

Zero Beat



Hampden County Radio Association

September 2012

Friday's Meeting

Our first meeting of the new season is almost upon us. Here's what we have in store for you when you arrive at our new meeting location. The theme for the September 7th meeting is based around a **'Welcome to the NEW HCRA'**. Instead of the usual presentation you'll be treated to a multi-media event that includes an A/V presentation of the last year in review, a demonstration of our new website and how YOU can take part in its content, the results of the joint FD event with MTARA and more. I can promise you it will be interesting and allow time for our members to take part in the discussion.

But wait, there's more! TYT TH-F5 Dual Band HT will be given away as a door prize. Free coffee, donuts, soft drinks and healthy snacks. Tickets will be available for the KX3 raffle.

Food, friends and fun – what more can you ask for?

See you there!
Jim/KK1W

New KX3 Raffle!

We were one of the first clubs in the world to give away an Elecraft KX3 – and we're doing it again! Tickets will be available starting September 7th during our kick-off meeting at the Holyoke Medical Center. *A \$10 donation puts you in the running. Only 250 tickets will be available and the drawing will be held March 1st, 2013.* Mark your calendars now for September 7th. You don't want to miss our very first meeting at the new location. We've other surprises scheduled for the meeting too – stay tuned.



Note: Please do not smoke anywhere on hospital grounds, including parking lots.

Visit our website at <http://www.hcra.org>. We are also on Facebook Groups: *Hampden County Radio Association* and *SOTAJerks*. Join us!

Join the ARRL or renew your membership!

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- QST Magazine
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- Technical Information Service
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- ARRL as an Advocate
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- Amateur Radio Emergency Service
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<http://www.arrl.org/membership>

FROM THE SHACK

“Welcome back, my friends.....”

Welcome to the NEW HCRA – new meeting hall, new website, new raffle and more! I hope your summer has been interesting and exciting. Now, as the leaves begin to turn and there’s a bite of crisp autumn in the air, it is time to re-energize your activity in amateur radio! The new HCRA has lots of stuff in store for you – read on.

New Meeting Location

Thanks to the efforts of John/Kx1x we have secured a new meeting hall. Starting with the September 2012 meeting our meetings will be held at the Auxiliary Conference Center at the Holyoke Medical Center. Many of you have been here before, it’s where the Western Mass VE Team has given examinations for close to a decade. We have all the details of the hall and how to get there on our website. Simply click this link! <http://www.hcra.org/meeting-location/>

What does the new location give us that prompted the change? Let me count the ways. First off the location is free. Your board has decided to make a donation to HMC for the use of the facility however we’re still saving over \$500/year in room fees. That’s just the start of good things. Our new location is newly renovated with state of the art heating and cooling, comfortable chairs, a complete A/V setup including screen, projector, sound system and wifi. Handicap access, convenient rest rooms, vending machines and 24/7 security round out the list. I think you’ll find it a superior alternative to our old location.

If, after reading the information about the location, you have ANY questions concerning directions, parking or anything else send me an email or call and I’ll do my best to help ease the transition. All my contact information can be found on the ‘Contacts’ page of the new HCRA website. <http://www.hcra.org/contacts/> Speaking of the website, this brings us to our next major improvement...

The NEW HCRA Website!

When we launched our first website, sometime back in the 1990’s, we were ahead of our time as amateur radio clubs go. However over the ensuing years everything around us changed and we didn’t! What was cutting edge became ‘old fashioned’ and we didn’t do anything about it. Sure, our Facebook page is an example of forward thinking but we needed to get our website into the 21st Century too.

The board discussed improving the website for over a year. Unfortunately the folks with the time didn’t have the skills, and the ones with the skills didn’t have the time. One night, after the HCRA meeting and over a beer or two, Jeff/NT1K volunteered to take on the task if we wanted him to do so. Heck yeah, we had been talking about it for months and now, here’s someone that actually has the skills AND the time to ‘get er done’. You’re looking at the results of a



few solid weeks (40 to 80 hours) of work – and we’re just getting started!

The new site is interactive and will improve the exposure of HCRA to the amateur radio community around the world. We’re learning to use the new tools available and there’s more to come. Two things on the top of the ‘to do’ list are a swap & sell page and a page where you can actually join or renew on line. I’m thinking we’re off to a pretty good start, don’t you?

As with everything new there will be growing pains and some concern over change (a/k/a “not doing things the old way”). If anyone feels we’ve missed the mark in a few areas please let us know. Better yet, sign up on the website and leave some constructive comments. That’s the beauty of the new site, it offers a chance for everyone to have a say in the execution.

Jeff will be presenting a website tour at the September meeting. After the presentation please take a moment to thank him for his efforts. The change involved a lot of work that easily goes unnoticed.

Back by popular demand – the KX3 Raffle!

The Elecraft KX3 (<http://elecraft.com/KX3/kx3.htm>) continues to be the hottest transceiver to hit the market in quite some time. A few years back it would be difficult to imagine a compact, all band HF transceiver with DSP, ATU, keyer and more wrapped up in a package weighing less than two pounds. That’s the good news, the bad news is it will set you back at least a kilobuck AND there’s a 120 day waiting list – you just can’t go out and buy one and put it on the air today.

Enter the HCRA KX3 Raffle. For as little as a \$10 donation you get a chance to take one of these bad boys home! Only printed 250 tickets have been printed so your chances are very good it could be YOU! (Ask Dan/KB1VWQ about that). The rig is already on order so when the drawing is made, you get to take it home – right then!

Tickets go on sale at the September meeting and are sure to sell out quickly. Be sure to grab yours now before they are all gone. Read more about the raffle here: <http://www.hcra.org/2012/08/29/new-kx3-raffle-starts-at-the-september-7th-meeting/>

Renewal Time is here!

Once again it's time to open your wallets and support your favorite radio club. Our fiscal year ended August 31st. If you haven't renewed yet, please do so at the September meeting or by mail using our handy application form.

<http://www.hcra.org/membership/> We have worked hard over the past ten years to control our costs, provide quality events for our members and NOT raise dues. By becoming a member you will help keep dues low and fun high! See Rich/N1KXR or Dave/N1MFL at the September meeting and stay current with HCRA. If you can bring a completed application with you it will make the process quicker for everyone.



Still not convinced? OK,

here's some incentive. If you join or renew your HCRA membership by the close of the October 5th meeting you could be the winner of a TYT TH-F5 dual band HT with rechargeable batteries, desk and mobile charger. Getting the bulk of our memberships early in the season allows us plan the year ahead. Help us out by renewing early and we might help you out with a new HT. Fair enough?

Notes from the cluster:

The HCRA October meeting will feature Tom Homewood/W1TO. Tom will be showing us how to get on radio teletype (RTTY), one of many exciting digital modes. Besides a RTTY primer W1TO will talk about RTTY contesting and the Yankee Clipper Contest Club. This will be a dual meeting – it will also be a YCCC meeting and you will be able to join or renew your YCCC membership at our meeting.

The Silent Auction returns at our October meeting. We've secured some nice donations over the past few months and will be offering them up to our members at realistic prices.

We will be putting out annual auction 'on hold' for 2012 in order to concentrate on getting all the new changes under our belt. It 'may' return in 2013 – at this moment it is too soon to tell.



The MTARA picnic is September 9th, just two days after our meeting. HCRA members are most welcome to partake in the fun, food and drink. Purchase tickets from Diane/KB1KST. Info

about this and other upcoming events is on our website under the heading of, you guessed it, events!

I think it's time to put the closing paragraph on this month's From the Shack. I hope everyone feels all the changes are positive and position HCRA to grow as an amateur radio club and local area resource for years to come. Please, don't hesitate to voice your thoughts, good or bad, about the new HCRA. Most importantly continue to be the engaged and active amateur radio operator as you've always been. That's the attitude that brings new folks into our fun, exciting and, when disaster strikes, necessary hobby.



73... Jim/KK1W

What's Going to Happen to ZeroBeat?

With HCRA's exciting new website, this question arises. Do we need Zero Beat? Do we need a separate publication if we have the website, along with Facebook, Twitter, Google+, etc.?

You will probably notice that most of this issue of *Zero Beat* is duplicated on the website and/or in Facebook. What do you think? Do you like to print out *Zero Beat* and read it where you have no Internet service? Do you prefer to follow HCRA on Facebook or the website? Do you care one way or the other? Let me know what you think! n1fj@arrl.net

73,

Frandy, N1FJ

Zero Beat Editor



Local happenings

(All times are local time)

Sundays: 0845: Western Mass Emergency Net 146.94, PL 127.3 - W1TOM/R

First Monday: Southwick Regional RACES Drill, 1845, 146.49 Simplex

Mondays: 1930: HCRA 10m Net 28.375

Tuesdays: 1930-2000: 146.94, PL 127.3 - W1TOM/R - Hampshire County Emergency Net

Wednesdays: 1930: MTARA Info net 146.94, PL 127.3 - W1TOM/R - includes NTS Net

2000: MTARA Swap net: 146.94, PL 127.3 - W1TOM/R

2000: MTARA Simplex Net - starts on 146.94 - PL 127.3, then goes to 146.42 direct (simplex) Usually starts immediately following the swap net.

Thursdays: 2100: Weather Net (Roger, K1PAI Net Control), 1st Thursday of every month: 147.090 MHz, All other Thursdays: 147.000, PL 127.3 - W1TOM/R

Fridays: 1200: BB's (Brown Baggers Luncheon)

Common Ground Restaurant

25 Park Avenue

West Springfield, MA 01089

Expect between 6 and 12 every Friday. Good food, great company!

Club Meetings & VE Sessions

1st Friday of the month 7:30 PM, HCRA Club Meeting, Holyoke Hospital Auxiliary Conference Center, 575 Beech St. Holyoke MA, 01040 (no meetings held in July or August) <http://www.hcra.org/meeting-location/>

3rd Friday of the month 7:30 PM, MTARA Club meeting, Red Cross building 506 Cottage St, SPFLD, MA (no meetings held in July or August)

4th Friday of the month 6:00 PM, Technician, General, and Extra Class License Exams, Holyoke Hospital Auxiliary Conference Center, 575 Beech Street, Holyoke, MA. Hosted by the Western Mass VE Team (WMVET). Contact: David Cote, w1fab@arrl.net

Third Monday of the month 7:00 PM, Franklin County Amateur Radio Club meeting, Greenfield High School (no meetings held in July or August) Meeting Apr 23, 2012, to avoid holidays)

4th Monday of February, May, August, November 7:00 PM, FCARC VE Exams, Unitarian Church, Main Street, Northfield

New England Flea Markets

8 Sept 2012 **Woonsocket RI** BVARC 8AM @HI FortinDr FreeTG Bob W1YRC 401 333 2129 W

9 Sept **Newtown CT** CARA @TownHall \$5@8:30 \$10/TG \$15/T Joe AB1DO 203 938 4880 W

15 Sept **Forestdale RI** RIAFMRS @VFW \$5/Sp@8 Rick K1KYI 401 864 9611

15 Sept **Windsor CT** VR+C Mus 115 Pierson LN @8AM Outdoor John 860 673 0518

16 Sept **Cambridge MA** FLEA at MIT Nick 617 253 3776 F Third Sunday April thru October

22,23 Sept **Wakefield MA** Photographica @AmericallCtr ~photo~ John 781 592 2553

29 Sept Center **Conway NH** WMARC @RecCtr \$5@8:30 Thaire W2APF 603 447 2376

29 Sept **Brookline NH** NEAntqRC@ EvntCtr\$10@7:30\$4@8:30\$0@10 Bruce 603 772 7516 W+

7 Oct **Meriden CT** Nutmeg @Sheraton was Wallingford John N1GNV 203 440 4973 F+

12,13 Oct 2012 **Deerfield NH** NEARFest XII @FG Mike K1TWF 978 250 1235

HCRA Contact List

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VE Session Team Liaison, Dave Cote W1FAB (413) 575-2950

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Field Day 2012 Summary

Last June Hampden County Radio Association once again participated in the annual ARRL Field Day event. This year we added an additional transmitter, which put us in the 8A category. As usual, the event was an overall success with our members and visitors having a great time while operating and enjoying each other's company.

And like every Field Day, the successes were accompanied by a few problems that no doubt affected our overall score and morale for a short time during the event. However, solving those problems was an excellent test of our ability to troubleshoot problems under pressure. Although there were problems with the antenna for the 15 meter and 20 meter SSB station, the 40 meter SSB station led by band captain Jeff, NT1K set an all time record for points for that station at Field Day and helped pick up the slack while others worked to get the other stations back online. Jeff even brought in operators from New Hampshire and New York. Nick, N1MAZ picked up the responsibility for the wireless network this year and a combination of Nick's excellent support and operators getting more comfortable with the N1MM logging software gave us our most successful year using that combo to network all of the stations together.

During Jose, N4BAA's late night visit, it was quite fun to see operator's names in the log change to "CW GOD", "North Korea" & "CW is lame". Nothing like a little humor at 1am to help wake you up and keep working stations! Back again this year was Jim, NN1Y with new assistant Mike, KB1VHS keeping everyone well fed and happy. The pavilion provided a great place to take a break from the dits, dahs and with each other and drinks.



Dianne, volunteered GOTA station a few new as well as some folks who aren't so new! And it wouldn't be a Field Day in New England with out some summer boomers moving through. Friday afternoon brought some lightening as storms to the south of us moved through. And again on Saturday, big storms blew in and stations were shut down until it was again safe to operate.

The big change at Field Day this year was the use of HF triplexers and a reduction in the number necessary towers. What did we learn? That the triplexers work great, but that if one antenna has problems, it affects more than one station! What did we really learn? Don't have antenna problems!



No Field Day summary is complete without some ideas for next year. The big one is probably better distributed management, specifically with the towers. Some have suggested tower teams consisting of several workers and a tower manager for each tower. Managers would be

experienced with installing AB-577 tower and the antenna going on top of it and would then direct the rest of their team on how to put the tower and antenna together in the proper and safest manner. Others have suggested fewer stations. It has also suggested that we focus less on bonus points and put more focus everyone operating as well as making sure that volunteers with non—radio related jobs get plenty of time to operate.

All of these boil down to management and we'll make sure to take them all into consideration for next year. A huge thank you to everyone who helped make Field Day a fun, educational and radio filled event. It's the biggest event in our club each year and without everyone's help we wouldn't be able to pull off such a large operation that brings new hams into the hobby each year.

See you in June 2013! Matt, W1MSW

Score summary:

QSOs: CW 1253, Digital 36, Phone 1615 for a Claimed Score 8,386 + Bonus Points 1850=Total Points 10236

All Summits are not Created Equal!



Above, a typical "view" from Dry Hill summit in mid-August.

Below, view of Northfield Mountain from Crag Mountain last week.



Scenes from last June's Tailgate Party



HCRA Meeting Minutes 8-26-2012

Officer Reports

Vice President - KB1NWH not present due to illness

Report - KY1T Camper has been cleaned. Field Day worked out well in it. It also doubled as a shelter during times of inclement weather.

Treasurer's Report - AA1YW

Current Financial report - (To include Dufresne Park refund and all incomes/expenditures to date)
\$6017.81

Field Day Net costs 2012 - \$856 Park Rental and Food

\$1392 Trailer purchase and Equipment (Triplexers)

There was some discussion on covering Field Day food costs

Secretary Report - N1MFL

Secretary was not present, ill. June minutes submitted in his absence

The topic was raised to publish the meeting minutes on the website and it was approved.

Technical Report - W1MSW

Field Day Raffle Result - \$130 profit

W1MSW will be helping Doug Henderson set up his K3

Zero Beat Update - N1FJ has content for September Zero Beat, cutoff date for September ZB is Aug 30th.

Matt offered to provide a Field Day report in the Sept issue

Membership report - K1KXR - Not Present

Current Member Count - 88

At Large - W1MJB Nothing to report

Program report - KX1X

September – Khrystyne Keane/K1SFA – had to drop because of family commitments.

October – Tom Homewood/W1TO – RTTY and RTTY contesting.

November Auction – none this year because of location change – still under consideration for 2013.

December – Holiday Party

January - ???

Guest report - NT1K

Report on new web site – Jeff spent time with us reviewing progress on the new website and some quick instructions on how to use it to post articles. We still have a lot to learn to take full advantage of this new tool. Everyone congratulated Jeff on a job well done and we're looking forward to additional future enhancements.

Old Business

Progress of joint holiday party? – (KK1W) – on schedule, Jim will coordinate with MTARA going forward.

Choose the next long term raffle prize, start date, coordinator? - KX3, 250 tickets, \$10 each, start in September.

New Business

How should member count be reported – (KK1W) – all agreed it should stay the same. Should we letter the trailer(s)? – no conclusion at this time – tabled until next meeting. Hospital Donation, when and how much? - \$250/year to be given in September.

Club Meeting minutes respectively submitted by Dave Scarpa, HCRA Secretary.

What Happened to 2 meter Repeater Conversation?

Recently I have had 2 meters on in the truck for local between-customer rides. I would guess that 60 to 75% of the time, someone is on to chat with. I wondered if a trip to the Adirondacks would find the repeaters along the way as active. Faye and I had to go to Massawepie Lake, 10 miles west of Tupper Lake, NY to retrieve our son Jake, KB1NSN, from his summer job at the Massawepie Boy Scout Reservation.

I created a list of repeaters in NY from Lake George to the Tupper Lake area. Sunday morning (Aug 18th) we left with the hope of arriving at our hotel in Tupper Lake around 3pm. When we got close to Lake George, NY I dialed in the Prospect Mountain repeater and correct PL tone. I keyed the repeater easily and put my call out a few times. Nothing heard.

North of Lake George, we turned off Route 87 and headed west of Route 28 towards North Creek. Again, dialed in the repeater and didn't hear a peep even though I was keying the repeater just fine. The next repeater was Gore Mountain which had great coverage. I held the Gore Mountain repeater for a while and no one came back to me. All too soon we passed Blue Mountain Lake and headed into Long Lake.

In June, we had spent 3 days in Long Lake working Field Day with the Bear Bait Radio Club. The BBRC recently put up a 2m repeater which will eventually go on Mt. Sabbatis and have excellent coverage. But the few hams in Long Lake, even tho they knew I was coming into town, no one was on.

Twenty two miles later we were in Tupper Lake and at the hotel. From the truck and inside the hotel, the repeater was dfq. Over the next 24 hours I never heard anyone on this repeater.

After getting Jake at Massawepie, we headed back towards home and reversed the repeaters. Finally! A voice and conversation on the Gore Mountain repeater. The other ham was in Glen Falls, south of Lake George and linked to Gore Mountain thru the Lake George repeater on Prospect Mountain. I held the Gore repeater for about 60 miles. Once in Lake George again, I switched to the Prospect Mountain repeater and worked our way home. No one else was to be heard or replied to my calls.

All in all I was on 10 repeaters over 36 hours and had one QSO. Quite disappointing for a traveler like me.

I had hoped for more QSOs along the way. I do hope that local repeaters do welcome and chat with travelers passing thru this local (Pioneer Valley).

This fall we'll be doing some traveling into NY and VT taking Jake to visit colleges he's interested in. I will be trying this experiment again as we travel to Ithaca, Rochester, Syracuse, and parts north in Vermont. Hopefully I'll find more activity.

While camping in Cape Cod this past July, I did find that the Dennis repeater, which has impressive coverage into where we camp in Truro, MA, very frequently had conversations going on. And those hams welcomed others into their QSOs. I was even surprised one day to find KD1UU who was in the Falmouth area (I think) and we chatted for a few minutes.

While there are plenty of repeaters providing some great coverage, has the 2 meter conversation withered into nothingness? Have others experienced this in their travels?

73 and hope to hear you on the air,
Larry, WB1DBY



