

## Portable Mast donation from Gwent Police

Courtesy of the Gwent Police Workshops, the Group is now in possession of a “pump-up”, portable mast.

The mast was originally fitted to a Police vehicle and was to have been discarded. However, one of our members, Gerwyn (GW4JDE), heard about it and made enquiries on the Group’s behalf. The mast was collected from Police HQ, Cwmbran, on 7th February.

The mast is extended by means of compressed air and an air-pump was provided, along with two control boxes. It is in very good condition requiring very little work to tidy it up. It has 4 lockable sections though we will probably have to adapt the very top section to allow aerials to be affixed.

I am sure this mast will prove a very useful addition to our operations, and our grateful thanks go to the Police staff who arranged the donation to the Group. ■



## Coax Cable donation from Vivista (Gwent Police)

Following the donation of the pump-up mast, the Police Communications department – Vivista – have donated a substantial quantity of RG-213/U coax cable. Our thanks to them for offering the cable to the Group. ■

## Exercise “Brunel 2”?

There is to be another Severn Tunnel Exercise, overnight on 17/18 June 2006. It is hoped that RAYNET will again be able to participate.

For this exercise, it has been suggested that RAYNET may wish to establish links between Severn Tunnel locations and Fire Service locations at Bristol. Additionally, a link to/from the South Wales F&RS HQ at Lanelay Hall is proposed. ■

### STOP PRESS!

Just as I was putting the final touches to this issue, I received an email advising that the Gwent RAYNET Group have been awarded “The RAYNET Cup, 2005/6”. The award is to be presented at the RSGB Annual General Meeting, in Belfast, on Saturday 06 May. [Kevin GW7BSC]

## Exercise “Brunel” Severn Tunnel, overnight 7/8 January 2006

Once again, 23cm radio has proved its worth at the Severn Railway Tunnel.

Overnight on the 7th and 8th January 2006, members of the Gwent RAYNET and South Glamorgan RAYNET Groups participated in an exercise at the Tunnel, alongside the Emergency Services.

Network Rail gave their permission for RAYNET to participate in what was a “Tunnel Familiarisation Exercise” for the Avon and South Wales Fire & Rescue Services. RAYNET members were located at the Emergency Access steps, Caldicot and the Green Lane RVP near Pilning.

Another member was allowed aboard the Avon F&RS trailer which traversed the entire length of the Tunnel starting from Green Lane.

Equipment used by members located outside the Tunnel were higher-power mobile 23cm radio transceivers with multi-element Yagi

beams, whilst the operator on the trailer used a handheld radio with the “copper-tube” dipole previously used during Exercise “Avon Express”.

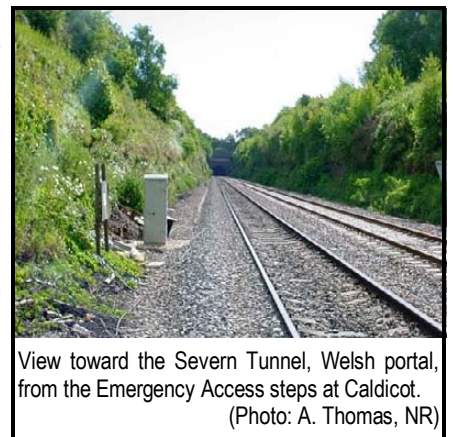
Communications between both ends of the Tunnel were established and maintained throughout the exercise, even with the Fire Service Road/Rail vehicles traversing the Tunnel.

A handheld radio was also used from the Caldicot location and successfully received signals from Green Lane, although there were occasions when the Green Lane operator was unable to hear Caldicot, although Caldicot continued to receive signals from Green Lane on the handheld unit.

RAYNET members at Green Lane were also joined by Peter Storey, a Telecoms Engineer from Network Rail, who requested that we also try communications on the 70cm frequencies. These tests proved unsuccessful, though unsurprising, following similar tests on these frequencies at the Caerphilly Railway Tunnel.

As a result of our communications exercise, it is believed that there is the possibility of aerials being installed at each Tunnel portal, for use with the 23cm frequency.

Many thanks to all the RAYNET members who took part in this exercise, with special thanks to Network Rail and the Fire & Rescue Services who allowed us to participate. ■



View toward the Severn Tunnel, Welsh portal, from the Emergency Access steps at Caldicot. (Photo: A. Thomas, NR)

## Ofcom Reform of Amateur Radio Licensing

Ofcom recently released a statement on the forthcoming reform of Amateur Radio Licensing. Some of you may have received a copy of the statement via Ofcom's mailing list service, but for those who haven't, here is a breakdown of the statement's content.

1. *This Ofcom statement sets out our new approach to the licensing of Amateur Radio.*
2. *It follows on from Ofcom's consultation on Amateur Radio licensing that was launched on 26 May 2005.*
3. *As a result of the consultation, Ofcom has decided to implement the following reforms:*
  - *To issue lifetime Amateur Radio licences which will remain valid for as long as the licence details remain correct or until such time as the licence is either revoked by Ofcom or surrendered by the Licensee. There shall be no end date on the Amateur Radio Licence. Such licences will be personal to the licensee and will not be transferable.*
  - *To provide an online, web-based self-service licensing service as an alternative to the postal service.*
  - *To issue electronic licences (probably PDF documents) to users of the online service. Users of this service would print a hard-copy of the licence which must be kept at the main station address.*
  - *To continue to make paper licences available (subject to a small administrative charge).*
  - *To modify the original proposal by requiring licensee to validate their licence details at least once every five years, in order to maintain their lifetime licence.*
4. *At present, the Radio Licensing Centre (RLC), a wholly owned subsidiary of Royal Mail Group plc, processes Amateur Radio licences. However, it is Ofcom's intention that, from 01 October 2006 (the intended implementation date), all Amateur Radio licences will be issued by Ofcom. Licences issued, renewed or amended on or after the implementation date will be subject to the revised licence terms and conditions (above).*
5. *Any licences which are due to expire before the implementation date must be renewed by contacting the RLC. Licences issued, renewed or amended before the implementation date will be subject to existing licence terms and conditions.*
6. *Ofcom believes that the new approach to Amateur Radio licensing will reduce unnecessary bureaucracy and cost associated with this important hobby. Ofcom regards the Amateur Radio community as a key radio spectrum user group and wishes to see Amateur Radio prosper.*

The Ofcom statement did not make any references to the likely cost of the lifetime licence, but noted in the statement that this would be decided based on the current spectrum pricing guidelines.

Unfortunately, I do not have a note of the web-link where this statement can be downloaded at Ofcom's site. However, if anyone has difficulty locating it, please let me know and I will email a copy. ■

[Kevin GW7BSC]

## Chepstow Vintage Rally 2006

On 22 May 2005, members of the Chepstow & District Amateur Radio Society put on an Amateur Radio display and special event station (GB4CVS) at the

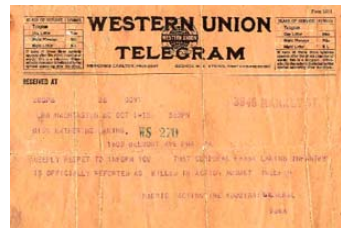


Chepstow Vintage Rally held at Cophill Farm. The Rally was very well attended and the exhibits covered a wide selection of vintage vehicles; a great day out for all the family!

The C&DARS are planning to attend this year's Rally which is to take place on Sunday 14 May, and would like RAYNET to participate in order to give visitors an idea of what Amateur Radio and RAYNET is all about. The Rally is held at Cophill Farm, near Chepstow, with access to the "rally field" from the B4235 road.

If you would like to participate, please let Kevin GW7BSC know. Further details can be obtained from Kevin or Dave (2E0DCR). ■

## Telegrams no more



So, it's goodbye to an old friend; not a person, but a "thing"! After 145 years, Western Union has (quietly) stopped sending telegrams. The company's web site says it all. The message reads: "Effective 27 January 2006,

*Western Union will discontinue all Telegram and Commercial Messaging services. We regret any inconvenience this may cause you, and we thank you for your loyal patronage. If you have any questions or concerns, please contact a Customer Service representative."*

According to an article by "Lifesciences.com", Western Union dates back to 1851 as the "Mississippi Valley Printing Telegraph Company". In 1856 it became the "Western Union Telegraph Company" after acquisition of competing telegraph systems. By 1861, during the Civil War, it had created a coast-to-coast network of lines.

So, why has the telegram seemingly gone the way of smoke signals and other early means of messaging? Blame it on the 'phones and the Internet. The decline of telegram use appears to go back at least to the 1980s; that's when long-distance telephone services became cheap enough to offer a viable alternative in many, if not most cases. Faxes didn't help either, and e-mail was probably the final nail in the telegram's coffin.

In a crude way, the telegraph was a precursor to the Internet in that it allowed rapid communication, for the first time, across great distances. Now, the telegram is a relic of a bygone era and it looks as if the Morse Code may not be too far behind. However, the company behind the telegram is still with us; Western Union has refocused its main business efforts to money transfer for consumers and businesses. ■

If you would like to provide an article and/or photo for the newsletter, please contact Kevin GW7BSC: (email) mw1azr@beeb.net or 'phone 07010726248.