



VINTAGE AND MILITARY AMATEUR RADIO SOCIETY

Report to the RSGB Spectrum Forum Meeting

30th November 2019

Activities

VMARS is an organisation of almost 600 members. Our focus is the restoration and use of vintage equipment. To that end, we run AM, USB and LSB nets on 80m (daily), 60m (regularly) and on 6m (occasionally); an online archive of manuals; two publications (a monthly news sheet and a quarterly technical journal), auctions of equipment (around 2,000 lots in the last year), a members-only online sales and wants forum and a separate general vintage equipment discussion forum. Portable working is a feature of the Society.

Most members are in the UK; about 10% are overseas, in NZ, Australia, Canada, the US and mainland Europe.

Spectrum Forum matters

(1) Interference

In common with many amateur radio operators, VMARS members suffer from numerous sources of RF noise. In few urban locations is the noise level now much below S9. We are extremely concerned that inadequate attention is being displayed by Authorities in addressing this and in preventing further proliferation of noise sources. In recent weeks we have seen OFCOM take some useful action in isolated cases, including resolving an S9+ permanent wideband interference being experienced by one of our members' which was found to be broadcast from the workings of an electrically adjustable bed some considerable distance from his location. The standing joke is that 'CE' now stands for 'Chinese Export' rather than a meaningful standard that would help address many noise sources.

Specific examples of concerns for the future include Wireless Power Transfer for Electric Vehicles and the roll-out of 5G.

A specific irritation is the relatively recent and unwelcome appearance of Winlink type data signals across the amateur bands. Winlink is a free radio e-mail service operated by radio amateurs. Our members experience significant interference on or around 3,615 kHz when data signals begin automatically without notice and in any one of several data formats making identification of the signal source very difficult, if not impossible in most instances. It seems clear that these signals are transmitted without checking that the frequency is not already in use.

Our objections to the current uses of Winlink are:

- a) While sending e-mails by radio is a legitimate activity of amateur radio, setting up equipment to automatically jump onto a frequency that is already in use is an abuse of licence privileges in the view of our members.
- b) We wholly object to the inclusion of unattended automatically controlled data stations being allocated to the 3,600Khz - 3,620Khz All Modes section of the IARU Region 1 Band Plan. Such stations should be confined to frequencies below 3,600Khz
- c) Our members question the legitimacy of operating any automatic and unattended data stations on the amateur bands due to the unwarranted and mostly unattributable interference that they cause. Furthermore, we question the argument put forward by Winlink operators that they are providing a safety service for sea going vessels when this service is adequately satisfied by commercial companies operating on non-amateur marine HF frequencies.

We would welcome and support the addressing of this increasing problem by the RSGB. In the case of the Winmore interference that our members are experiencing, research shows that the signals probably have an overseas origin.

(2) Band plans and frequency availability

We make good use of the 60m allocation and see that allocation in part as the result of the Forum's pressure. Some time ago we suggested to the Spectrum Forum that Intermediate licence holders should be permitted access to these frequencies and would once again recommend this to the Forum. We would also like to have permission to operate mobile on the 60m frequencies. Reasons for not permitting this in the past have been stated as interference to other users. We would welcome feedback on reports of interference caused by the current fixed station and portable arrangements in order to learn what the risks of interference from mobile stations are likely to be.

There are other allocations that would be of great value to our members, for instance an extension to the upper end of 80m. Such an extension would relieve the severe congestion that occurs on the band.

Although outside the remit of the Forum, it would also be useful to see 60m and 4m allocations in all near mainland European countries.

We make use of 2m for local communication, so the French proposal to change the use of the band is of concern to our members and we trust that the RSGB will continue to oppose it.

Finally, we would like to thank the RSGB and the Spectrum Forum group in particular for their continued support for and defence of our hobby.

Tony Barron G3YYH

Chairman, VMARS