

DIGICOM

The Newsletter of MAXPAK,
The Midlands AX25 Packet Radio
User Group

April / May 2009



DC92

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Autumn / Winter DIARY.

Monthly Member's Meetings to be held at the pub
"One Man and his Dog", Turnberry Road,
Bloxwich WS3 3UB, just around the corner from
the old qth, off the A34 ([MAP](#))

All meetings commence about 19.45 hrs in the
Lounge Bar.

11th May Natter Evening
(Note - see chairman's jottings)

8th June Natter Evening

6th July Natter Evening

We hope you may be able to pay us a visit to one of
our meetings.

CHAIRMAN'S JOTTINGS

Greetings and a Happy Easter to you all!

Another AGM has come and gone and as you will see from the minutes elsewhere in this publication, the Committee were block voted back into office with unanimous support from all members present.

On behalf of the Committee, I would like to thank them for all their work and support over the last year and also to thank all members who attended for supporting our re-election this year.

The MaxPak Local Area RF Network continues to evolve. Since the last Digicom, I am delighted to report that the split frequency 70cms link between BLOX and DUDLEY nodes is now up and running (thanks to Miles for his work here) and also we now have a dedicated 9K6 Link from DUDLEY to CORLEY, the main Coventry node operated by Roger G3ZFR which links directly into the Coventry BBS, GB7COV.

GB7WAL/GB7WS, operated by our committee member David, G7BNK now has a 2m 9K6 User Port on 144.975 and we hope to open a 144.975 9K6 User port on the DUDLEY node in the very near future. Some work needs to be done on the radio which will operate on the DUDLEY node in order to make it work at its best on 9K6 as tests have revealed some teething problems with trying to link with GB7WS and GB7DBY. I hope to complete this soon so that installation may take place at DUDLEY node.

In addition, since the last Digicom, we have converted the whole of the GB7WS node to **BPQ408a** operation using Multidrop KISS TNC's on all ports.

This has enabled its sysop, David to easily monitor traffic on all ports as well as making routing through GB7WS much more efficient.

Finally, if you have not already done so, please take time to browse the new MaxPak Website.

Special thanks due to the Webmasters Dave M0DCM and Miles G4GSB for all their work.

One final thing, the next club meeting falls on May Day bank holiday, so we will be meeting the week after, May 11th.

In the meantime, 73 until the next issue.

Chris Roberts G0CNG, Chairman 2009-10.

www.maxpak.org.uk

Node/BBS News

Correct April 6th 2009

GB7MAX /BLOX Node (Bloxwich)

The BBS/Node, using WinFBB/ XROUTER continues to perform satisfactorily. Direct Telnet access to the BBS on Port 4001 and to the BLOX node on Port 2323 is available.

Contact Chris, G0CNG, sysop, for further information or access password authorisation.

Current R.F. user access to both BLOX and GB7MAX is as follows:

2m 144.9375 MHz 1K2
70cm 432.675 MHz 1K2

GB7WAL (Walsall)

This BBS continues to perform satisfactorily. (See chairman's jottings) User ports as follows:

2m 144.850 1K2
2m 144.975 9K6
70cm 432.650 1K2

DUDLEY GB7DN (XROUTER) NODE (Dudley)

Sited at the QTH of our Secretary, G4GSB in Dudley. User access is as follows:

2 m 144.850 MHz 1k2
2 m 144.975 MHz 9k6 (see chairman's jottings)
70 cm 432.675 MHz 1k2

GB7PMB and SALOP G7BUG-8 NODE (Newport, Shropshire)

Sited at the QTH of Tony, G7BUG.

Good signal reports have been received around Newport and Wellington areas.

Direct Telnet access available, contact G0CNG.

R.F. user access as follows:

2m 144.950 1K2

Minutes of AGM Held on Monday 6th April 2009

In attendance were G7BNK, G6KUI, G0CNG, G0KFS, G4MTG, M0DCM, G3TIN, G7III, G7VBJ and G1CLL. The AGM opened at 20:10

1. **Minutes of the last AGM** The minutes of the last AGM had been published in Digicom, which had been sent to all members. They were also available on the club website and copies were available to all attendees.
 2. **Matters Arising There** were no matters arising from the minutes, which were proposed as a true record by BNK, seconded by DCM and accepted by all.
 3. **Chairman's Report** CNG said that the club had had an eventful year with the closure of the WV node based at the Mander Centre in Wolverhampton. The equipment had been re-distributed between the BLOX, WS and DN nodes in a bid to continue providing good RF links for all our users. He also requested that everyone look at the pictures on the website showing the old WV cabinet now running the DN node, in the loft of GSB's QTH. As for rallies, we only attended the one in Telford, due to the closure of the Aldridge and Elvaston rallies. CNG finished off by thanking the committee for all their hard work in the running of MaxPak. The chairman's report was proposed by BNK and seconded by KFS.
 4. **Presentation of the Annual Accounts.** KFS presented the accounts which showed that we had a total income of £240 and expenses of £469.73, leaving a deficit of £229.73. GSB informed everyone that some of the income had come from a generous donation of equipment from G0CER, which we had sold at the Telford rally. The main expenditure was equipment such as power supplies and aerials, as well as the site fees for the (now) defunct WV node. We also spent £36.40 on the Xmas social and £38.00 on the packet conference. The accounts were proposed by KUI and seconded by TIN and accepted by all.
 5. **Subscriptions for the coming year.** CNG stated that he thought that we leave the present subscription level as it is, £10 for under 60's and £5 for over 60's. MTG asked if we could make over 70's life members. CNG said that the committee would look into it and discuss it at the next committee meeting. The motion was proposed by DCM and seconded by KUI and accepted by all.
 6. To 9 **Election of committee.** GSB had read in past AGM minutes that the committee could be "block" voted back on if the committee and all in attendance were in favour. The committee all agreed to continue serving their posts. The elections were proposed by KUI, seconded by TIN and accepted by all.
10. **AOB.** None

The meeting was closed by CNG at 20:30 who thanked everyone for attending.

Minutes prepared by G4GSB

APRS Article Follow Up

The following is part of an e-mail I received from Iain G7III and is kindly reproduced with his permission. Both replies to my original article have encouraged me to take another look at APRS. I will let you know the results in due course. Miles G4GSB

Hi Miles,

I was very interested to read your article in Digicom 90, and while not a MaxPak member, thought I would reply with at least what I perceive APRS to be, or useful for.

First of all, I'm sorry to hear that you didn't have such a good experience. The UK is currently changing from using exclusively TRACEn-N to using a compromise setting that still permits TRACEn-N (but with potentially limited traceability), and WIDEn-N packets such as used by the Newn-N paradigm, but without the path limitations imposed by the pure Newn-N paradigm.

The amount of stations you heard via digi's may well have been reduced because of this, depending on when you tried.

I also suspect that may have contributed to your trouble getting messages through, although that is more likely to be AOS (Absent Operator Syndrome)

Additionally, there are gaps in the network, especially in the Midlands - esp. from kind of South Birmingham across to Northampton, and then up towards Sheffield.

I'm hoping to help fill this gap to at least some extent when I relocate to Coventry in the next few months.

It is true, that unfortunately some people do transmit, and leave it on, and don't always receive. Very poor operating habit I know, but I don't blame APRS for that :)

I saw you were using UI-View. While very popular, I personally feel it is not always the best tool for the job, and is kind of showing its age. On the Windows platform, you might want to also give AGW Tracker a try.

So, having dealt with all that, what is APRS good for? Well, like any tool, it's how it's used. It was described by its inventor as a "local

tactical awareness tool" or something similar.

Rather grandiose words those, but here are some ideas that it can be used for:

1) Local Amateur Radio Resources:

APRS has the facility to add objects as well as your own station, so, you could imagine a map showing:

a) All local VHF/UHF Repeaters, **with** their call signs, and frequencies (something I'm planning on doing once I get up there)

This is very useful when travelling, no need to look up what repeaters

are where and remember which channel they are on.

b) AX25 and AXIP nodes, with frequency and status info (again something I'd like to do). I might for example put out an object for GB3COV with a comment saying "OPERATIONAL" or "NOT HEARD in x DAYS" if it was off air

c) Local Radio clubs meeting place and time, as well as regular "nets"

d) Other special events as appropriate

e) WX. A number of folks like to transmit weather info from their weather stations. Can, and has been used by folks to see weather coming in that might affect their radio operating

One thing I'm thinking of doing is having a lightning detector, and then if/when it detects lightning within x miles, putting that object out on APRS. Other possibilities include marking heavy rain, heavy snow (ha ha that'd fill your map right about now wouldn't it?) etc (*email received during heavy snows at the beginning of February, g4gsb*)

f) Satellite tracking. Adding an object for ISS when within range so that other users know that it's within range is another potential use. Correctly formatting the object means that a D710 user can switch to working the ISS (for example) very easily.

Ideally you get the digipeaters to send out these objects (with appropriate path lengths, so as to cover the correct area for the object - a Coventry Repeater on UHF such as GB3CV doesn't need to show up on a map in Dorset for goodness sakes, but would probably want to be seen in Birmingham, Northampton, Banbury etc so that folks heading towards Coventry knew it was there to be used.

2) RAYNET

I understand that a number of RAYNET groups have found it useful as a tactical tool. You could imagine each checkpoint on a scouts hike on the map, and an object for each team for example. Additionally things like Search and Rescue vehicles, Net Control etc can be added.

One look at the map and you can see an overview of the entire operation/exercise/event. Objects have a Time/Date associated with them, so you can tell that team x was at location y at time z.

3) PROPERGATION and COVERAGE

it's -very- easy to tell on the map when a lift is on, 2m (lights up something crazy). Obviously, as you discovered it can be used to show an idea of what coverage you get.

See <http://hal.g7iii.net/screenshots/APRS-Demo/tn/2M-1D-Lift.png.html>

as an example of lift conditions on 2M

All of the above, of course, depends on people putting the data on the map in the first place, (and keeping it up to date for that matter) All the maps referenced above were generated by my own scripts,

that I'm currently in the process of resurrecting more efficiently, so hopefully live data will return soon...Or when I move up to Coventry...

Now...HF...There's another ball of wax. Esp. on 30M. Curious band that I find. There are probably 4 or 5 stations here in the UK that I have often seen in the past (I currently have a horrendous RFI issue that is hampering things) However, I very rarely saw them direct. Often a HB9 station or Russian station would show up, and digi them (I'm guessing they were going over the top of me) I must admit, recently I have been getting similar results to you (lots of Italian stations). I guess the band isn't quite open to Switzerland, Austria etc at the moment as it used to be.

Before the current interference issue, I also often heard a station in Russia. See:

<http://hal.g7iii.net/screenshots/tn/xastir-30m-21-Apr-07.png.html>
<http://hal.g7iii.net/screenshots/tn/xastir-30m.png.html>

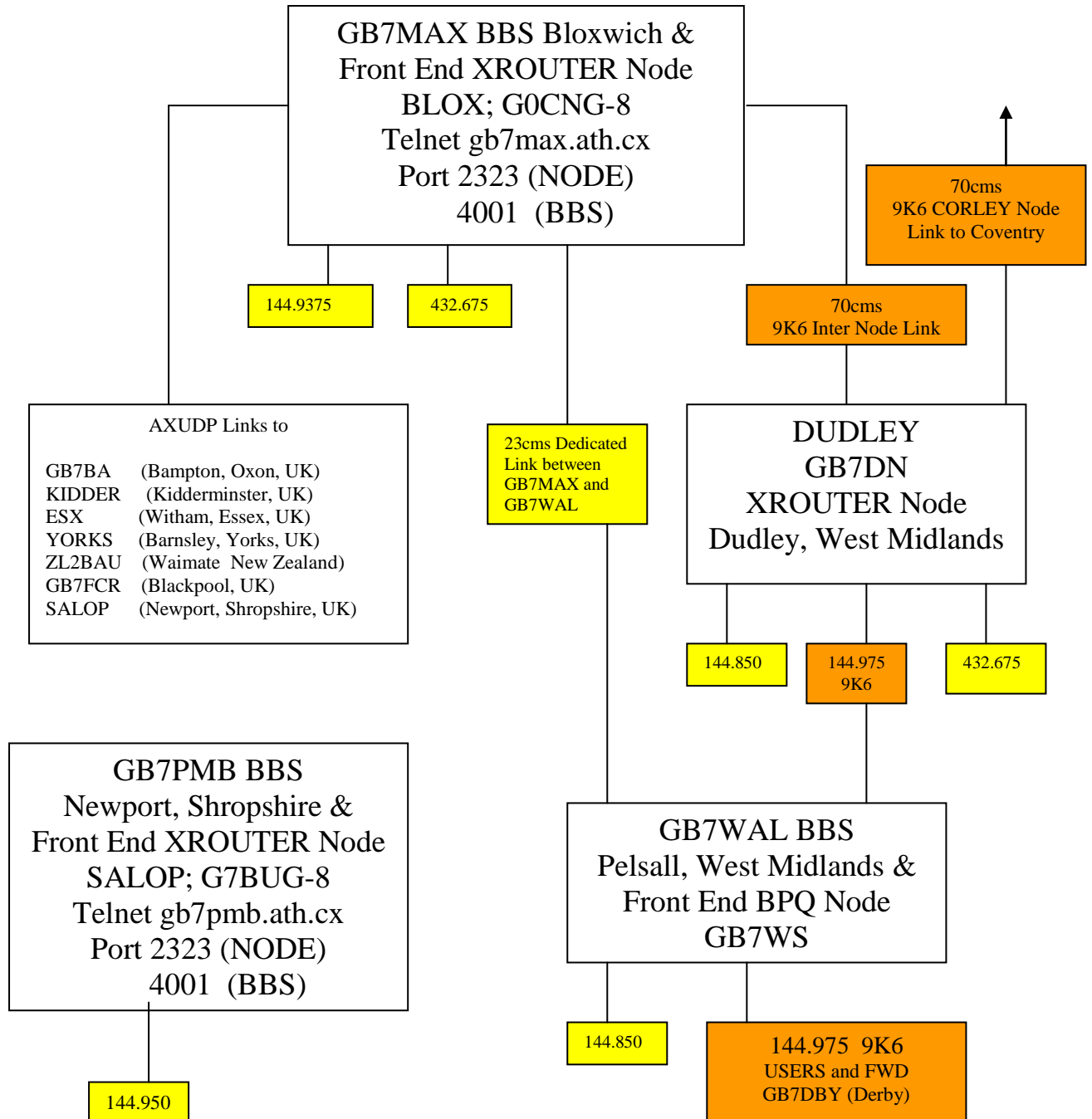
the white and blue lines show the paths taken by the packets. One other reason that you may not see many stations "local" to you is that often folks don't add the digi call to the packet path on HF, in order to keep the packet length as short as possible, with it only being 300 baud.

Oh and your suggested HF packet frequency for 10 metres is actually also used by APRS users on 10, but I don't think I ever saw the band open particularly well. With the enlargement of 40 metres due soon, I'd love to see a frequency allocated there for APRS use. I think a UK wide HF APRS could be a great asset. 30 Meters is interesting, but we do suffer from it being a daylight band, and signals going over the top of us. anyway, hope that brings at least one man's opinion on what APRS is, and what it's useful for. It is true there are setup issues out there with folks not always having the "best" settings for the UK. We do tend to need slightly longer paths than the US.

73s Iain

The MaxPak Local Area AX25 Network; April 2009

1K2 user ports in yellow, 9K6 users ports in brown



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