

BRASSPOUNDER



April/May 2009

Greetings once again from MOBPT.

I must firstly apologise for the delays in BP that have happened since the beginning of 2009. The reliability of the internet here has been somewhat "Lacking" shall we say. Since it was installed at MOBPT the service has been intermittent, until it finally gave in and left me without any service at all. Suffice to say after many phone calls and firm exchanges with the provider, I have a resumed service, how long it will last who knows! (Hi).

However, onto business, it seems such a long time since I've been able to waffle on through the pages of BP to you all, as you can imagine, I've an absolute mountain of emails to go through. I will relax the time on logs to be sent for the ladder and other activities which will give me time to catch up with the backlog. So, if you do notice that your entry hasn't appeared in the latest table, send it to me and it'll be shown in the next edition of BP...

As they say, "normal service will be resumed as soon as possible"

I'll start with the April reports from members. firstly G4LHI

Hello Robert,

I attach my claim & very brief report for the April 2009 Activity Ladder. Very many thanks to all members and non members that helped with my April Ladder score of 30 points. Conditions seem to be improving a little on the bands, but still a lot of deep QSB, but I'm sure that before too long we may get back to some good QSO's again, these rubber stamp QSO's are not what we like in the Fists Club, but as condition are that is the best we can do and are lucky to get the info required for the logs. Sorry to be rather brief this month, but my time is limited at the moment for domestic reasons, look forward to May and better conditions and perhaps a little more free time. Hope some of our members took part in the EUCW QRS Party on Monday 27th April to Friday 1st May, unfortunately I could not make it this year.

73/88 to all

De Peter G4LHI # 2219

Thanks as ever Peter for finding time to participate and send in a report with your busy schedule, pass our regards to Jean, and wish her a speedy return to good health. I'm sure all who read BP will echo my words...

I had these comments from Bill, GOBAK with his April ladder entry, which I must confess had me smiling... I'm sure Bill wouldn't mind me sharing this with you...Read on...

Hello Robert

Please find attached my log for April. I nearly had a divorce on my hands when I dashed home from the In Laws BBQ at 6PM on the 12th. I started to call CQ and found the band very quiet. After about 15 minutes I realised I was on BST and not UTC. Realising my error I quickly dashed back to the In Laws only to find the XYL and Kids on their way home. You can imagine the atmosphere as I'm sure we have all been there before? After things had settled down and around 6.55PM, I dusted off the key ready to start. The radio has recovered but I am sure the Paddle still has a few problems.

Anyway Robert, I have still managed a few points for April with my 5 Watts and short end fed antenna. I appreciate all the effort the stations put in to hear my weak QRP signals. I am enjoying the Ladder a lot.

Many thanks

Bill GOBAK Fists 13262

Bill, I sympathise with you, I've been there, I guess many who read this have been there too! I'm wondering just how much you had to grovel and how much it cost you to get in the YL's and childrens good books once again! (Hi) (I've had to do that a few times in the past too!)

[A very interesting article and report from G3ZOD](#)

WARC Challenge

It's been nice to hear 30m staying open in the evenings and until the small hours. I've not been actively on the air much but have been closely monitoring propagation on 30m. I see it closes for a few hours overnight, although on one day recently it did stay open for over 40 hours without break. I also discovered that 12m is not quite as dead as I thought, although I've yet to make any contacts on it this year. As well as the propagation monitoring, I've also spent some time building and experimenting with a small loop antenna on 20m/30m/40m.

I wasn't able to take part in the EUCW QRS Party 2009 due to it coinciding with my wife having a week on leave. Okay, well, that's not the entire truth - I'm embarrassed to say that I completely forgot about it, but will try harder next year!

40m Bandplan Change

I wonder what other members make of the bandplan change starting in April on 40m where the CW segment's upper limit has been extended by 5kHz from 7.035 to 7.040?

My experience on the occasions I've listened is that nobody has taken any notice; 7.035 to 7.040 is still in heavy use by digital stations. I did manage one CW QSO in this region. I should point out that it was on a clear frequency between digital signals, but required the maximum filtering on my receiver. My QSO partner was struggling too and as a result gave me the slightly bizarre report of RST 399 !!

Ladder

12th April: 80m in the afternoon session was again disappointing. Peter G4LHI came to my rescue and was my only contact. I gave the evening session a try but with the lighter evenings, I think the propagation advantage is being lost now and I had a single contact with Kev G4CMZ and his 2 watts QRP.

26nd April: Peter G4LHI again was my only 80m contact and very much appreciated. Peter's signal has been dwindling with me as the year progresses, but he still puts out the strongest (actually, now the least weak) signal that I can hear from the South of England.

As 80m was going nowhere, I ventured up onto 40m and was lucky to come across another FISTS member Milan OK1KW calling CQ and had a contact with him and also with a non-member.

G4FON Loop Antenna

Fellow FISTS member Dave M0GGK and myself have had a go at building G4FON magnetic loop antennas - see <http://www.g4fon.net/MagLoopTwo.htm> . This is a very simple and inexpensive loop antenna for 40m, 30m and 20m made out 5 metres of RG58 coax and a few other bits and pieces. It's straightforward to make but took a bit more time than I expected.



The photograph shows the finished result minus some doweling used to hold the antenna in a diamond shape. Note that the coax is the antenna, not the feeder! It uses beehive trimmer capacitors for tuning and a small torroid for coupling. Despite breaking with the conventional wisdom for these type of antennas (the resistance must be kept extremely low, and consequently using switches and coax rather than solid copper tubing doesn't help), it undoubtedly does work. My normal indoor antenna is a doublet wound around various upstairs rooms and works reasonably well on 20m and 30m, but poorly when transmitting on 40m. On the S-meter, the G4FON loop gives signals around 3dB lower but picks up much less noise, so signals are more readable on the loop. Both Dave and myself found the loops very difficult to tune due to them being extremely sensitive to having hands near the tuning unit. Once tuned though, it's only a case of moving the two switches to change

bands. While the loop won't be replacing my indoor wire antenna, it is fun to play with and will be accompanying me on any trips away from home.

WSPR Propagation Monitoring

I'm sure rigs get bored when not in use, so I've found some interesting activities for mine! One of these is WSPR - Weak Signal Propagation Monitoring. This can give a fascinating insight into propagation, especially on 30m. In this system, stations effectively act as beacons running low power (typically between 5 watts and 100 milliwatts). The modulation is very slow multiple frequency shift keying, which allows digital processing such that signals can be received that are too weak to be detected by the human ear (similar idea to QRSS morse transmissions). Receiving stations can upload "spots" to a web site.

There are three different ways to participate in this:

- To view the results of who can hear who, all that is necessary is to visit this WSPRnet web page <http://wsprnet.org/drupal/wsprnet/spots> .
- To receive and optionally upload "spots" requires an audio connection from receiver to computer and the WSPR software from W1JT at <http://www.physics.princeton.edu/pulsar/K1JT/wspr.html>
- To transmit requires an audio connection from computer to transmitter and the WSPR software.

While using my simple G4FON small loop antenna on 30m, the results have been quite startling. The number of signals received gives an insight into when the band is open and where to. While the signals are, as the title suggests, weak, it's easy to get an idea of what contacts might be possible using CW. I discovered that 30m opens up between the USA and UK to a greater or lesser extent every evening. I was also surprised that transmitting WSPR using 2 watts has resulted in regular reports from the USA and occasionally from Brazil and Australia. As an example, the snapshot shows a few of the spots of stations that I heard and that heard me while I was writing this. As luck would have it, the band was open into both Australia and the USA this evening

Timestamp	Call	MHz	SNR	Drift	Grid	Pwr	Reporter	RGrid	km	az
2009-05-16 22:36	G3ZOD	10.140248	-27	0	IO83wj	2	K1JT	FN20qi	5445	286
2009-05-16 22:34	K1JT	10.140249	-8	0	FN20qi	5	G3ZOD	IO83wj	5445	49
2009-05-16 22:26	K1JT	10.140249	-16	0	FN20qi	5	G3ZOD	IO83wj	5445	49
2009-05-16 22:22	G3ZOD	10.140248	-27	0	IO83wj	2	K1JT	FN20qi	5445	286
2009-05-16 22:22	G3ZOD	10.140236	-23	0	IO83wj	2	W3CSW	FM19kd	5694	286
2009-05-16 22:18	K1JT	10.140249	-17	0	FN20qi	5	G3ZOD	IO83wj	5445	49
2009-05-16 22:14	G3ZOD	10.140249	-23	0	IO83wj	2	K1JT	FN20qi	5445	286
2009-05-16 22:14	G3ZOD	10.140236	-26	0	IO83wj	2	W3CSW	FM19kd	5694	286
2009-05-16 22:06	G3ZOD	10.140236	-27	0	IO83wj	2	W3CSW	FM19kd	5694	286
2009-05-16 21:56	G3ZOD	10.140235	-24	0	IO83wj	2	VK8CH	PH57	13884	60

As most activity takes place on 30m, on Wednesdays, the WSPRnet web site suggests two other bands and quite a lot of participants QSY to them for the day. I tried this with 15m and 12m. I mostly ignore 15m as I rarely ever hear any signals, but was surprised that on the day, from mid afternoon to late evening I was receiving European stations. The 12m day (I discovered afterwards) coincided with a sporadic E opening and the band stayed open into Europe from around 7:30UTC to the early hours of the following day. I can now see that what I think of as "dead" bands are frequently not dead at all; there's just a lack of CW stations on the air at the time I've tried listening.

For an interesting article on WSPR by G4ILO, see <http://www.g4ilo.com/wspr.html>

Also, Bill N2CQR talks about some great results he's been getting using WSPR (including 20 milliwatts across the Atlantic) in his recent SolderSmoke podcast at <http://www.soldersmoke.com/soldersmoke107.mp3>

73 de Graham (Gra) G3ZOD FISTS #8385

Thanks for a excellent report and article Graham... Very interesting reading...

And from Stan K4UK with his comments on the WARC during April..

Rob - M0BPT:

Quite a surprise to pick up two new grids in the last hour of the month. - Hi ! Had a nice chat with Lin, G4DZE and was surprised because we both were running low power - He at 30 Watts and me at 14 Watts.

Missed a solid week due to other commitments.

73, Stan - K4UK

Thanks for the info Stan, it shows that no matter how long is left in any activity, surprises come along at any time. Guess you were pleased that you worked into the last hour to grab some extra points..

From G4LHI with his comments on the May ladder..

Hello Robert,

I attach my, very small claim, and brief report, for the May Ladder. I wish to thank all those members & non members that helped with my May Ladder & a score of 27 points. The low score I am afraid is the result of poor conditions on the bands again, together with the fact that I could not devote quite as much time as usual owing to domestic reasons with Jean's poor health. Hope in the near future things will improve on both counts.

Hope the EUCW QRS Party went well, I was so disappointed that I could not be active for that event, I have always enjoyed that and meeting up with old friends.

73/88 to you all & look forward to the June Ladder

de Peter G4LHI # 2219

Thanks for taking time from your busy schedule to join in the May ladder Peter. As mentioned earlier, We all hope Jean makes a speedy recovery to good health...

And from Stan K4UK with his comments regarding the May WARC activity.

Rob - M0BPT:

As you can see I had conflicts during the beginning of the month and wasn't able to get on until the 17th. So only 3 new multipliers in May. Did work John, ZL1BYZ a couple times, but can't seem to get Ralph, ZL2AOH or Nigel, ZL2TX to hear me - Hi! Only 8 QSO's with FISTS members this month.

Guess June will be the last month for the 2009 WARC Band Challenge. I shall miss it. Now I'll need a new challenge to keep me active on the bands. I have been chasing the 2009 CW / Phone Award Log. To date I've exchanged Telephone Area Codes with 72 folks but in only 56 unique Area Codes. All but 5 of those QSO's were on the WARC's.

73, Stan - K4UK

Thanks for your comments Stan, Yes indeed, June will see the end of the WARC Challenge for the foreseeable future. Almost all of the participants have emailed to say that they'll miss the activity but, as the interest has been diminishing over the years, I'd decided to end it if no more interest was forthcoming... And I'd like it to go out on high point and be remembered with affection by all who participated in it...

Lets take a look at the results tables for the past two months...

Bear in mind, I have mentioned on the FISTS NG that owing to the problems with the internet at M0BPT I shall be relaxing the dates for sending logs for one month, so if you do not see your monthly score in the tables, send them to me at your earliest opportunity and the June BP will show the most up to date information...

OK lets look at the results tables.

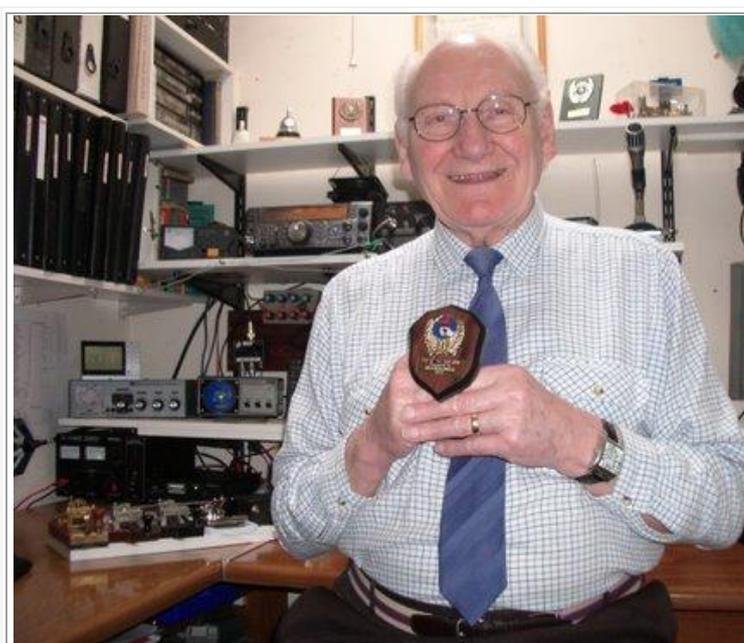
Firstly the Ladder table

LADDERTOTALS2009													
CALL	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	JUNE	JULY	AUG	SEPT	OCT	NOV	DECE	TOTALS
G4LHI	29	40	44	30	27								170
M5ABN	27	40	27	21	0								115
IK2RMZ	7	12	20	0	43								82
G4CMZ	0	21	26	22	5								74
G0BAK	6	8	16	14	12								56
M0DRK	10	22	15	0	8								55
2E0TEK	18	20	14	0	0								52
G3ZOD	8	12	11	7	7								45
OH7QR	15	4	5	5	12								41
G8XGQ	2	10	0	0	0								12

And the WARC Table

CALL	JAN	FEB	MAR	APR	MAY	TOTALS	MULTI	MASTER	PWR
K4UK	41	160	67	59	44	371	74	274	54QRO
IK2RMZ	37	50	37	77	109	310	25	77	50QRO
W4YE	41	48	15	12	0	116	12	13	92QRO
G3ZOD	100	59	10	16	5	190	5	9	50QRP
OH7QR	31	25	41	26	66	189	4	7	56QRO
G8XGQ	15	10	4	0	0	29	4	1	16QRO
W4FCR(C)	4	13	0	1	2	20	4	8	0QRO
DL1GBZ	0	0	0	2	0	2	0	2	0QRO

Before I go, here's a couple of images sent from G4LHI at my request with his "FIST of the year 2008" award. Thanks to Peter for sharing these with us.



Thats all from me till the next Brasspounder. As you'll have seen from the earlier comments regarding the internet problems, still not working correctly, If some of you have read the post MOC DL on the FISTS NG updating you of my problem, to answer a reply. Its not the ISP who's at fault, there is an "intermittent fault" at the exchange/lines that carry the ADSL signal, how they can say its intermittant when its total failure for days on end is beyond me! But I must wait for the BT and Cable and Wireless engineers to resolve the problem....
Enough of my tale of woe...

till next time, keep well, Keep pounding the Brass.

73. MOBPT.



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