

Welcome to Essex Ham TX:

Well, we're back with the third edition of **Essex Ham TX**. The last month or so have been fairly quiet, but with the events calendars for clubs in Essex hotting up now that the weather's better, we have a few more things to talk about, hence the new newsletter.

If this is your first time reading, **Essex Ham TX** is a short electronic newsletter that updates you on upcoming local amateur radio events in the Essex area, looks at what's been going on recently, and focuses on a topic that may stimulate you to try new modes or aspects of the hobby.

It's great to see the calendar filling up for 2013, with lots of interesting events and get-togethers. Talks on the 2012L Olympic station look set to be a hit, we like Harlow & District's upcoming 'Eurovision Song Contest' Contest, and the five day camping and fishing trip organised by Thames ARG is something a little different. Other fun outside events have taken our interest too, including some High Altitude Balloon activities by Chris M6EDF (see our "tracking balloons" video on our site). There have also been some successful training courses in recent weeks, with a few new M6s taking to the air.



If you've got a topic you'd like covered, you're a club with something to promote, or you've got an interesting photo or report from a local event, then we'd love to hear from you. We're especially keen to hear from local clubs with reviews of club nights, photos of local exam passes, plus dates for our online events calendar.

Essex Ham TX is a free online newsletter. It's available to download from www.essexham.co.uk, and it's emailed to those who subscribe to our free mailing list. Please send on a copy on to anyone who might find this interesting. To get future newsletters and updates by email, sign up free via the box on our website.

The **Essex Ham TX** is driven by you – if you have any comments, suggestions or feedback, get in touch!

Pete MOPsx

Local Events:

Latest Events Calendar online at www.essexham.co.uk/events

08 May 13	Harwich ARIG	Club Talk: D-Star, DVAP and Dongles
10 May 13	Harlow ARS	Eurovision 2013 Event – Pick a random country and work it over a week
11-12 May 13	Multiple	Windmills On The Air: Stock Windmill, Rayleigh Windmill, Royal Gunpowder Mills & others
11-12 May 13	Dengie ARS	Stow Maries Vintage Fly In, Stow Maries Airfield
14 May 13	South Essex ARS	Practical evening on Antennas
15-19 May 13	Thames ARG	Radio, Fishing and Camping Break, Downham nr. Billericay
15 May 13	Havering ARC	Club Evening: "Alternative Data Modes" by Dave, M0TAZ
19 May 13	Dunstable DRC	Luton / Dunstable Downs Boot Sale / Rally – Details at www.ddrbootsale.org
20 May 13	Braintree ARS	AGM
26-27 May 13	Coalhouse Fort ARS	Coalhouse Fort Open Days, Tilbury
29 May 13	Havering ARC	Club Night: Yaesu Radio Night
31 May 13	Loughton EF ARS	Club Talk: 2012L Olympic Station – "The Most Successful Special Event Station Ever"
03 Jun 13	Braintree ARS	Club Night: Speaker from Essex Air Ambulance and Table Top purchases
07 Jun 13	Thames ARG	Club Talk: SOTA Experiences, by Peter G1FOA

Monday Night Net:

As ever, thanks to so many of you for taking part in the Monday Night Net. This is a regular get-together starting at 8pm on most Monday nights. We typically have a dozen or more participants, and often hear from people "off-air" letting us know that they've been listening in. We've had some issues recently as a result of the problems with the GB3DA repeater, meaning we've had to move at the last minute to the 70cm repeater GB3ER. Take a look at essexham.co.uk for information on the state of GB3DA.

As the net progresses, there's a regularly-updated list of participants and topics posted to www.essexham.net

What is the Monday Night Net?

This was started by Pete MOPsx and Jim 2E0RMI in 2011. The net was originally run on a Thursday, and was intended to help out the new M6 Foundation licence holders. As you may recall from when you passed your first radio exam, making that first contact, or that first expensive purchase from the local emporium can be tricky, and it's helpful to get some friendly advice first.

Although the Net was intended to give the new M6s a chance to have a chat amongst friends, the Monday Night Net has grown into a meeting place for all amateurs in and around Essex. It's not uncommon for the Monday Night Net to get upwards of twenty people – some with days of experience, and some with decades. The net is welcome to all, so please give it a try!



Joining the Monday Night Net:

The net usually takes place on a Monday evening from 8pm local time on the Danbury Repeater, GB3DA. The Net has a moderator, who holds a list of participants and tries to let each person on the net talk in rotation, so that everyone knows when it's their turn to talk, and everyone gets a chance to have their say.

GB3DA details: Listen on 145.725MHz. Transmit on 145.125MHz with CTCSS of 110.9. Note that there is a 90 second timeout

Thanks! Our thanks to the Essex Repeater Group for allowing us to run the Monday Night Net on the GB3DA repeater. If you use the repeater, please consider joining the ERG, or making a donation. More details at www.essexrepeatergroup.org.uk

For more details about the Monday Night Net, go to www.essexham.net

Recent Essex Activities:

Joint Thames ARG / Chelmsford ARS Tabletop Sale:

On Friday the 3rd of May, two Essex clubs successfully joined forces to hold a tabletop sale on Canvey Island as a joint club night. The evening was very well attended, and a good opportunity to buy, sell and chat. Also available were Canvey's finest triangular flapjacks, as seen on TV. Pictured here are some of the winners of the combined raffle. Well done chaps. We've put together a shot video of the event, which you'll find at www.essexham.co.uk/news



Sandford Mill Operating:

Sandford Mill, near Chelmsford, is one of the venues frequented by the team from Chelmsford ARS. They operated from here twice in April: International Marconi Day and the museum's public open day. The event got a large turnout from hams and the public, in part thanks to the interview with Sandford Mill on Phoenix FM (presenter: John M6LOS). The team was using computer logging for SSB contacts for the first time, in preparation for July's G100RSGB operation, where electronic logging is mandatory. Pictured here is Jim 2E0RMI, working from the Marconi Hut.



Want to tell us what you or your club's been up to? Go to: www.essexham.co.uk/contact

Give it a try: The £10 Software Defined Radio

SDR, DAB, Freeview and Aircraft for a Tenner! By Pete MOPsx

This is the find of the year for me. A bunch of Essex Hams travelled to Rainham School for Girls in March for the Rainham Radio Rally. There we found, for the bargain price of £20, an amazingly clever USB stick. We all thought we'd come away with a bargain, until we discovered Amazon and eBay selling them from between £5 and £10 online.



So, what's so special? The **Realtek RTL2832U** is sold as a dongle that lets you watch and record DVB-T (Freeview). It can record telly to your hard disk and also lets you record DAB digital radio and FM. It comes with a pretty basic antenna and even a remote control.

The reason that this little USB stick is loved by the amateur radio community, is due to the chipset. Using free software, the tuner used for Freeview and DAB can unlock pretty much the entire radio spectrum from 24MHz to 1.85GHz – making it a very handy and cheap Software Defined Radio (SDR). So, what does this mean?

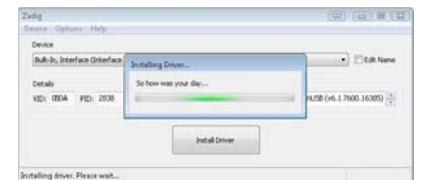
- Listen to bands not available on many ham radio rigs
- Add a radio receiver to your computer, laptop (or even your Android tablet via USB, apparently)
- Receive and record USB, SSB, AM, narrow and wide FM
- Visual representation of what your part of the radio spectrum looks like
- Access to aircraft tracking (ADS-B) – overlay local transponders onto a real-time map

If you're going to make any serious use of this, it goes without saying that you'll need to connect it to an antenna that's better than the free vertical that comes in the packet. The socket is tiny (an MCX connector), but fortunately, Maplin sell an MCX-to-coax connector, and it's an easy job to remove the coax socket and fit something more ham-friendly, such as a BNC.



Setting it up

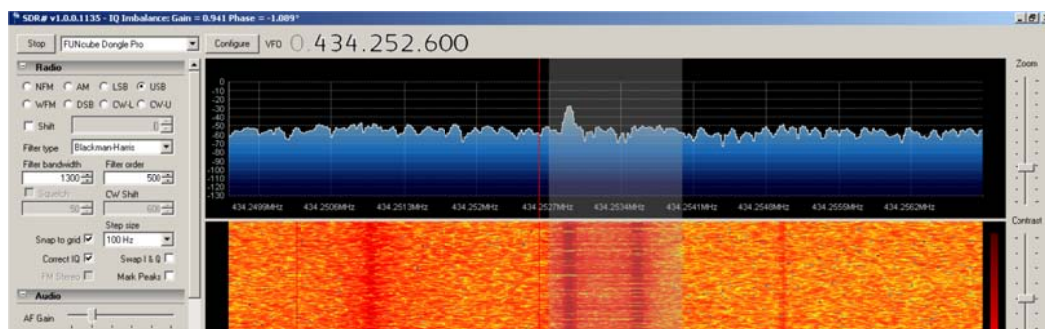
The Realtek dongle comes with software (called Blaze) to allow it to get FM, DAB and Freeview – if you're not planning to use the dongle for those modes, don't install Blaze. Instead, you'll need to install a set of drivers as part of a package called Zadig.



Setup isn't quite as straightforward as it seems, and we know of more than one Essex Ham who's struggled with the drivers. We've put together a step-by-step guide, which we'd strongly advise you to follow – Go to www.essexham.co.uk/realtek

Software

Highly recommended for use with dongles such as the Realtek and the Fun Cube Dongle, is SDR# (pronounced "SDR Sharp"). It's a free and powerful SDR package that allows direct entry of frequency, access to all sorts of settings and filters, plus options for modes such as Narrow FM, Wide FM, AM, USB, SSB and CW. Available from sdrsharp.com



SDR#, the free Software Defined Radio package, showing a RTTY data from a balloon on 70cm USB

Want one? For availability, more screenshots, links to the software, and help getting set up, go to www.essexham.co.uk/realtek

Any suggestions for the next "worth a try?" Contact us via www.essexham.co.uk/contact

Worth A Look:

New RSGB Website:

The RSGB has finally revamped its website. Opinion is mixed, with many commenting that it's very difficult to find things since the move. On the positive side though, it's a more up-to-date looking site, with a decent focus on bringing new people into the hobby. See www.rsgbbeta.org. Keep an eye on "Centenary Station" under the "Operating" menu for an update on the 100 year event – The callsign G100RSGB will be coming to Essex in July and August this year – see if your local club is getting involved.



Updated Band Plans

There have been several changes to the band plans recently, as announced in Radcom, as well as at a recent meeting of the Chelmsford ARS. Get the latest from rsgbbeta.org/operating/band-plans and have a look.

Change of Frequency: MB7IDA Echolink

Due to a change in the band plan, note that the frequency for the Danbury Echolink repeater MB7IDA has changed. It's now 145.3375MHz. CTCSS remained unaffected (110.9Hz)

Training in Essex:

Foundation Courses:

- **Loughton & Epping Forest:** Weekend Course 25/26 May 13, 28/29 Sep 13 (www.lefars.org.uk)
- **Thames Amateur Radio Group:** Weekend Course 25/26 May 13 (www.thamesarg.org.uk)
- **Chelmsford Amateur Radio Society:** 05 Sep 13 (www.g0mwt.org.uk)
- Also offered ad-hoc by Havering & District ARS and Colchester ARS



Intermediate Courses:

- **Loughton & Epping Forest:** 06 Jul 13, 26 Oct 13 (www.lefars.org.uk)
- Also offered ad-hoc by Havering & District ARS and Colchester ARS

Advanced Courses:

- **Chelmsford Amateur Radio Society:** 01 Jul 13 (Exam only). 24 Oct 13 (Revision course - www.g0mwt.org.uk)
- Distance learning courses run by Steve Hartley G0FUW. Contact him for dates via QRZ.com

Know of any local training courses? Tell us at: www.essexham.co.uk/contact

And Finally...

A big thanks to all of you who've been doing a great job of promoting the Essex Ham site, and passing on word about the Monday Night Net. As I'm writing this, I can hear James 2E1GUA on the GB3DA repeater telling a new M6 to give this week's net a try. It's all appreciated. We recently spied one of our Essex Ham car stickers in the window of one of the display cabinets of a certain Hockley-based emporium. If you want one to show your support (or find a fun location), the limited edition car stickers are free to participants of our Monday Night Net. To everyone else, they're £499.99 (!)

Comment or suggestions? Please get in touch via essexham.co.uk/contact - or if you're into Twitter, we're @EssexHam. We're also on Facebook and out-and-about at local events. Thanks for your support!

Pete MOPsx

