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There were two particular reasons I was keen to meet **Martyn Baker G0GMB**, the subject of this month's feature. Firstly, I knew that he was an enthusiastic VHF DX-chaser and I was keen to learn more about his achievements despite the handicaps of a suburban location with limited antenna space and high local noise levels. And secondly, I knew that Martyn was one of the most familiar faces in the RSGB, with the important role of coordinating operations at the RSGB's highly successful National Radio Centre at Bletchley Park. What, I wondered, was involved in bringing the magic of amateur radio to the thousands of visitors that GB3RS attracts each year?

Martyn's QTH is Stony Stratford, near Milton Keynes, famous in amateur radio terms as the birthplace of the world's most famous multi-band antenna invented by **Louis Varney G5RV** who lived in the locality. "My two local pubs,

Martyn Baker G0GMB

Roger Dowling G3NKH meets the RSGB's National Radio Centre coordinator.

the 'Cock' and the 'Bull' are also the origin of the phrase 'A Cock and Bull Story' as travellers on the old Roman Watling Street related ever more implausible tales as they staggered from pub to pub," Martyn told me with a smile.

Early days

Born in Harrow, Martyn initially spent ten years as a physics and electronics teacher in Swindon and Newport Pagnell, having taken his B. Ed degree at Southampton University. He then moved into industry, working on mainframe computer training with a major US manufacturer. After some 20 years there, he worked in the international and commercial divisions of a small asset management company based in Olney,

Buckinghamshire before taking early retirement.

Martyn's interest in electronics and technology dates back to his schooldays when he built various gadgets for his own amusement. His interest was further stimulated by a chance visit to an uncle, **Brian Hummerstone G3HBR**, who introduced the young Martyn to the fascinating new world of amateur radio. Brian kindly provided him with a CR100, one of the classic HF band ex-Government communications receivers found in many a radio amateur's shack in those

Fig. 1: Martyn G0GMB in his well-equipped shack. Here he is using his recently acquired Yaesu FTdx10.

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Fig. 2: More shack equipment: on the right is a Kenwood TS-22 HF band linear and, below, a Linear Amp 'Discovery'. **Fig. 3:** Principal rotary antennas mounted on telescopic mast: dipole for 10m/15m/20m; 15-element 70cm beam; 5-element 6m beam; F9FT 'Tonna' 17-element 2m beam. **Fig. 4:** 3-element 4m rotary Yagi. The pole on the carries supports a doublet that zig-zags around the garden.

days – and Martyn was hooked. After a while he also acquired a 2m converter and would spend many happy hours listening into the local nets.

Martyn remained an SWL until he went to college, where one of the tutors encouraged him to take his 'City & Guilds' examination (at the time the recognised requirement for a Class B VHF-only licence) and in due course he became the proud owner of the call G8KGF. His early gear comprised a Pye valve taxi-phone, modified for phase modulation, and a Belcom Liner 2, which was a popular entry-level 2m transceiver of the era.

Still restricted to VHF with his Class B ticket, Martyn eventually decided that it was time to get his full licence and he was greatly indebted to the late **Geoff Groom G3YLC** for his patient CW tuition. After much effort this led to Martyn's proudly becoming G0GMB in the early 1990s. He acquired a Kenwood multi-band TS-930, an excellent rig that he used for many years, but his principal interest remained the VHF bands using a Kenwood TS-700.

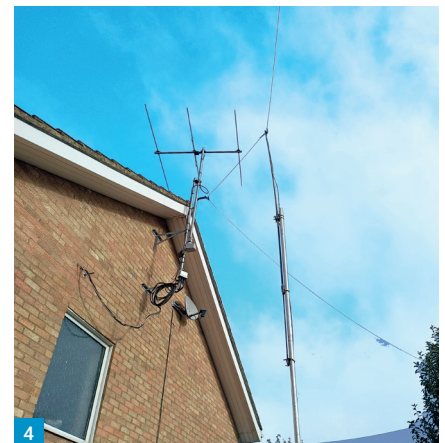
Martyn's shack today

Martyn's extensive range of equipment, **Figs 1 and 2**, is testimony to his interest in all aspects of amateur radio today. His most recent acquisition is a Yaesu FTdx10 SDR-based HF/50/70MHz transceiver, the performance of which impresses him greatly. He also has a Kenwood TS-890 for HF band use and an Icom IC-756PRO for 6m. For optimal performance on the higher bands, he prefers to use the transceivers in transverter mode: on 4m he uses the TS-890 as a tuneable IF in association with an ME4T-PRO linear transverter and low noise amplifier. For 2m, Martyn uses his IC-756PRO and a Kuhne TR-144 transverter, and for 70cm an Icom IC-9700. He has a number of power amplifiers, including a Kenwood TL-922 and a Linear Amp Discovery for 2m.

Antennas

A telescopic mast carries a rotary dipole for 10, 15 and 20m, a 15-element 70cm beam, a 5-element 6m beam and a 'very old' Tonna F9FT 17-element 2m beam, **Fig. 3**. Supported on separate poles, Martyn has a 3-element 4m beam and a wire doublet zig-zagging around the garden for the HF bands, **Fig. 4**.

Although Martyn uses different modes on



many bands, he has always retained a particular interest in all aspects of VHF, including tropo, sporadic E, aurora and meteor scatter. In DX-chasing terms his results have been impressive: at the last count he had totted up some 111 Maidenhead QRA squares on 70cm, 381 squares on 2m, 606 squares (and over 100 countries) on 6m, and 211 squares on 4m. He finds digital modes, including FT8, invaluable. "I couldn't ever have worked China, Japan or Korea on 6m on SSB," Martyn told me. "When band conditions are right FT8 makes it possible."

Monitoring

A feature of Martyn's shack is his band monitoring software, **Fig. 5**, which has played a big part in his DX success story. "I like to be able to monitor all the bands simultaneously," said Martyn. "When you're trying to work DX it's all about being in the right place at the right time. Sometimes the openings can last for minutes or even seconds so unless you monitor constantly you can eas-

ily miss out." On banks of screens duplicated to cover the various bands, Martyn uses KST Chat (which displays who is on each band, chasing DX, sporadic E, meteor scatter, FT8 QSO etc); JTDX (a clone of WSJT, open-source software designed for weak-signal digital communication, including FT8); DXMaps (excellent software for monitoring sporadic E); Grid tracker (used to identify Maidenhead squares still to be worked) and PSK Reporter (showing where FT8 signals are being received or sent around the world).

The RSGB National Radio Centre (NRC)

Martyn has been a lifelong member of the RSGB, having initially joined as an associate while still a youngster. He was therefore well aware of the RSGB's new showpiece demonstration station GB3RS, **Fig. 6**, at nearby Bletchley Park when it opened in 2012.

I visited GB3RS with Martyn and commend it highly to any PW reader who has yet to see

it in operation. It's equipped with a fine array of modern operational equipment, including a FlexRadio Flex-6600, Yaesu FT-5000, a Kenwood TS-2000 and an Icom IC-9700. Antennas include a three element SteppIR beam, a multi-band dipole for the LF bands and satellite dishes for Oscar-100 reception and transmission. There's also a comprehensive display of historic radio equipment over the years, including equipment from the UK station of the late **King Hussein JY1** kindly donated by his widow **Her Majesty Queen Noor**, Fig. 7.

The success of GB3RS, which now attracts over 70,000 visitors each year, soon led to the need for a professional organiser of its activities. When an advertisement appeared towards the end of 2017 it was clear to the RSGB that Martyn, with his deep knowledge of amateur radio in all its aspects plus a lifetime spent in the educational and training field, was the ideal person for the job. It was a bonus that he lived less than ten miles away!

He took on the role of RSGB National Radio Centre Coordinator in January 2018, with particular responsibility for organising the large team of volunteer demonstrators. It's no small task: with three or four volunteers required each day the team is over 50-strong. Some work most days, once a week or fortnight, while others can only offer the occasional day. So, sorting out the complex rota to meet their personal availabilities is definitely a spreadsheet task for Martyn, Fig. 8.

What are the qualities required of an NRC volunteer? Above all, one should have a passion for meeting people and feel confident in explaining our hobby to the public – and as a licensed amateur be able to operate the NRC's wide range of technical equipment. Volunteers are required to be able to commit to working at least one (preferably two) days per month. New applicants are constantly sought to replace those who are forced to retire due to work, family or illness, so any interested reader is invited to email Martyn at nrc_support@rsgb.org.uk

The future of amateur radio

My meeting with Martyn left me feeling confident in the bright future for our hobby. Amateur radio cannot live in the past, and Martyn's obvious ongoing enthusiasm for all the latest developments – not only at his home QTH but so admirably on display at GB3RS – leaves no doubt that many exciting new developments lie awaiting around the corner.

Radio has come a long way in the past century. Who knows what further developments lie in store?

Access to both the Bletchley Park museum and the National Radio Centre is free to RSGB members by downloading a free entry pass from the Members' Portal on the RSGB website. **PW**



Fig. 5: Extensive monitoring software is duplicated in two operating positions. Fig. 6: Martyn and volunteer Paul Barrett demonstrate amateur radio to two National Radio Centre visitors. Fig. 7: Some of the late King Hussein's radio gear is among the many fascinating items on display. Fig. 8: Spreadsheet time as Martyn prepares the volunteer rota for the months ahead.