



Squelch Tales



Newsletter from the Merrymeeting Amateur Radio Assoc. for March 2006

POPHAM COLONY

Special Event Station

Steve Kercel, AA4AK

For the past several meetings, we have been discussing the idea of having MARA run a Special Event station in 2007 in connection with the 400th Anniversary of the Popham Colony. In 1607, the Virginia Company established two colonies, one in Jamestown VA, and one in Northern Virginia (i.e., the modern day site of Phippsburg ME). The colonizers supposed that the Kennebec River was the “Northwest Passage” to the Orient, and the plan was to establish a fortified position at the mouth of the river and to make money by charging tolls to ships passing through the Kennebec on their way to China.

The plan did not work out. Since the Popham site is at the same latitude as the French Riviera, the colonists expected that the winters would be mild. The reality of winter in Maine was a bit of a rude awakening. However, the colonists had built a ship, the pinnace *Virginia*, out of local materials, and in February of 1608, they all got on the ship and high tailed it back to England before collecting their first toll.

The ship itself proved to be quite seaworthy, and subsequently made a number of trans-Atlantic voyages. It was the first English ship built in the Americas, and is regarded by many Mainers as the beginning of the New England shipbuilding tradition. In honor of the event, a local group, called “Maine’s First Ship” is building a full size

replica of *Virginia*, and anticipates launching the ship in the early Fall of 2007.

In connection with the event, we’re thinking of setting up a Special Event station. The idea is to get a special callsign, maybe N1P (Popham, Phippsburg?), and set up a temporary station on the Popham site. Operation would happen in the same time frame as the launch of “Maine’s First Ship.” The particulars remain to be worked out.

The most urgent particular is this: Who wants to take charge of the task? If nobody else wants to do it, I’d be quite happy to take it on. However, if there is another member of the club who is just itching to manage a Special Events station, far be it from me to stand in their way. Anyway, if someone is interested in taking charge of this activity, please notify our President, Brian Dorval, at or before the March 2006 MARA meeting.

NVIS Slides

Steve Kercel, AA4AK

Several members have expressed an interest in having copies of the slides from my presentation on Near Vertical Incidence Skywave (NVIS). Since the slides contain copyrighted materials from a variety of sources, it is not appropriate for me to post them on a Web site. However, if anyone wants a copy, please e-mail me at kercel1@suscom-maine.net, and I’ll be happy to e-mail you a .pdf file containing copies of the slides. Caution: Please use the e-mail address as given above, the GWI and ARRL aliases does not work correctly.

73, Steve

MINUTES OF MEETING, January 26th

Call to Order:

The January Meeting of the Merry Meeting Amateur Radio Association was called to order at 7:02 pm by our president Brian/AA1WI at Mid Coast Hospital, Brunswick, Maine.

Attendees:

MARA Members:

Brian/AA1WI	Abe/KC1W
Michele/KC7LIF	John/KC6TVF
Paul/KA5FPT	Steve/AA4AK
Lee/N1HOC	Allan/WA1SCS
Bill/N1KAT	Marjorie/KB1MRZ
Steve/KB1JTE	Lee/W1LWT
Al/N1MHC	Bob/N1VVF
Gay/N1XBN	Donnie/WD1F
Louise/KB1IEF	Devin Dauphin

Guests:

Bob/KB5SUD John/K2LOT
Ray Thombs Sr.

Treasurer's Report:

Bob/N1GWE could not make the meeting this month but does reports a current balance of: \$577.57.

Technical Committee:

Donnie/WD1F reports:

The 440 machine had recently lost audio, the problem was dirty pots and they were cleaned and the repeater is back on the air.

The 2 meter repeater continues to go through audio level adjustments.

And, the Packet node is off the air because it was interfering with the 2 meter repeater.

Activities:

Lee/N1HOC: Has been contacted by the committee for the MS walk, that date will be announced as soon as known.

Bath Heritage Days and Brunswick/Topsham Memorial Day Parade: Lee is contacting the organizers of the events to see if MARA's help is needed and dates/times for the events.

Sagadahoc ARES:

Allan/WA1SCS reports:

1. The Second Annual Emergency Communications Seminar will be held on Saturday, February 4th 2006 at the Mid Coast Chapter of the ARC. Bryce will present the Maine Emergency Communications Course and Steve/AA4AK will make a presentation on Near Vertical Incidence Sky-waves (aka, cloud warmer antennas).

2. Allan also encourages members to take the online courses from FEMA for ICS/NMIS.

3. Brian/AA1WI attended a Yankee Club meeting and had the opportunity to tour the local Maine Public Safety Communications Center.

MidCoast Chapter ARC:

Michele/KC7LIF: The ARC had a clean up day on Saturday January 21st and during the work day problems were encountered with the emergency generator starting - more on this in New Business. And a reminder for the upcoming Introduction to Disaster Operations course. Interested parties should contact the MidCoast ARC directly for more information.

Old Business:

1. Popham Colony 400th anniversary. Steve/AA4AK is willing to take on the planning for this special event if no one else wants to take it over. Steve will continue to lead the project and will accept help from any interested members. Hopefully we can get a special event station on the air with both HF and VHF.

2. Lee/W1LWT's balloon project. A practice launch will take place February 24th at 2:00pm from Camp Hinds. The launch will be designated REDD-1 and will have APRS and possible ATV. The package will be much smaller than other payloads, weighing in at just 1 ½ lbs. The purpose of this launch will be to test a battery warmer.

New Business:

Paul/KA5FPT: as a follow up to the ARC working day in January, Paul would like to know if MARA would be interested in purchasing a new battery for the electric start on the ARC emergency generator.

Discussion: MARA could take an active part in the generator maintenance, including monthly test starts and using the generator for Field Day to get a good test under load.

Motion: Paul/ KA5FPT to purchase required battery for the ARC generator, Seconded by Steve/KB1JTE. passed unanimously.

Paul/KA5FPT: Currently FCC has a petition for rule making to make changes to amateur band plans based on band width used and is accepting comments.

John/KC6TVF: The new Brunswick Fire House at Cooks Corner will have the local EOC built inside. This is the time to introduce ARES and possibly get 1 or 2 amateur antennas on the tower terminating in the EOC. Allan/WA1SCS and John will contact John/K1JJS to make contact with the Fire Chief to discuss possibilities.

A reminder was put forth that our PIC John/K1JJS hopes to have each Maine amateur club designate a PIO.

Brian/AA1WI: The next AMSAT launch will be Suit Sat and be in orbit on February 2nd, 2006.

Bill/N1KAT attended the New England Cabinet Meeting with Brian/AA1WI. Topics presented were:

- Upcoming program to celebrate the 100th anniversary of the 1st AM broadcast.
- BPL - Motorola has a equipment that significantly reduces the interference to amateur radio.
- Phil Young will be retiring from Bulletin Manager duties after 20 years. John, K1JJS to assume those duties

Lee/W1LWT was presented the Ham of The Year Award by MARA's president Brian/AA1WI.

Program:

Near Vertical Incidence Sky Wave (NVIS) Steve/AA4AK gave a great introduction to the topic with a series of very interesting slides. A presentation with more detail will be given during the 2nd Annual Emergency Communications Seminar on February 4th.

Next Meeting:

The next meeting of the Merrymeeting Amateur Radio Association will be February 23rd, 2006, 7:00pm, at the MidCoast Hospital, in Brunswick ME.

Adjournment:

Brian/AA1WI made a motion, seconded by Lee/N1HOC, to adjourn the meeting at 8:23.



EMCOMM 2006

a whopping success

Topsham, ME, February 4th: A group of sixteen motivated hams from the MARA and other communities in southern Maine arrived at the American Red Cross headquarters at 9 AM to attend the Maine Emergency Communications course sponsored by the Sagadahoc ARES, MARA, and the Mid Coast ARES net. Under the able tutelage of Bryce Rumery, K1GAX the very informative

courses got underway. Michele and John Briggs set-up a table full of munchies and beverages to keep the students fortified throughout the morning and early afternoon. After Bryce finished his instruction and everyone took the final quiz, In addition treat was provided the attendees. DR Steve Kercel, AA4AK gave an interesting talk on Near Vertical Incident Skywave (NVIS) as it relates to disaster communications and QRP communications in the lower HF spectrum (80 & 40 meters).

As a following note, all that attended and took the final test passed and were awarded certificates from Bryce Rumery, ARRL Maine EC. Well done all!

Great turnout for Winterfest 2006

A report by W1ZE

Chelsea, ME: If you had a ham buddy you haven't seen in a while most likely you would have ran across him at this years Winterfest event in Chelsea.

Saturday morning (Feb.11) I got my head off the pillow at 6:30, turned on the coffee pot, grabbed a quick shower, put on my flea market duds and headed up the frosty roads to Chelsea. Upon arrival at the Crystal Springs hall a few minutes after 8:00 I noted a parking lot full of cars and trucks, with antennas stuck out all over them. At that hour there was way more folks there than in previous years during peak attendance.

When I went in there were already a lot of folk's set-up with their ham treasures for sale. Three commercial vendors were there selling everything from coax plugs to HF transceivers and they seemed to be doing a brisk business.

Several events were scheduled throughout the morning. The first was a short talk by Ernie Parsons, W1RXH, President of East Coast Amateur Radio Service (ECARS) the largest on-air activity (net) that meets every day on 40-meters 7255 KHz. Ernie lives in Bowdoin and is a member to MARA.

There were meetings of the Good Sam RV ham radio group and a short meeting of the Augusta ham club.

Some nice door prizes (donated by Ham Radio Outlet) were given away. The only unfortunate thing about the event was that I was not one of the winners.

The Augusta Club presented Phil Young, W1JTH of Augusta their clubs Lifetime Achievement Award for his decades of service to the Ham Radio community here in Maine. Phil just retired as Maine's Bulletin Manager after a quarter century in that position (MARA's John, K1JJS has taken over that duty). Phil has held almost every office in the Augusta club and is still secretary/treasurer of the Pine Tree Chapter of the QCWA. Well done Phil!

Follow-on reports indicate an attendance figure in excess of 200 and maybe close to 300 folks cycling through the event. There were even a half dozen MARA members there. Our hats go off and Kudos to the Augusta club for an outstanding event. **Thanks for a fun Saturday in mid winter!**

**ARE YOU TRAINED,
EQUIPPED & READY**



Easy Match for Mobile

HF whip

By Bruce Randall

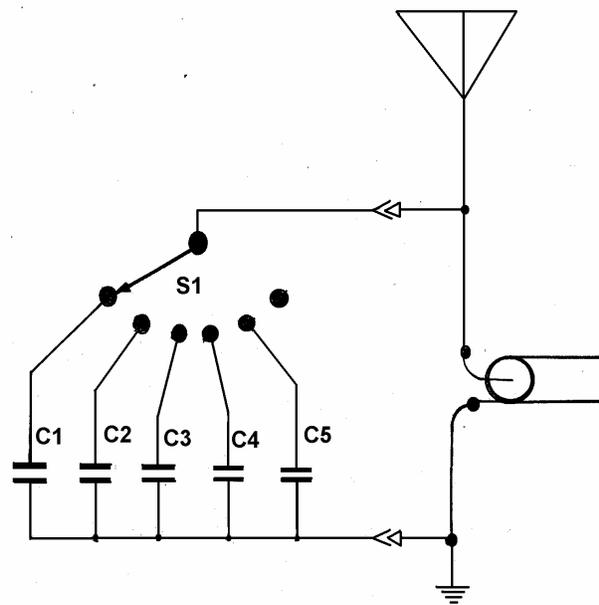
Several months ago Jim, N1IPA was installing his new Yeasu HF/VHF/UHF multi-mode transceiver in his van and asked me a few questions on the best way to match a HF antenna. I dug up the following short article I intended to put into *Squelch Tales* some day, so I guess now is the time.

HF mobile whips at the lower frequencies, 3.5 to 18 MHz may have a base impedance far less than the impedance of the 50-ohm coax transmission line feeding it. At 75-meters you may be looking at a base impedance of 2-ohms or less.

To compensate for this, some form of matching needs to be employed. The best way is, at the antenna base input add some additional inductance (L) or capacitance (C). Over the years I have used both methods but found that with fixed band antennas like Hustler or Hamstick, the added capacitance method works well.

Place a small single pole 4 to 6 throw rotary switch in a small plastic box at the base of the antenna so you can switch in various fixed value capacitors to get the SWR down to almost flat at resonance.

The rotary switch is installed as close to the base of the antenna as possible and configured as follows:

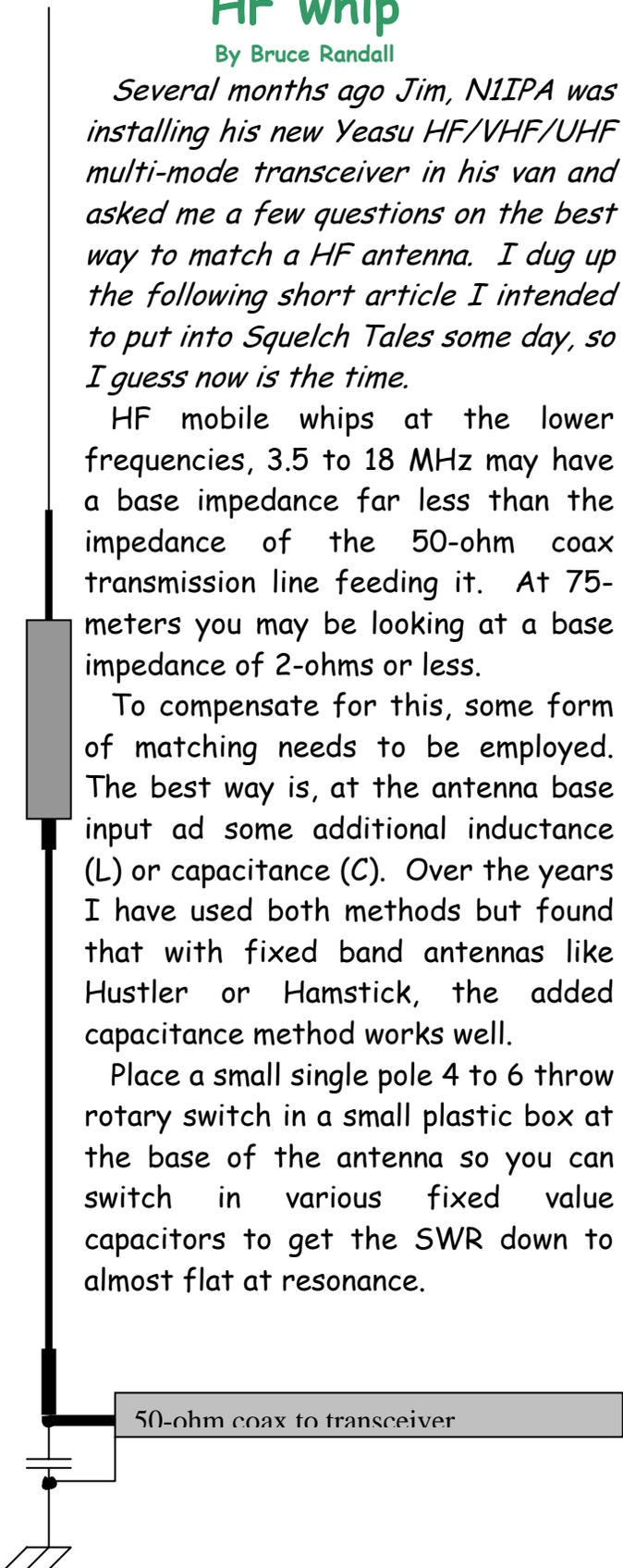


The following values for the various capacitors may help you get pretty close and help you get a good match and low SWR:

- 80/75/60 M = 1000pF (.001uF)
- 40 M = 470-500 pF
- 20 M = 170-220 pF
- 17 M = 170 pF or less
- 15/12/10 M = 80 pF or less

Depending on your antenna type and where installed on your vehicle, the bands above 18 MHz may not need a capacitor(s) at all. Note, with all loaded HF mobile antennas, keep the coil above the metal roof of the vehicle

73, W1ZE



News from Newington



SB QST @ ARL \$ARLB003

ARLB003 FCC noncommittal on "Morse code" proceeding

Just when the FCC will act on the "Morse code" proceeding, WT Docket 05-235, remains hazy. The Commission released a Notice of Proposed Rule Making and Order (NPRM&O) last July proposing to eliminate the Element 1 (5 WPM) Morse code requirement for all license classes. The Amateur Radio community filed more than 3800 comments on the proceeding, and additional comments continue to show up, even though the formal comment deadline was last fall. The next—and most-anticipated—step for the Commission is to formally adopt any revisions to its rules and conclude the proceeding with a Report and at spells out the changes and specifies their effective date.

"There really is no news," an FCC Wireless Telecommunications Bureau (WTB) staffer told ARRL this week on background. "We certainly hope to release WT Docket 05-235 sometime this year, but we're not making any predictions at this time." The WTB staffer indicated there would be no "big announcements" at the Dayton Hamvention FCC Forum either.

Beyond eliminating the Morse requirement, the FCC declined in its NPRM&O to go forward with any other suggested changes to Amateur Service licensing rules or operating privileges.

The proceeding began with 18 petitions for rule making--many just calling for the elimination of the Morse requirement but some asking for more far-reaching changes

in the Amateur Service rules. The various petitions attracted a total of some 6200 comments. The FCC subsequently consolidated the petitions--including one from the ARRL asking the FCC to establish a new entry-level license class and to retain the Morse requirement for Amateur Extra class applicants--into a single proceeding designated WT 05-235.

Worth noting is that the FCC did not propose in WT 05-235 to extend HF privileges to current Technician licensees who have not passed a Morse code examination. In its NPRM&O the FCC suggested that in a no-Morse-requirement regime, such "codeless Techs" would be able to gain HF access by taking the Element 3 General class written examination.

Before it releases an R&O on the Morse code proceeding, however, the WTB wants to wrap up action in another Amateur Radio-related docket--the "Phone Band Expansion" (or "Omnibus") NPRM in WT Docket 04-140, released last April 15. A dozen petitions for rulemaking, some dating back to 2001, were consolidated in the Omnibus proceeding. In that NPRM, the Commission proposed to go along with the ARRL's Novice re-farming plan aimed at reallocating the current Novice/Tech Plus sub-bands to expand portions of the 80, 40 and 15 meter phone bands. The FCC also agreed with an ARRL proposal to extend privileges in the current General CW-only HF sub-bands to present Novice and Tech Plus licensees (or Technicians with Element 1 credit).

Any FCC decision to eliminate the 5 WPM Morse code requirement for HF access would have no impact on either the current HF CW-only sub-bands or on the CW privileges of Amateur Radio licensees. The Morse code proceeding neither put forward nor recommended any changes in CW allocations or privileges.

