piece of angle iron, preferably galvanized, about 4' long and several U-bolt clamps. Use this piece to "splint" the damaged part. A *small* 1/8" hole needs to be drilled into each leg near the concrete to drain the water and help prevent further water accumulation and internal rust damage. The split can be pulled closed and welded or otherwise sealed.



Rohn 25 - Split tower legs can be caused by improper water drainage and subsequent freezing. It's a sure-fire way of total failure.

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Another problem that I have come across from time to time is that some of the bolts holding the sections together come out. Use a pair of field glasses to look at the connecting nuts & bolts.

Antennas: Also do a visual on your antennas, rotor & wiring. Does it need some work?

Grounds: You do have a ground rod attached to your tower, don't you? Check the wire and the clamps.

Overhanging trees: Another thing to check is the growth of nearby trees. Are they interfering with your tower and beams? Some branches can be taken care of by using a pruning pole. Others may require the services of a tree company.

And with towers, I cannot stress safety enough.

Use a proper harness with attachment lanyards if you climb your tower. One lanyard is not enough. You need two. Keep one attached to the tower at all times. And don't climb alone. Have someone on the ground to be able to get help, if needed. The time that it takes to rescue someone from a tower in middle Georgia depends on where you live and if the fire department can get an aerial truck to the tower. To get a crew to climb the tower and bring you down will take longer. Yes, I have seen the videos of people climbing without safety gear (even up to 1800'). But ponder this: is your life worth more to you and your family than one slip of your foot?

And, as always, I look forward to a good climb. I don't mind coming out and lending a hand or equipment. I also can bring a chair and relax on the ground with something cool to drink while you climb!

CGARC Officers, Board of Directors and Committee Chairs

Dave Stewart, KN4DS President & VE Testing Coordinator	Scott Nolde, N4CI Board of Directors Member as Last Past-President	Mike Besemer, WM4B Repeaters* Control Operator Repeaters* Coordinator Repeaters* Trustee
Tim Hardy, AF1G Vice President	Mike Besemer, WM4B Board of Directors Member	Dan Haines, KF4DB Repeaters* Control Operator
Bill Atkins, WR4BA Secretary/Treasurer & Newsletter Editor	Leon Tompkins, WR4MT Board of Directors Member	Charles Armstrong, AE4VA WA4ORT License Trustee
Preston Morgan, WR4PM Club NET Coordinator	Terry Teal, KI4QFF Program Chairman & Emergency Coordinator	*Repeaters include both 146.85 & 145.11

If you have articles or items you would like to contribute to and have published in our next Newsletter please contact the editor. If you have suggestions, complaints, or if you have items for our "**Tailgater's Trading Corner**" for sale, buy, or trade send anything to: CGARC, P.O. Box 2585, Warner Robins, GA 31099 or email Bill at WR4BA@yahoo.com

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CGARC Secretary/Treasurer and Newsletter Editor
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