

**Steve Hartley's Notes**  
**Zoom meeting, 27<sup>th</sup> June**

**Current position**

We see many small clubs operating independently, each trying to do everything and failing in most respects.

Seems 'obvious' that we should pool resources to provide a better service/experience across a broader area, loosely referred to as Wessex.

**Issues**

Tribalism – there are some clubs who were established due to feuds in other clubs and the twain shall never meet. There is also a genuine sense of belonging/loyalty that works against joining together with others. Wessexham will fail if it threatens that tribalism.

Diversity – amateur radio is a very broad collection of interests that have radio as the common feature. Many with specific 'niche' interests have little interest in other aspects of the hobby. This stifles enthusiasm at a very local level and 'forces' those with the special interests to join the national groups. It is interesting that such memberships never seem to be seen as a threat to local clubs.

Demographics – most radio amateurs are old, and getting older. Over half of the amateur radio population is within ten years of the UK average age of mortality (based on 2015 survey). Most recruits are over 40. Under 25s represent around 1% of the RSGB membership. The number of female radio amateurs is small and the numbers from ethnic minorities is tiny.

Lack of willing horses – with an aging population and a general reduction in numbers, it becomes harder to find those who are naturally attracted to organising, leading and delivering events, not just in amateur radio; there was a time when you had to wait years to join a golf club, now they are advertising for new members to join. The number one most common thing in clubs is the low attendance at AGMs and the same folk being re-elected year in year out due to zero interest from the bulk of the members. This is even prevalent at national level with the RSGB changing its rules to allow board members to stay in office longer and the role of Company Secretary now doubled up with that of General Manager, all due to the lack of volunteers.

Apathy – there are an army of radio amateurs who want 'someone' to do 'something' but are not prepared to do it themselves. In big groups you normally have the ideas people and those who turn ideas into action. As clubs shrink, you can end up with lots of followers and no leaders and the whole thing vacillates. Again, looking at national level, the voting at the RSGB's AGM usually comes in at about 2-3% of the membership; nobody cares when things are jogging along nicely.

The 'new age' – Clubs used to be the only place you could find out about amateur radio, the only place you could ask for help. Now we have the internet and more information than you can ever need (some complete tosh, but that's a different thread). This contributes to some clubs becoming 'social clubs' for those who do not use, or do not trust the web. Related to this is the ease that younger amateurs can join up via social media and form less formal groups or 'clubs'.

Geography – as you broaden the focus travel becomes an issue for many. There are those who will travel miles to do something they want to do, and others who will not leave their own town for anything. The latter is more the norm for regular events. Extreme examples; a guy in Scotland who needed two days of travel to get to an exam centre and home again, a guy in Bristol who would not travel to Bath for weekly classes. There is no doubt that people working longer hours and the reductions in public transport do not help in the attendance of local clubs.

### **What might be done?**

Who - Find out who is interested in some form of Wessex level collaboration and who is willing to do stuff. The risk here is that we find lots of ideas of what might be done, with no one to make it happen.

What – identify what things would be seen as adding value at a Wessex level. That probably needs some kind of survey or a presentation to the clubs and individual amateurs in the area.

When – lockdown is not helping but it is forcing folk to find other ways of joining up. Denby Dale are a great example of how a small club has embraced new technology to make their meetings more popular and see their membership grown during lock down. The G-QRP Convention is likely to have ten times the attendance this year, because it will be available online. Making Club talks available to all across the area is relatively trivial. However, there needs to be a forward diary of events to make Wessexham a real thing rather than a concept. Maybe a list of 4, 5 or 6 things for 2021 that can be planned and delivered well to provide ‘good press’ and a tangible benefit of Wessexham that does not threaten local tribalism.

### **Some ideas:**

- Who’s Who in Wessex Directory – knowing who to contact for help, who is willing and able to help
- Full Day or Weekend Workshops on ‘interesting’ topics – experts sharing their thing
- Contests/Field Days/events; IOTA, Lighthouses on the air, RSGB Field Day, PW QRP Contest, DXpedition, etc. – collective team work
- Bath & West – a public facing promotion
- Club Team Buildathon – friendly competitive event to bring members of different clubs together – I am willing to make that happen, if it is desired.
- Joining up schools and colleges during December Youngsters on the Air month and/or British Science Week – public facing promotion using existing structures
- Be prepared to bin the idea if it does not work; if Wessexham has not gained momentum after 12 months, say ‘we tried’ and move on.

**What not to do** – don’t create a ‘super club’ with a committee, minutes, AGM, etc, etc.