



What's Bubbling

Club Newsletter

Issue XXIX

June/July 2000

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Hardboat coming into Bovisand to pick us up

EDITORIAL

FREQUENCY

I tried to make the magazine monthly to aid those wishing to plan publication of future events for those who do not often see the notice board often. There have not been enough articles and notices from club members to achieve this. Hence I am giving up trying. I will publish future editions when there is sufficient. Bearing in mind holidays this means that the next edition will probably be in about two months time, unless I am suddenly deluged with printable items.

TIDES

Adrian started to plan a day's diving off Selsey and found that he had three sets of tide times spanning a range of 3 hours for high and low water at Portsmouth. Sad to say the time in What's Bubbling was one of the incorrect ones. I blame computer error (doesn't everyone these days?). My times for the June table for Portsmouth slipped from BST to GMT. I informed Greg as soon as I found that my table was wrong so that he could pass the information on to anyone proposing club dives. I hope that the tables in this issue are correct.

As a side issue I checked the figures from the programme I use against the main yachting almanac. For the Hampshire/Sussex, area where tides are a bit peculiar (due to the Atlantic tidal wave passing around Britain both ways and meeting off the Solent) my times were usually within 15 minutes of the almanac times. As always the best diving practice is to arrive slightly early, after allowing time to locate the site, and dive when tidal current allows. Unfortunately too many impatient people expect marshals to succeed where Canute failed.

THANKS

Thanks to Judy who provided much of the information on radio changes and Greg who has updated (again) the club telephone list.

RADIO CHANGES

COASTGUARD CUTS

The Maritime and Coastguard Agency have announced that with effect from 31 January 2005 they will downgrade the Coastguard watch on channel 16 from a "dedicated headphone watch to a loudspeaker watch". What this means in real terms is that they are less likely to notice if you try to contact them by radio. They want people to buy new DSC radios and use channel 70 for DSC distress message communication.

DSC

The preferred method of communication by marine VHF radios is being changed. Because of the changes new equipment may be needed by 1st February 2005. New radios must have the DSC capability after that date. DSC stands for Digital Selective Calling. Transmissions by such radios will be by digital data, not voice. DSC allows a radio call to be directed to a specific vessel, or group of vessels, giving possibly a longer range and less interference. Individual radios must be programmed with a unique Maritime Mobile Service Identity number which identifies the radio when it transmits.

Thus our club radios will become obsolete in 4 years time. (4 years is longer than the working life of most of our past radios based on past experience!) Also because of the necessary procedure changes to operate DSC radios, all current Certificate of Competence in Radiotelephony (VHF only)" licences end in February 2005. People who wish to retain, or gain a licence will have to do another course.

Sadly the cynical view is it all seems to add up to more cost for less service. Instead of paying once a lifetime for an operators licence some of us will now have to pay again for new courses and a replacement licence. Radios will have to be registered with MMSI numbers as well as licenced annually. Good radios will have to be discarded and new ones bought.

MSI

Marine Safety Information is no longer broadcast on Channel 67 by the-Coastguard. Instead it is broadcast on either channel 10 or 73. The announcements of which channel is to be used next are on channel 16.

SOURCES OF INFORMATION

1) Royal Yachting Association "Certificate of Competence in Radiotelephony (VHF only)" top up module courses etc.

Website: www.rya.org.uk.

Tel: 02380 627 400.

No doubt there will be adverts in the nautical (sorry maritime seems to be the current "in" word) press for courses as time goes by.

2) Radiocommunications Agency information sheets

Website: www.radio.gov.uk

eMail: library.ra@gtnet.gov.uk

Tel: 020 7211 0502105

3) Licences: The Radio Licensing Centre, Post Office Customer Management, PO Box 1495, Bristol, BS99 3QS

Tel: 0870 243 4433 or AMS on 020 7211 0215117

4) International Telecommunication Union

Website: www.itu.int

5) Maritime and Coastguard Agency

Tel: 02380 329 136

ABBREVIATIONS USED IN THE LITERATURE

RA	Radiocommunications Agency (a British Government Organisation)
AMS	Aeronautical and Maritime Section (of RA)
DSC	Digital Selective Calling (coded digital radio communication method)
MMSI	Maritime Mobile Service Identity (coded identification of DSC radios)
GMDSS	Global Maritime Distress and Safety System (a ship to shore alerting organisation)
IMO	International Maritime Organisation (an international organisation)
MSI	Marine Safety Information (safety information broadcast by Coastguards)
POCM	Post Office Customer Management (licencers, a subsidiary of the British Post Office)
MCA	Maritime and Coastguard Agency (a British Government Organisation)
ITU	International Telecommunication Union (an international organisation)

MARINE RADIOS - WHAT YOU SHOULD KNOW

BACKGROUND

Marine radios for the purposes of this article refer to the standard VHF radios used for short distances off the coast, as in our boats only. They operate on line-of-sight range only, and thus have ranges ship to ship of a few miles and ship to shore of about 50 miles. Actual ranges depend upon power, aerial heights, atmospheric conditions and topography (e.g. headlands in the way).

The use of marine radios is governed by international regulations as well as national law. Thus all fixed ship (& boat) radios must be licenced for the vessel (Ship Licence). Portable radios may not need to be licenced if they are used only for receiving - information on this seems to be a bit contradictory. They need to be licenced if to be used for transmission. The licence is slightly different to the Ship Licence but costs the same £22 per year.

Users need to be licenced or may operate only under the control of a licence holder. For our radios the licence is the "Certificate of Competence in Radiotelephony (VHF only)". It is granted for payment of a small fee and passing a simple written examination. One day courses are available for this through BSAC and commercial organisations. All members should do this course if they expect to go out in boats often.

Communication uses fixed frequency bands of wavelengths, numbered 01 to about 88, with two M (marina) channels. The channels are restricted to certain types, and methods of use. The most important is channel 16. This is currently the main contact and emergency channel. All ship radios should maintain a watch on channel 16 to hear of emergencies and to hear anyone trying to contact them. This channel should be used for serious emergencies only, or for the minimum time to contact another radio and agree another channel to use for communication. Channel 67 is used for contact with the Coastguards. 08, 72, 77 are the preferred channels used for ship to ship communication. Often we have used 72 for our boats in the past. Alternatives are: 09, 15, 17, 69.

Channels 06, 10, 70, 73 and 67 are reserved for communications with and by rescue services. The USA uses similar frequencies differently technically. Hence most marine radios have the choice of either "USA" or "International" type operation.

Ship radios should only transmit when at sea, except for emergencies and port operation messages (to harbour/marina staff). The radios can either transmit or receive, not both together. Thus one person should hold the transmit button on and speak, finishing with "Over" (meaning: please reply) and releasing the button. Then whoever is on the other radio holds their transmit button down and speaks, again finishing with "Over". When either person wishes to end the conversation they finish with "Out". This is the end of communications. In a real emergency, risk of death, serious injury or serious and imminent danger to the boat, anyone can, and should be able, to use the radio.

BASIC EMERGENCY OPERATION

- 1) Ensure that radio is switched on.
- 2) Ensure that radio is switched to "International", or "Int" operation.
- 3) Turn up the volume.
- 4) Turn the 'Squelch' control down until the squealing noise goes.
- 5) Switch power to 'High'.
- 5) Ensure that the radio is on channel 16.
- 6) Listen. There is no point in transmitting from a low inflatable if something with a higher aerial is transmitting nearby at the same time.
- 7) When all is quiet press the transmit button and send your message. Release the button and listen for replies, especially from the Coastguard. If there is no reply in a reasonable time repeat the message and check the radio settings.

EMERGENCY MESSAGE FORMAT

- 1) "Mayday, Mayday, Mayday."
- 2) "This is rib Ealing 1, rib Ealing 1, rib Ealing 1."
- 3) "Mayday rib Ealing 1."

- 4) "Position just off Ballard Point"
- 5) "Engine failed and drifting onto nearby cliffs"
- 6) "I need a tow or rescue of people"
- 7) Other information to aid rescuers: "Orange rib, 4 divers total aboard in a red, a yellow, a black and a green drysuit."
- 8) "Over."

MNEMONIC FOR DISTRESS MESSAGE:

M	Mayday 3 times
I	Identification of you vessel 3 times
P	Position of your vessel
D	Distress nature
A	Assistance required
N	Number of people aboard, including you
I	Information to aid rescue
O	Over