



RAYNET History: The 1953 East Coast Floods

Many RAYNET members are aware of how RAYNET came into being, following the disastrous floods on the East Coast of England in January 1953. However, I wonder how many members know the extent of these floods and the number of lives lost? Reproduced with the permission of the Met Office this article, from their web site, describes those floods.

The greatest storm surge on record for the North Sea occurred on 31 January and 01 February 1953. The surge height reached 2.74m at Southend in Essex, 2.97m at King's Lynn in Norfolk and 3.36m in the Netherlands.

The storm that caused the disastrous surge at the end of January was among the worst to visit the UK in the 20th century. Hurricane-force winds had blown down more trees in Scotland than were normally felled in a year. A car ferry, the Princess Victoria, on passage from Stranraer in Scotland to Larne in Northern Ireland, sank with the loss of 133 lives – only 41 of the passengers and crew survived. From Yorkshire to the Thames Estuary, coastal defences had been pounded by the sea and given way under the onslaught.

During the afternoon of 31 January, the shingle spit of Spurn Head in Yorkshire was breached. Soon after darkness fell, Lincolnshire bore the brunt of the storm. Sand was scoured from beaches and sand-hills, timber-piled dunes were breached, the landward slopes of embankments were eroded,



concrete sea walls crumbled, the promenades of Mablethorpe and Sutton-on-Sea were wrecked, and sea water broke through to flood agricultural land.

Because many telephone lines in Lincolnshire and Norfolk had been brought down by the wind, virtually no warnings of the storm's severity were

passed to counties farther south until it was too late.

Later that evening, embankments around The Wash were overtopped and people were drowned in northern Norfolk. Fifteen died in King's Lynn and another 65 between there and Hunstanton. At

Wells-next-the-Sea, a 160-ton vessel was left high and dry on the quay.

By midnight, Felixstowe, Harwich and Maldon had been flooded, with much loss of life. Soon after midnight, the sea walls on Canvey Island collapsed and 58 people died. At Jaywick in Clacton, the sea rose a metre in 15 minutes and 35 people drowned.

The surge travelled on. From Tilbury to London's docklands, oil refineries, factories, cement works, gasworks and electricity generating stations were flooded and brought to a standstill.

In London's East End, 100 metres of sea wall collapsed, causing more than 1,000 houses to be inundated and 640,000 cubic metres of Thames water to flow into the streets of West Ham. The BP oil refinery on the Isle of Grain was flooded, and so too was the Naval Dockyard at Sheerness.

Almost 100,000 hectares of eastern England were flooded and 307 people died. In The Netherlands, 50 dykes burst and 1,800 people drowned. The flood covered nine per cent of all Dutch agricultural land and three per cent of the dairy country. The sea reclaimed over 200,000 hectares of polder country.

Although storm-force winds occurring with high tides are a dangerous but rare combination, there is no reason to suppose that the meteorological situa-

Across south-east England

- 300 drowned
- 24,000 houses damaged
- 180,000 acres flooded

Netherlands

- 1835 drowned
- 46,000 houses damaged
- 322,500 acres flooded



tion of 1953 could not recur one day. In fact, with the south-east region of the UK actually sinking at the rate of about 1 cm each year, the risk of storm surge damage could increase.

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Box Tunnel Exercise Sunday 26 November 2006

On Sunday 26 November, members of the Gwent and North Wiltshire RAYNET Groups took part in a communications exercise at Box Tunnel, Wiltshire.

The exercise was arranged so that the North Wilts. Group could carry out tests in a similar manner to those carried out by our Group at the Severn Tunnel. Wiltshire Fire Service were also invited to participate and the exercise gave them an opportunity to familiarise themselves with the tunnel.

The exercise commenced with a briefing at the nearby Middlehill Tunnel Access Point, after which some RAYNET members dispersed to locations at each tunnel portal, whilst the rest stayed at the Access Point, joining Network Rail and Wiltshire Fire Service staff for the walk through the tunnel.



The exercise Group assembles at the Middlehill Tunnel Access Point for the pre-exercise safety briefing. [Photo: GW7BSC]

Gwent RAYNET members located at the West portal, operating from the A4 road-bridge. Mike (GW3YKZ), Dave (2E0KAC), Ben (2E0RCG) and Kevin (GW7BSC) were also joined by Mike (G0JMD) from the South Gloucestershire Group.



Dave (KAC), Ben (RCG), Mike (YKZ) and Mike (JMD) on the A4 road-bridge next to the West portal. [Photo: GW7BSC]

Radio operations took place on 144MHz, 433MHz and 1297MHz, with the 1297MHz equipment kindly loaned by Dave (2E0DCR).

As expected, communications on 1297MHz were maintained with the walking group throughout the tunnel length, whilst a link on 433MHz was also maintained throughout with the operators at the East portal.

A monitoring station was activated by Phil (G6ZUG) of the Bath RAYNET Group, from the Avon Fire Service Command Centre at Lansdown, Bath. Communications to/from this location were established successfully on 144MHz and 433MHz.

Fire Service communications were maintained between staff within the tunnel, though communications with Officers at each portal were lost at roughly the halfway point. ■

EMI Worries

Rumours abound of a new vehicle tyre monitoring system fitted to luxury cars in Europe and the US, that is operating in the 70cm band on a frequency of 433.92MHz. The system relays tyre pressure values to a monitor/receiver mounted on the vehicle dashboard.

Recent tests conducted by the Korean Amateur Radio League found that the system is at the mercy of radio frequency interference, with the system being seriously affected by any amateur radio station transmitting on or near the frequency, at close range; the transmitter doesn't have to be mounted in the vehicle to affect the system. ■

[Item from the ISWL "Monitor" magazine, November 2006]

Communications Test with Longtown MRT Sunday 17 December 2006

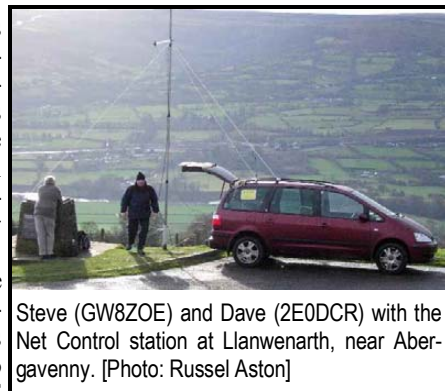
On Sunday 17 December, Group members took part in a communications testing exercise with members of the Longtown Mountain Rescue Team. Operating locations were from various points in and around the Brecon Beacons, and the LMRT Base in Abergavenny. Members of the South Glamorgan RAYNET Group also joined us for this exercise.

From previous discussions with the LMRT, it was identified that they had various difficulties with their communications in the area, and we arranged these tests to see what improvement, if any, RAYNET could provide for them. With the exception of one location, at the end of a forest track at Mynydd Du, RAYNET stations were set up at publicly-accessible locations; car parks at Mynydd Du, Gospel Pass and Llanthony. There were two Talk-Through Units in use, one at Llanwenarth and the other at the forest track.

Steve (ZOE) kindly provided prospective radio-path plots and with the two TTU's linked, it was hoped that a communications link from all stations would be fed back to the LMRT Base at Abergavenny. Unfortunately, whilst stations in the North of the area were able to communicate, the TTU link was unsuccessful and the link back to Abergavenny could not be established.

However, toward the end of the exercise, the operator at the forest track changed location by only a small amount, and it was found that direct communications were possible with the LMRT Base using only a low-power handheld radio!

Although unsuccessful, it was a useful experience. Further tests are to be conducted and will include the use of HF equipment. The LMRT have also invited us to participate in on of their exercises. ■



Steve (GW8ZOE) and Dave (2E0DCR) with the Net Control station at Llanwenarth, near Abergavenny. [Photo: Russel Aston]

MW1AZR web-site updated

Our Group's new-look web site is now up and running following a fairly comprehensive "revamp" (www.mw1azr.org.uk).

The new site roughly follows the same structure as before, though the pages themselves have had a makeover, with only one or two pages having been removed. The site continues to be "clean", with regard to there being no cookies, or fancy processor-hogging animations.

I would appreciate your suggestions for items that would be useful on the "downloads" page, though Group-specific items will continue to be available only from the Group's Forum.

Our "mobile" web site (www.azrmobile.net) has also undergone a makeover and has been tested further on various handheld devices and mobile phones. It would appear to be fully accessible with devices such as Blackberry's, Pocket PC, Palm and XDA's, as well as a number of mobile phone browsers. [GW7BSC]

"GB3AZ" 70cm Repeater

A new 70cm Repeater has come online in the Severn-area. GB3AZ replaces what was previously referred to as "The Link", and utilises the following frequencies:

Input – 434.600MHz,
Output – 433.000MHz
CTCSS – 94.8Hz

More information, if required, can be obtained from Dave (2E0DCR). ■

Gwent RAYNET Group Annual General Meeting

The Group's AGM is due to take place on Wednesday 14 March 2007, starting at 19:15hrs. The proposed venue is County Hall, Cwmbran.

The venue will be confirmed in Notices sent to members, and will be made available on our web-site for any interested parties who will be welcome to attend. ■

If you would like to contribute to the content of this newsletter, please contact us, either by ...
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