

# The National Radio Centre

**A YEAR ON.** After opening its doors to the public on 17 February last year, the RSGB's National Radio Centre has seen a rising number of visitors through the door – over 1,200 during the month of August and only slightly fewer in September – enjoyed an official opening by Ed Vaizey, MP and received many favourable comments from visitors. The radio station, GB3RS, has made contact with some memorable people and the volunteers have kept the building open to the public every Thursday, Saturday and Sunday even over the Christmas holidays as well as Bank Holidays. Following a visit to the NRC, at least two people have found an interest in amateur radio and then gone on to take their Foundation licence. Several other 'lapsed amateurs' have re-kindled their interest in the hobby and have reactivated their licence too.

**INTERESTING CONTACTS.** Whilst the main aim of GB3RS station is to demonstrate amateur radio to the visiting public and to get them to try their hand at making a contact, that doesn't mean to say that they don't get called by some interesting stations around the world. Earlier in the year, Peter, G4XEX was operating GB3RS and had a conversation with Richard Lineruth, SM2TOS. He said it was very fortuitous to work the station that day as he had just finished an interview with an 86 year old man who was involved in passing messages from Sweden and Norway to the OSS and SOE during WWII. Richard is involved with a group who are searching for the old bunkers that were built by the Swedish/Norwegian resistance during WWII and were supplied with equipment by the SOE and OSS. This equipment was parachuted in by British and American Air Force. Apparently these bunkers/secret bases are still there on the Norway/Sweden borders and, it is believed, have remained untouched since the end of the war. It is possible that much of the radio equipment may still be sealed inside them. Richard and the group will be searching some of them out in the summer of 2013, any other time of year is not feasible that far north and that high up; they will also be setting up some amateur radio stations with the special call SE2PALS. It is hoped that a sked can be arranged between them and GB3RS.

On 27 December last year, the station was contacted by Bharathi Prasad, VU2RBI. Bharathi, VU2RBI is probably one of the most well-known ladies in amateur radio. She was part of the Andaman DXpedition team that, following the earthquake and tsunami that devastated South Asia, swiftly shifted from



Some of the interactive displays.

the role of DXpedition into an emergency communication link with India's mainland. For this activity she won the ARRL's 2005 International Humanitarian Award. In 2010 she was invited to London to take part in the Commonwealth Observance Day, where she was presented to her Majesty, The Queen and she told her story to *RadCom* (June 2010).

**NEW RECRUITS.** On a visit to the NRC, Michael was very interested in the various exhibits and also took some time to chat to the operators of GB3RS. He is now the proud owner of the callsign M6EIO and is the first person we know who has actually got their licence after being inspired by a visit to Bletchley and the National Radio Centre.

Nathaniel is a volunteer at Bletchley Park and can often be seen directing traffic around the site. He has been a regular visitor to the NRC and often comes in to listen to the radio or have a go on it as a guest. Recently, instead of his normal, "Is there any chance I can talk to anyone", he said "I passed my Foundation licence two days ago, can I talk to someone on the radio?". A seat was provided and a very nervous Nathaniel sat down ready to make his first ever QSO as a radio amateur rather than a 'guest'. It was not easy; as is usual in these circumstances, everything conspired against the operators to make it difficult. The bands were full of DXpeditions working split frequency, contesters calling '59 QRZ' and others in long involved contacts. Eventually an American station calling CQ was heard and Nat got his first ever QSO – on his first QSO he discovered that spelling Nathaniel out phonetically is not practical and using a shortened version of his name, Nat, was much simpler. Having completed his first 'real' QSO, he went back to the car park to direct yet more traffic. Later that day he returned ready to make some more contacts, although it was a bit of a baptism of fire for him as when GB3RS appears on air and the bands are wide open to the USA it does tend to attract a bit of a pile up, but Nat handled it very well. The other operators did suggest to him that he told stations he worked that he had just obtained his licence and this lead to some 'gentler' contacts, making it easier

for him. These new licensees really inspire the hard working volunteers and, with visitor numbers climbing, who knows how many new licensees 2013 will bring?

**NEW EQUIPMENT.** Towards the end of the year, Yaesu UK kindly loaned the National Radio Centre some new equipment. The GB3RS operators are now enjoying the FT-DX5000 as well as the SM-500 station monitor and MD-200 desk mic. The operators find headsets, in particular, makes demonstrating the workings of amateur radio to the public much easier, giving guest operators the chance to use either a headset or desk mic, depending on which they find easiest to use.

**OVERSEAS VISITORS.** Throughout the year, the NRC has seen visitors from many countries. Some, like Dave Arnold, W8DXX and his wife have made time in their holiday schedule to visit the NRC, others discover the NRC as part of a Bletchley Park visit. The visitor book shows comments from New Zealand, Malaysia, The Netherlands, Belgium, USA, Australia, France, Ireland, Canada, Japan, West Indies, Denmark, Norway, Spain, Hungary and Germany amongst others as well as all over the UK. With several events planned at the NRC during the RSGB Centenary, there's never been a better time to plan your visit. The Centre is open on Thursdays, Saturdays and Sundays throughout the year and there are plans to take part in several events such as World Amateur Radio Day and Museums on the Air in 2013. The RSGB would like to thank the volunteers who turn out week after week to man the Centre and operate GB3RS, without their dedication the Centre would not be as effective. If you would like to get involved with the work at the National Radio Centre, please contact Carlos Eavis, GOAKI, by email to carlos.eavis@rsgb.org.uk.

## VISITOR BOOK COMMENTS

- A wonderful and an uplifting visit – **G7GZC**
- A great introduction to amateur radio – **G30OU**
- An excellent resource to promote amateur radio. Good luck with the Centre – **GOMLO**
- Loved it – **P Anderson, New Zealand**
- Nice exhibition, really cool to see and talk with the guys – **B de Heij, Netherlands**
- I love the Morse code – **Megan, Bristol**
- First time I've seen this in operation, interesting – **P Grey**
- An excellent educational story, GB3RS good setup – **MQOTES**
- Children enjoyed Morse code and interactive stuff – **MOBZE**
- Very well presented with latest technology – **G Davy-Wats**
- Very helpful volunteers – **M Rose**
- Very interesting – **R & P Hall, Grenada, WI**
- Fascinating, wish we understood it all! – **A & B Dickenson**
- Fantastic visit for someone who knew nothing about radio – **A Flowers**