



Brecon Beacons Challenge Sunday 02 September

On Sunday 02 September, Gwent RAYNET assisted the British Heart Foundation with their “Brecon Beacons Challenge”, a 12-mile hike around part of the Brecon Beacons, with a start/finish at the Beacons Mountain Centre near Libanus.

We were gratefully assisted by RAYNET operators from Groups in Mid and West Wales, as well as members from the Midlands. We also had a member of Gloucester RAYNET who acted as course “sweeper”, thus covering the 12-mile trek himself! Many thanks to Neal Harden for that.

The Brecon Beacons National Park kindly provided a camping area for those RAYNET members who were travelling some distance to the event.

Around 200 participants began the hike with a marathon-style “mass-start” at the Mountain centre, and followed an anticlockwise course taking in 10 Checkpoints. The participants were required to travel in teams; no-one was allowed on the route single-handed. If, through injury or other circumstance, a “team” was down to one person, that person had to join another team to be able to continue.

Net Control and a Talk-Through Unit (TTU) was established at Mynydd Illtud with a 70cm link to/from the Mountain Centre Control and remote stations using 2m to/from the TTU. Prior to the event, RF profiling had shown there may have been communications problems, so basic radio tests were carried out from various locations. No serious problems presented themselves and, on the day, communications to/from the mountain locations proved more than adequate.

It was felt that a second TTU may have been useful, located further North towards Brecon. However, this is some thing that will be investigated if we should be asked to assist with this event again in 2008.

Generally, the event went well with no serious problems. The Red Cross teams provided some First Aid assistance, but there were no “serious” casualties.

There were some lessons learnt from the RAYNET-side; one person sweeping the entire route is not really suitable. A second sweep should have taken over from the halfway checkpoint. Somewhat more “serious” was the fact that the Control Station has effectively closed down before checking/confirming the sweep team was off the mountain. Additionally, it had been suggested that a “hot debrief” would be held at the Mountain Centre after the event. The did not take place as most of the operators who had travelled some way to get to the event, wished to pack up and make their way back home. As a result, the Control was closed down and, on returning to the Centre, Neal found that everyone had gone.

We would like to thank all of the RAYNET members who joined us for this event – it certainly would not have been possible without your help. We have also taken on board all the comments made, both negative and positive. ■

Exercise “Dragonfly” Saturday 27 October

Exercise “Dragonfly” was an internal communications exercise in conjunction with Blaenau Gwent Emergency Planning Unit.

The exercise centred around a fictitious road accident near Aberbeeg, requiring message-traffic to be sent to Police HQ, Ambulance HQ, New Inn Fire Station and the Blaenau Gwent Emergency Centre at Brynmawr. At around 09:00 on a damp and dismal morning, a ‘phone call was received asking RAYNET to deploy and provide communications.

Three TTU’s were set up to cover the area concerned – one at Llanhilleth Common, one at Llangatwg Common and one at the “Mountain Air” Picnic Site above Cwmbran. The TTU’s were interlinked on 70cm, with remote stations using 2m. We also made use of a separate 4m link for an “engineering net”.

Part one of the exercise was to get three messages from the “incident site” to each of the blue-light locations with part two being to get those messages up to Brynmawr.

Within the first few minutes of all stations being on-air, the communications were quite good, but this soon changed with considerable audio degradation rendering communications almost impossible. As the “incident scene” could not get useable communications to the blue-light locations, it was decided to relay the messages via the TTU operator at Llanhilleth. Unfortunately, this proved almost impossible and much time was subsequently spent swapping frequencies around, and moving aerials around in an attempt to re-establish the links we had initially. Ironically, the 4m net was working fine, though it was not possible to change tack and use this in place of the 2m/70cm links.

As the “EndEx” time approached, it was obvious that we were not going to be able to obtain satisfactory communications and Kevin (GW7BSC) requested the exercise stopped and stations closed down.

To what extent the weather conditions played a part is unknown, likewise the nearby PMR mast that appeared to be a recent addition to the mountainside near “Mountain Air”. At Mountain Air, Llanhilleth and Brynmawr, weather conditions were poor with a combination of thick mist and drizzle.

Whilst the exercise failed on this occasion, it will be run again in the future. We will, however, pre-empt this by carrying out some extensive RF tests to establish the ideal locations for coverage of the East Gwent valley. ■



GW4JDE operating from his vehicle located at New Inn Fire Station.

From The Network Forum News: Shoreham Airshow Incident

South Sussex RAYNET once again provided a team of operators for the two-day RAFA Airshow at Shoreham-by-Sea over the weekend of 15/16 September.

Each year an emergency plan is rehearsed and refined, in the hope that it will never be needed. This year, that practice paid off as, on the Saturday, a Hurricane nose-dived into the ground killing its pilot instantly. The incident happened off-field and, thankfully, no other persons were involved.

A shout of "aircraft down" brought everyone in Control to high alert. The pre-prepared messages and procedures for "Incident Off-field" were broadcast and acknowledgements sought from all on that net. This resulted in all access/departure gates being closed, all senior safety and administrative personnel being briefed, and the PA Caravan being informed, and hence members of the public. Meanwhile, via the routine net, all others were told of the incident and status of the alert.

The event highlighted the need for training and preparedness. All logs were impounded, including off-air recordings the Group routinely make at such events, with scanners feeding into PC recording programs so a permanent record with "time stamps" is kept. The organisers pronounced themselves highly satisfied with the way in which communications had been controlled.

Once again, RAYNET members went home feeling that their skills were valued and had made a real difference. ■

[Report taken from the RAYNET News of 23 September 2007]

Wye Valley Exercise with SARA Sunday 07 October

This exercise, organised by Group members Dave (2E0DCR) and Mike (GW3YKZ), was designed to identify communication requirements up the Wye Valley, from the Severn Area Rescue Association's Lifeboat Station at Beachley, to at least Monmouth.

As SARA were heavily involved with the Gloucestershire Floods back in July, we also invited members of Gloucester RAYNET to "listen in" and provide some signal reports; our aim for the near future, is to provide a link from Beachley to the SARA Base at Sharpness.

In what was a successful exercise, we had two TTU's located at St Briavels and Tintern, with Mike (YKZ) and Ben (RCG) operating mobile stations driving up and down the Wye Valley on the A466 road. Steve (ZOE) ran a "base station" at the Beachley Lifeboat Station, and was able to communicate with the mobiles and Adrian (ZEN) at Penallt near Monmouth.

Signal reports were received from two Gloucester RAYNET stations; Neal (EKM) at Coleford and another in Cirencester, which Dave (DCR) was able to work direct, without the use of the TTU's. Using a 5w handheld radio, Kevin (BSC) at Beachley, was able to talk with Neal though it is uncertain which of the TTU's was relaying his signals.

Thanks to Dave and Mike for organising a useful exercise, which we hope was beneficial to SARA also. ■

Network Registration Fee and PAI

From the 1st January 2008, the registration/membership fee for The Network will increase to £7.20 per year (60p per month).

The main benefit from this increase is that the previously separate charge for Personal Accident Insurance (PAI), will now be incorporated into the fee. This means that you will automatically have PAI cover when registering/renewing.

At the moment, our Group's registration date means that the payment for PAI actually falls the month before member registration! By having this combined fee, this situation will no longer arise.

Group members' renewals will become due at the end of April next year, so could you please note now, that Mike (YKZ) will be looking to collect renewal monies (£7.20) from members at or before our AGM in March. ■

Cotswold Marathon (Scouts) Gloucester RAYNET

Gloucestershire RAYNET will be covering the Cotswold Marathon/Scout Hike next year, and are likely to be looking for help.

The event takes place overnight on 9th & 10th of February and will take place in and around Gloucester and the Cotswold Hills. Some of you have already expressed an interest, but if any others wish to help, please let Kevin (GW7BSC) know. ■

Visits to User Services' HQ

Over the past few years, the Group has visited a number of Control Rooms of the various User Services and voluntary Groups – Police, Fire, Ambulance, SARA, Burnham Hovercraft and Swansea MRCC to name a few.

The Group has a number of new members who missed out on these visits, and I would like to try and organise some "return trips".

If you would be interested in such visits, could you let me have some ideas please? Maybe some other locations that we've never been to before?

Depending on the responses, I'll try and arrange a few for the warmer months next year! [Kevin GW7BSC] ■

**Next Group Meeting:
Wednesday 21 November 2007
19:30 at The Old Ferry Inn,
Beachley near Chepstow**

If you would like to provide an article and/or photo for the newsletter, please contact us via email: mw1azr@btinternet.com or 'phone: 07010726248.
