

Harborough at War 2021

As we finally begin to emerge from 18 months of lockdown, members of the Welland Valley ARS attended the Harborough At War event and put GB5HAW on air.

The station GB5HAW was on air over the weekend of 7 and 8 August and, despite adverse weather conditions, the event still managed to attract quite a lot of visitors.

Club members turned up on Friday with the intention of doing the hard work of putting up our cheap and cheerful gazebo, notice boards, tables, chairs etc ready to start operating first thing Saturday. Well, that was the plan. Mother nature had other ideas though! The gazebo had served us well in the past, it had kept us dry during light showers and had kept the sun off us on hot days. However, it was never designed to be used in monsoon weather and we had never tried to erect it in driving rain and gale force winds. Eventually we managed to get the frame up and the top on, but it was still minus the sides. To stop it flying away we held it down using several pallet straps and large wooden pegs hammered into the ground. When we did try to attach the sides to make it windproof, we discovered that there was no way to peg the bottoms down and that the three small Velcro fasteners that held the sides to the frame were woefully inadequate and snapped off! This was not going to work...

That evening I returned home with the sides of the gazebo and asked 'Mrs G4XEX' if she would do the club a great favour and sew eyelets every 15cm along the bottom of each 3m side so we could peg them down the following morning. Being the angel she is, she did, finishing at 10pm. As you may guess I was not flavour of the month and it will take several bunches of flowers and boxes of chocolate to get back into her good books! A price worth paying.

The following morning, we arrived on site just after 7.30pm – and with the wind still blowing – we finally managed to get the sides on and pegged down. With pallet straps holding the whole thing to the floor we then set about erecting the mast and antenna. Thankfully with the 4X4 parked on a drive-on-plate at least the fibreglass mast was not going anywhere, although it did bend quite spectacularly....

In between the downpours, Andy, GOSFJ ran a Morse practice outside the gazebo where people were encouraged to have a go at sending their names in Morse. It proved quite popular with numerous people having a go on the practice



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oscillator. (The name 'BEV' sounds great in CW). When there was no-one lined up to try their hand at CW, Andy spent the time using his Clansman on 18MHz CW. He also had a display of old WWII covert suitcase radios and spy radios, also his Russian military radio that attracted some interest.

In the gazebo Colin, G1VIG fired up another ex-army Clansman and we made several contacts using SSB, including giving away points in the European HF Contest. The Clansman didn't seem to like our G5RV but did work perfectly into a random piece of wire we had strung up from the mast?

Another of our members, Paul, G1FJH had a display of some of the finds he had unearthed on archaeological digs in France on the sites of WWI battles. These artifacts, which included used .303 rounds and bullet casings, shell casings, ball bearings from inside shells plus cap badges and buttons also drew a crowd. The Harborough At War event was WWII onwards themed and the tanks and other hardware was all

of 1939/1945 and Falklands vintage. That said, given the weather over the weekend perhaps the 1916 Battle of the Somme may have been more appropriate!

Despite the rain and wind after 18 months of being indoors it was fantastic to get outside and mix again. Even members of the club had not seen each other since March 2020 and we had only conversed via radio or Zoom meetings. It was also nice to get together and put amateur radio back into the public eye. Given the lack of freedoms over the last year and a half, people in general seemed happy to hang around and take an interest in what we were doing. As always, we will never know if visiting our display stand station may have provided a spark of interest in some of our visitors, but one can hope!

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