

British Inland Waterways on the Air 2024

A weekend in Bugsworth with The Little Treasure & Crew.

August bank holiday weekend 2024 saw a new event for the society, that being the 2024 British Inland Waterways on the Air (BIWOTA) activity. Invited by members Ron M7RJL & Tracy to join them on their narrowboat "The Little Treasure" moored in Bugsworth Canal Basin, the team set up and operated for the weekend on HF (SSB & CW), 2 Metres (SSB & FM) plus through the QO100 satellite.

The seed of an activity had been sewn some months before when Ron suggested the society may wish to operate in the event from the iconic Bugsworth Canal Basin where his boat would be moored. Well, we all jumped at the chance so plans were made for Ron & Tracy to sail The Little Treasure along the Peak Forest Canal on the Friday preceding the event where they would be joined by the team the following morning.



The weekend arrived and as is typical with bank holidays here in the UK, the weather prospects didn't bode well especially with Storm Lilian making her presence known a day or so before. Nevertheless, and despite the high winds our nautical duo reported early in the evening that the SRS boat division had arrived on scene without a hitch and had moored up in prime position in time for a spot of light refreshment in the nearby hostelry. Meanwhile, back in Stockport Friday afternoon saw double Nigel's (M0VN1 and G0RXA) loading the required gear (including the kitchen sink) into our equivalent of Thunderbird 2 and reporting they would be onsite early the following morning.

Saturday dawned reasonably bright and accompanied by Evan M0TJU the obligatory mug of tea was consumed on the weekend nautical home before proceeding to erect the outside gazebo and radio equipment. We were soon joined by Keith M0JYP and the plan for Saturday was for Evan to operate CW on HF with our FT897 & Keith to operate SSB QRP using his Xiegu X6100. Nigel M0VN1 would also be setting up our QO-100 portable kit with the aim of making some contacts through the "bird in the sky", elsewhere 2 Metres would be available but that would be a focus for Sunday.



With antennas set up both stations hit the airwaves with Evan quickly into his stride and Keith receiving good signal reports from him and his little Chinese wonder rig. Antenna wise, Evan was using a long wire with one end attached to a 12 Metre Spider pole secured to the rear end of The Little Treasure whilst Keith had brought two whip antennas (20 & 40 Metres) which were mounted on a magnetic mount secured to the boat. Both did the job admirably.



Arriving on scene just in time for some of Tracy's delicious chilli was Carsten G0SYP who had come to see how things were doing. In fact, as well as sampling the fayre on offer he was quickly pressed into action helping Nigel setup the QO-100 gear. Now, if you know Bugsworth at all then you'll know the area is surrounded by trees which had the potential to curtail our Qatari activity, however with Carsten's help relocating the dish to a higher level and finding a suitable gap in the foliage we succeeded in accessing the satellite. This proved its worth on Sunday where at one stage Nigel had a pileup of stations trying to work him and our GX8SRS special callsign which was only halted where thanks to a large gust of wind our dish was uprooted from its secured position. Once repositioned Nigel was quickly back on-air joining Evan who was continuing to make CW contacts a plenty.



Saturday drew to a close around 4pm with Double Nigel & Evan (Keith and Carsten had already taken their leave) heading home allowing Ron and Tracy to enjoy some peace before operations began again for day 2 on Sunday. Thankfully the weather had for the most part played ball with just a 20 to 30 minute spell of rain interrupting what had been a fun and successful day. Special mention must be made here of Evan who assuming the role of team weather forecaster predicted the time the rain would stop to the minute.



On to Sunday and once again Evan hit the air with CW whilst double Nigel's (VNL & RXA) setup the dish in readiness for some satellite activity which as has already been reported was quite successful. Also, Sunday would see the SRS monthly Sunday morning net chaired by Keith M0JYP from his home QTH. Recognising that accessing the net may be a challenge our 2 metre antenna, a W-30 "white stick" on a heavy duty tripod was relocated to a higher spot adjacent to the satellite dish. This move proved successful as armed with an Anytone AT778UV transceiver Nigel G0RXA with Tracy alongside was able to join in the net receiving good reports from Keith as well as Stephen M0RDN at his alternative QTH in Didsbury. Unfortunately, Gordon M0LAR was not audible until the last few overs when his comments were monitored through the Jodrell Bank WebSDR, or Farid M0UNG who could not be copied at all. Sadly, a power issue put paid to the morning's 2 Metre activity using the Anytone, but later in the day there would be some 2 metre CW & SSB contacts using

Evan's rig of the day, the Icom IC7000. Evan had chosen the Icom rig in preference to the Yaesu but encountered an ATU issue which was rectified by Neil M6NAE coming to the rescue with a replacement ATU, thanks Neil.

The plug was pulled once again around 4pm following which the task of packing up and loading Thunderbird 2 began which was completed in double quick time once again allowing our nautical duo some peace before they returned The Little Treasure to its home mooring the following day. A thoroughly enjoyable weekend was had with us making contacts around the UK, Europe and beyond and our thanks to Ron & Tracy for their hospitality and to the members who joined us both at Bugsworth and on air. You'll be pleased to know plans are already afoot for the 2025 event.



Narrowboat: The Little Treasure

Callsign: GX8SRS

Location: Bugsworth Canal Basin

Grid Ref: SK 0221 8202

IARU Locator: IO93AI

WAB Square: SK 08

Total QSOs: 81

Equipment

HF Kit: Yaesu FT-897, Icom IC7000, Xiegu X6100

VHF Kit: Anytone AT778UV, Icom IC7000

QO-100: Yaesu FT817ND, DX-Patrol QO-100 Full Duplex Groundstation (Version 1).

73s from the SRS Boat Division:

Ron & Tracy M7RJL, Keith M0JYP, Evan M0TJU, Nigel M0VNL, Nigel G0RXA, Carsten G0SYP, Neil M6NAE Plus Gromit (our Mascot).

26th August 2024

www.g8srs.co.uk/biwota/