



Greetings one and all and welcome to the February edition of BP!

I hope you have been pounding brass and having fun - if not Dx – for fun is what it is really about, I am sure of it. I have been operating as much as I could and have tried hard to work FISTS stations. I do sometimes find FISTS lurking in the QRP territory too so I pop up there every now and then but honestly, I do wonder why I ever left crystals behind for all the dial spinning I do. Now, Keith, G0HKC, is spinning in his set because he tracks me with some stalking software and he will vouch that I am one of that 'modern breed' and I band hop. I plead guilty as charged m'lud...modern rigs permit such fun and games and I'm a modern lad y' know! Why am I rambling? Well, although I seem to band hop I usually call CQ or work QSO on a handful of frequencies. Are you the same? Does your VFO knob have a dusty side and a clean side?

Radios

Talking of radios and things modern, I recently bought an mcHF kit. I have long fancied one of these beauties because (a) they are cheap and (b) their footprint is attractive to my eye and ideally suited to portable ops. They look a bit like the Elecraft KX series...black brick styling with large screens. In theory they are astonishing performers and this easy an easy seduction to fall for. I say in theory because they are sold largely as KITS. In fact the early versions were only sold as boards, but now at least you can buy a full kit from MONKA mcHF and make a better stab. So, having bought a kit the builder must make it accurately in order to get the spec'd performance! It's all very well making a design that works like nothing on earth, but if the builder uses a hot poker to solder it with ...

And many have, so the failure rate is, I suspect, high.

This is mine...



It's about house brick sized.

If you're after a new HF portable radio do at least consider the mcHF. They are terribly supported and there is no published user manual. The internet has many groups using and supporting each other and in fairness the build is not hard - but there are precious few instructions. If all goes belly up there is a builder in Slovakia and another in the US who will build, repair or restore the radio for you.

In use the radio is fabulous. A decent 10 watts out, no internal ATU (though it is available), big screen and great audio. I really like mine. It performs well. The big thing for me is that at under £300 it makes a good portable radio I don't mind lugging around. It runs all modes (apparently there are modes other than CW...whatever next?) and takes anything from about 10v to 18v, so those 4S lipos are ideal.

And another...

Well, I'll tell you a secret...my mcHF had to go to Slovakia. I built it alright then it had no Tx., I mean it never did have RF out and I couldn't fathom it. I replaced the devices etc etc, all the usual suspects but still no RF. In the end I became worried that I was going to ruin the very fine tracks on my boards so I asked Paul, OMOET for help which he duly offered (for a very reasonable fee) and off my rig went. So I was radioless and in the end I couldn't resist but buy a cheap second hand Xiegu G90. I have heard many good things about these and wanted to see what the fuss was.

I have to tell you that the Xiegu G90 is astonishing. It is easy to use, clear audio, 20 watts out, amazing internal ATU and really very small for what it is. Thing slightly bigger FT817. The screen is smaller than the mcHF by a long way but it is very clear. If there's one niggle it's the buttons...very small and seem to require finger nails to press them in, but that is probably the only niggle.

I wish I could report ongoing success with mine but sadly it has died! I turned it on one morning to find ...no RF!! Is this something in my shack killing devices??? Well, there's a reason Xiegu sell for £300 what Yaesu sell for £1000...support again. There is almost NO Xiegu support. Sure, Sinotel will deal with it but that usually means swapping it or sending back to China for repairs (or more likely) swapping! There are no circuits or service manuals out there!

Now, in fairness, this isn't an issue on the whole...I spent a long time searching my radios fault and believe me, it is exceptionally rare. In fact I could not find a single example of the same fault. I couldn't find anyone with. Dead Xiegu in fact and I tried hard! I am not saying there are no dead Xiegu G90s, just that the failure rate is low. I'm not saying even that the failure rate is lower than Yaecomwood...just that it's low and probably lower than I expected given the price. Anyway, there I was with a dead rig and no service engineers! I opened it up, of course and had a look but the SMD stuff is beyond me (where are the filament heaters??). The final PA devices are the same as the mcHF - nothing fancy at all. The build quality is excellent - I was impressed. But I still had a dead rig.

Fortunately an old friend of mine emailed me in my plight and said he had fixed many Xiegos up til about 2 years ago when quality suddenly improved, so he sort of knew them and would take a look. Well, I had nothing to lose but the postage and that would have been incurred sending it to Sinotel anyway so I sent it off to Mr X (anonymity at his request).

I shall let you know what the outcome is but if it is a gonner, I shall likely buy another. That's how impressed I was.

Oh, and my faulty mcHF?? That was a couple of broken tracks which became apparent only when Paul popped it onto his test rig and break-out boards. I have no test rig or break-out boards so would likely have never found the fault, so I don't feel too bad.

On Air

I managed a few hours on air this month and worked several stations, among them: G0KVL, F18436 Craig, Chris, G3XIZ F14024 and Bernard, ON7ZH F 18446. I also worked (last night, as I type, in fact and on Dave G0AYD's mcHF (yes, he has one too!) G4KUE, Chris in Coventry who USED to be a FIST but isn't now. I told him off.

One other station of note is Steve, G8XEV, who always makes me jump when I hear him. It's not that he is loud but that the first station I ever worked and the first entry therefore in my old 1980 logbook is G3XEV, John, who lives in (or did) Sedgley, West Midlands. John and I were clubmates in the OLD Dudley Amateur Radio Club. I haven't heard of John for ages but these things linger do they not?

Activities

Next year - April 2nd to be exact – is the anniversary of SFBM's death and I think we should mark this. 150 years since the great man died is a milestone. I know Vail was instrumental but...it's not his 150th and to be fair to Morse and Vail, Morse was the salesman! So, I am going to be planning a few activities for the event but you might want to consider getting a special callsign! I am happy to accept special callsigns as valid for FISTS activities BUT I suspect you MUST register them with Graham so that the logging software can be sorted. Remember that you cannot book callsigns more than 6 months in advance and they only last 28 days so please give Graham the full six months to sort them out. If he tells me this is impossible I shall tell you in good time.

Spring Wordsearch. Look out for a wordsearch this spring. It's all done and dusted, just waiting for The Great Man to sort the logging. I'm hoping it will run March to May and this one has a poetic feel to it.

W3W...I still haven't got my heard round a What 3 Words activity yet...any ideas?

That's it folks...do send me stuff you'd like to share.

Best 73 all

David G4YVM
F15868

Comments for Ladder January 2021

Entrant	Comments
Phil 2E0DPH	Here is my log for the January Ladder Good to see lots of activity during the Ladder sessions this year. Do stay safe and well everyone. 73 Phil
Ivan G0BON	Really difficult sessions for me with all lot of QRN. I am finding this lockdown hard this time round so having something to look forward to every 2 weeks and having fun lifts one's spirits up.
Richard G0ILN	Last entry I put "condx not very good" Could it get worse "Yes it could!" Great fun as usual. Richard G0ILN.
Graham G3ZOD	I actually braved the chilly shack tonight for the last 45 minutes of the Ladder on 80m on 24 January. I could hear virtually nothing except noise, then got called by Andrew GW3OQK. After finishing, the band suddenly had S9 signals! Weird but nice. At least I now have 2 QSOs in my log for 2021 -and- can put an entry in for the January 2021 Ladder! 73 de Graham G3ZOD
Tony G3ZRJ	24th evening band went very fast
Robin G4DNP	Thanks for QSOs and stay safe 73s Robin
Peter G4LHI	G4LHI Claim for Jan Ladder but I'm afraid the band condx were not at their best, lots QSB & QRM but I made it in spite of that Hi. Mni tnx to the organizers of this great event. Keep Safe & HN Y73 Peter
John G4LRG	Great to hear all of the activity - thanks for the points,
Richard G4TGJ	Only a couple of ladder contacts. Both the QSOs were with my homebrew QRP transceiver.
Richard G4TPJ	Always good fun - good cw practice.
Ray G4XUZ	My January ladder log attached. Limited time and dodgy condx so low score, but good fun as always. All on straight key this month. 73, Ray, G4XUZ, Fists 777
John G4YTJ	Evening session was a blank on 10th with no contacts. I dodged the DIY on 24th to operate both sessions. Pleased to work Will MI0WWB after failing on previous ladder sessions.
Paul M0GSX	Hi To All at FISTS, Hope everyone is keeping well and safe from this dreadful virus, Please find attached my January log for the Ladder Sessions. Managed 2 days with three sessions, mostly on 80M but with the odd 40M Contact, but conditions were not too good, with the best conditions on the afternoon session of the 24th for me, with a couple of new members in the log, with very good and strong signals, with the other sessions I made, the conditions were quite poor from the West Midlands with hardly any Inter G at all, the last session was particularly bad with even EU signals subdued and for the first 18 Minutes things were good for G, but just after 18 Minutes, signals dropped completely out with very few 80M signals on the band at all. Hope others managed better, but it's to be expected this time in the cycle with hopefully better conditions to come. Thanks to all you do for us at FISTS making this a very good Society to be a member of.. Paul M0GSX #17642
Steve M0SHM	Great time as always and I need the paddle practice ready for CWA which is coming up.

Mark M0UZE	Thank you all. Please keep safe
Pete M5ABN	Not a very productive month, partly due to high levels of QRN and deep QSB. Hope Feb. proves better. Congrats to Richard and Peter for 2020 Ladder. Vy 73 Pete M5ABN
Will MI0WWB	Three bands worked this time, good to meet up with folks again.
Erkki OH7QR	Hello David, Please find attached my first log in 2021. All the best and stay safe. 73 Erkki fists 8318
Norbert ON4ANE	24/01/2021 condx vy good to the east, vy poor to the west 73 de Norbert ON4ANE
Michael OZ8AGB	Seems that many english stations were hiding on 80m again?
Jan PA0SIM	Condx not vy gd to UK, but always fun trying to work a weak signal. Tks to the WebSDR Maasbree I can hear them. 73 Jan PA0SIM
Cees PA0VLD	Ladders 73 pa0vld cees
Joop PG4I	Thanks for the QSOs and happy to work a few new members. See you in the next Ladder. 73 de Jo PG4I
Adam SQ9S	RIG: Bencher BY1, FT-2000, ant. GP7 Vertical 40-10m, PWR 100W. Tnx for all QSOs. Poor propagation and big QSB. Only one QSO this weekend. Cu in February! Best 73 Adam SQ9S #20019

Results for Ladder January 2021

Callsign	Posn	Total	Jan
G4LRG	1	85	85
G4LHI	2	79	79
G0BON	3	70	70
G0ILN	4	67	67
2E0DPH	5	57	57
G3XVL	=6	51	51
M5ABN	=6	51	51
G0JHK	=8	48	48
G4TPJ	=8	48	48
G3ZRJ	10	45	45
G5VZ	11	40	40
MI0WWB	=12	33	33
PG4I	=12	33	33
M0GSX	=14	30	30
M0SHM	=14	30	30
M0RSU	16	26	26
OH7QR	17	24	24
M0DRK	=18	21	21
PA0SIM	=18	21	21
MW0BGL	20	19	19
G4XUZ	21	18	18
SA1CCQ	22	17	17
G4YTJ	23	15	15
PA0VLD	24	14	14
ON4ANE	25	12	12
M0UZE	26	9	9
G4DNP	27	7	7
G3ZOD	=28	6	6
G4TGJ	=28	6	6
IW2JJS	30	5	5
OZ8AGB	31	3	3
SQ9S	32	1	1

* *Check log*

Upcoming Events

February 2021

First day	Last day	Event	Times
Sun 28 Feb		FISTS Eu Ladder	1400-1600 UTC, 1800-2000 UTC

March 2021

First day	Last day	Event	Times
Sun 14 Mar		FISTS Eu Ladder	1400-1600 UTC, 1800-2000 UTC
Sun 28 Mar		FISTS Eu Ladder	1400-1600 UTC, 1800-2000 UTC

April 2021

First day	Last day	Event	Times
Sun 11 Apr		FISTS Eu Ladder	1400-1600 UTC, 1800-2000 UTC
Sun 25 Apr		FISTS Eu Ladder	1400-1600 UTC, 1800-2000 UTC
Mon 26 Apr	Fri 30 Apr	EuCW QRS Week	0000-2359 UTC
