

ARC-SHORTS

MARCH 2014

Club Repeaters: 147.315 (PL 107.2), 444.6 (PL107.2), 224.82 (PL107.2), 53.13 (PL107.2) (UP for TESTING at undisclosed temporary location, 927.6 (-25Mhz, PL107.2), and 1282.600 (PL 107.2), DSTAR 145.38Mhz, 442.060, and 1284.600

NEXT CLUB MEETING

Our next meeting is **MARCH 14th, 2014** at 3600 Wheeler Ave. Just off Duke Street in Alexandria about 1 block west of Quaker Lane. We start the meeting at 7PM with our program and follow with a short business meeting.

This month's program KB3TCB, Keith who had a broadband network up and running using a link-sys router, a raspberry pi and a laptop. He was transmitting video and data throughout the room and said it has uses for ARES.

Checkout his webpage <http://www.remoteamateur.com> and also the presentation at <http://jcarcmo.org/broadband-ham-network-prese.pdf>

Dinner prior to the meeting will be at Atlantis (Bradlee shopping center of Rt. 7 just east of 395) with folks starting to gather about 5:30. Our guest speakers get a meal on the club.

February MEETING MINUTES

Club meeting opened @ 1900

2014 VAQP presentation – KI4OBT presenting

Upcoming events

10K run Sunday the 16th, GW parade on Monday the 17th

Treasurer/budget report – treasurer out of town for funeral

Secretary report – 20 members last month per sign-up sheet, I see 14 members tonight

Committee reports

- Training report – starts on March 4th
 - Trailer report – RC710 head for D71 and remote kit, cleanup progress
 - ARES – GW parade is annual test for this
 - Repeater/remote receivers – 6 m repeater up and running @ K4GOR's place, PS swap on 23 cm but fitment issues (10 A switching)
 - D-STAR – 2 additional members, 2nd generation software up, hoping to be beta tester for 3rd generation
 - Webmaster – media marketing program, NPR interest about recreating 1914 era transmissions; NOAA WX project; Puerto Rico trip by KI4D
- Hamfests
- Vienna on the 23rd, 3 tables

- Timonium on April 5th (Saturday)
- Frostfest report –
- 3 of 5 rooms reserved for Dayton (KA4GFY), carpooling arrangements

old business

- Previously discussed

New business

- Larry speaking about APRS – Android application and Bluetooth TNC connecting to a HT/mobile w/ voice control (MobileLinkD) waiting on Larry for a write-up

net controls

- 2/20 – KA4GFY
- 2/27 – W9TCE
- 3/6 – KI4D
- 3/13 – N4ASX

50/50 pot and winner - \$48 pot KK4RBB John (W9TCE holding onto club half of pot)

Ways and Means by W9TCE

Next meeting scheduled for March 14th with program on Voice of America (Tim) KT4MV

Meeting adjourned at 2040 by KJ4FUU

PRESIDENT'S CORNER

I hope everyone is surviving this winter. It's too cold to be outside, so if you have a radio inside, take advantage of the opportunity. This past weekend was the ARRL International DX Contest. I made 37 contacts with 31 multipliers, and picked up a new DX entity for me (the Aland Islands), so even though I was QRP, I think I did OK. I'm really hoping for warmer weather for the VA QSO Party this month (right after our March meeting, in fact).

I would really like to encourage our members to participate in the VA QSO Party. Our club sponsors two of the plaques that are awarded. A few reminders:

- 1.) When you submit your log, please put the Alexandria Radio Club in the field for Club Membership.
- 2.) Even if you only have a 2-meter handheld, you can still participate. Check out the rules and the suggested frequencies at the SPARC web site. I will have my 2-meter mobile radio at 5 watts on the suggested 2-meter frequency. Anyone within a couple of miles of me stands a chance of hearing me, or me hearing them. It's better if you use a mobile antenna or a J-pole instead of the rubber duck.
- 3.) Make a contact, submit a log, and you WILL get a certificate. This is a significant difference from just about every other radio contest that I know of.

There are hamfests coming up this Spring, the big one being the one in Dayton, OH. Contact Rich KA4GFY if you are interested to see if there are any tickets/carpool seats open. I think the Timonium Hamfest is coming up soon.

Stay safe, and have fun on the radio,

-- Tom Kirby KJ4FUU
President, Alexandria Radio Club

WASHINGTON'S BIRTHDAY PARADE and 10K RUN

Thanks to all who came out to support the George Washington's Birthday events. The weather was cold but we had a great showing and those whom we supported were very happy with our participation.

For the 10 K run. I confused an 8AM start as when folks should arrive and not the START of THE RACE. So I asked our participants to arrive at 7:45 AM. While I value sleep on weekends, should have moved this up to 7AM. Lesson for next year should be asked to participate. But, given the professionalism of our members we were able to get in place and had no problems this year.

The following supported the 10K run:

Rich – KA4GFY
Don – KI4D
Lukas – WA3UEA
Andy – KC9WER
Tom – KJ4FUU
Rick – N4ASX
Harry – N4CWP
John – KK4RBB
Rick – N4ASX
Lee - N4TCW

The race was over in 90 minutes and then back home to some warmth.

The George Washington's Birthday Parade was also a cold event as it has been for the last several years. This was the second time that the overhauled trailer had a chance to be used. Thanks to Harry, N4CWP for digging it out the day before!

We installed an RC-D710A head on the Kenwood V71A radio and were able to use one radio for packet and the other for APRS. We picked Lee N4TCW to be our lead for the parade and forced him to walk the parade (better then walking the plank!). Lee did double duty as he also worked with the marshals to get changes to the order of March. Given our problems with repeaters last year, we ran the operation on 146.415MHz SIMPLEX with no real problems, maybe better antennas next year between the reviewing stand and the start. Another issue was the short time between marshals getting their units arranged and the time we had to send the changes up to the reviewing stand. Rich, KA4GFY operated the packet station this year and made all the changes

and Harry, N4CWP, Ian, N8IK and Jack K5OTZ did a masterful job at collecting the inputs, editing the order of march and providing it to the reviewing stand folks.

The use of packet was a blast from the past. Previously we had used the D-Star digital data link, but had problems with the RF path. We did check out 1.2GHz voice and we had a good signal, but no time to set up the digital link. APRS which is now very popular is a PACKET mode, but the idea of keyboard to keyboard or sending files over packet has been ignored for a long time as the internet replaced the old bulletin boards. What is really missing is a good WINDOWS based terminal program, maybe someone will write one soon.

Thanks to the following who participated

Rich –KA4GFY

Tom – KJ4FUU

Lukas – WA3UEA

Andy – KC9WER

Lee – N4TCW

Harry – N4CWP

Jack – K5OTZ

Ian – N8IK

Don – KI4D

John – KK4RBB

Rick – N4ASX

The folks who did the real work were the ones who had to deal with the marshals and run around with them getting the changes in the cold. Many thanks

Cellphone-based APRS Solution

(Excerpts from material presented to ARC Feb 14, 2013 Meeting by Larry Walker, KK4CBL)

Have you ever wished for an inexpensive, portable APRS solution? After Ian, N8IK, mentioned one during his presentation of an emergency kit for communications, the solution he suggested seemed to merit further investigation. It consists of three parts: An Android application, a miniature TNC and a user-provided VHF transceiver. These are explained below as three steps. Step One: As the <http://aprsdroid.org/> website states: “APRSdroid is an Android application for Amateur Radio operators. It allows reporting your position to the APRS (Automatic Packet Reporting System) network, displaying of nearby amateur radio stations and the exchange of APRS messages.

The site further states “You can use APRSdroid to connect to the APRS network via different means:

- APRS-IS via Internet (WiFi or mobile data connection)
- AFSK (audio connection between your radio and the smartphone)
- Bluetooth-serial connection to a TNC”

This application may be either downloaded from the website above or obtained through the Google Play Store financially helping to support the author of the APRSdroid application. (I downloaded from the Google Play store).

Step Two: The TNC for this three-part solution may be obtained from the website <http://www.mobilinkd.com/>. It advertises that all you need is “Your radio. Your Android phone or tablet. APRSdroid. And a Mobilinkd TNC. Only \$49.95.” (They should also state that you need a cable for the TNC to transceiver). Advantages cited are as follows:

Why a Mobilinkd TNC?

- A better user interface for mobile APRS than any existing APRS radio.
- Low cost — much less expensive than existing purpose-built APRS gear.
- Battery powered and Bluetooth connected — just one cable.
- Excellent performance — tunable for optimum performance with your radio.
- Both ready to go with minimal configuration and yet completely hackable for those hams that have to know how their gear works and improve it.

Existing purpose-built APRS radios are very expensive and have a limited user interface. Building your own APRS system with other TNCs require an external GPS, a computer, power supply, and result in cables strewn everywhere to connect it all together. With the Mobilinkd TNC, just one cable connects the TNC to the radio.

The TNC is 11mm thick. Weighs less than 40 grams. And will run for more than 2 days on a single battery charge.

Note: The TNC ships with a Mini USB cable for charging/power. A red LED turns on when charging starts and off when complete.

Step Three: The radio. I elected to use a Kenwood TH-F6 HT that was already on hand. Many other solutions are possible and the Mobilinkd website sells cables for Alinco, Yaesu, Vertex, Baofeng, Kenwood and Wouxun. The cables cost from \$9.95 to \$12.95, depending on the radio involved.

Checkout and operation: Upon arrival the TNC was only partially charged as it had been accidentally turned on in shipment. Using the provided USB cable it was connected to a laptop and charged fully in less than two hours. A User’s manual is available from the Mobilinkd website. The manual explains how to set up both the APRSdroid parameters and the TNC. The developer suggests that when testing the TNC you should have another APRS/Packet AFSK 1200 baud radio to test with. I had a KPC TNC connected to an Icom 2200 which I use for packet work and it was just the ticket.

I paired the APRSdroid app with the TNC using Bluetooth and connected the extra-cost cable between the TNC and transceiver. Setup went quickly and the unit functioned perfectly the first time. All in all it seems a great low-cost solution and should provide a highly portable APRS station for use in ARES-related activities.

Field Day Planning

Next comes our Field Day in June, but it’s time to get inputs from those who participate. This is a great event which combines a contest, an ARES exercise and a great club event.

Jack K5OTZ was not able to get Armistead Booth Park this year but he did get a new park that looks good for us. Joseph Hensley Park which is across Eisenhower from the Animal Shelter and has good facilities. Word is that Amistead Booth is undergoing modernization and we would not have the whole park anyway.

There were lots of comments last year on Field Day suggesting that we could have a better operation.

Some suggestions are:

Divide the club into 5 set up or operating teams. The goal is to not have a ONE PERSON station. We still want maximum operation of all of our radios, but not to the point where we lose the fun and comradely.

Add a meal ticket so that we keep costs down and still provide meals. Many folks pointed out that we had some 'members' whom no-one knew that did not stop to operate but did enjoy the meals. In order to defray the costs we will have a cost for the meal ticket to help cover Lunch, Dinner and Breakfast.

Allow each team to establish some signup sheet for operating so that we make better use of each station. We are NOT suggesting folks just show up for a shift and leave, but so that everyone can get a chance to operate.

Changing to N3FPJ software for logging.

Do we want all of our operating stations under the pavilion or should we spread them out?

Dose the club trailer help or hurt when the space is confined and no-one knows if the station is operating or not?

For CW, the rule will be that the operator of the station can use any legal mode he or she chooses.

We want to maximize club participation. Jack K5OTZ and Rick N4ASX have been selected to co-chair this year and we need YOUR input. What would make Field Day better for YOU???? Jack is working on getting the same park as last year.

73 Rick
N4ASX – ARES EC.

Hamfests –

The next hamfest in the area is the Baltimore Amateur Radio Club's Greater Baltimore Hamboree on Saturday, April 5. The location is the Maryland State Fairgrounds in Timonium, MD, just outside Baltimore on I-83. It's a short drive from Alexandria. In addition, the Hamboree is also the location for the 2014 Maryland Emergency Preparedness Expo.

A week later on April 12, the 59th annual York Hamfest, takes place at the Porter's Community Fire Company in Spring Grove, PA. The York area is a couple hours north from Alexandria off I-83.

It's also not too early to start thinking about the Dayton Hamvention. This year's event takes place May 16, 17 and 18. I have 5 rooms reserved for this year and 3 are now full. As of early March, rooms are still available if needed. The cost per person should still be around \$200 plus whatever food and goodies you buy. If you are interested in going, let me know by late March so I can order the tickets. We also will most likely need people willing to drive. It works out to about 1200 miles out and back and the running around in Dayton. SUVs or other large vehicles work great for carrying back our bounty from the Hamvention.

Training -

Our latest class kicked off March 4 with 12 new students in attendance and 2 more promising they will be there the second week. It looks like a very enthusiastic group and we should be hearing them on the air by mid-May.

Contests -

March 15 & 16 – Virginia QSO Party. Exchange is a serial number and your county or city if located in VA. Others send a serial number and state.

March 16 – North American Sprint, SSB. Exchange is both calls, your name and state.

March 22 & 23 – Oklahoma QSO Party. Exchange is RST and state.

March 22 & 23 – Louisiana QSO Party. Exchange is RST and state.

March 29 & 30 – CQ WW WPX SSB Contest. Exchange is the RST and serial number.

April 5 & 6 – Mississippi QSO Party. Exchange is RST and state.

6 meter Repeater –

The Alexandria Radio Club's 6 meter repeater is now on the air from its permanent home. We were able to purchase a set of duplexers from a club near Durham, NC and combine both the transmitter and receiver into a single site. We were able to eliminate one rack of equipment all the linking equipment between the two sites. This should eliminate some of the issues we experienced before with footprint of the two sites and the audio not always in synch.

If you have 6 meter FM equipment, give it a try. We are interested in knowing how well it works.

73,
Rich, KA4GFY

Social Events

Monday Night Half Price Burgers – There is a group that gets together at Shooter McGee's (Duke and Paxton Streets) on Monday evenings at 6:15 PM. A good burger and soft drink runs about \$9.00.