

RSGB SSB FIELD DAY 2005

As a customary part of our Programme of Events we entered this worldwide Contest.

We were blessed weather-wise with probably the best weekend of the year and, after much canvassing, advertising, prodding and urging, a slightly better turnout of supporters albeit some 70% of our members failed (for one reason or another) to show up at any time throughout the duration of the event.



The steering committee, shown above, debated and concluded that as we stood no chance of making a name for ourselves this time the Order of the Day would be “*Enjoyment*” coupled with some self-training and experience for the newcomers. Jo (xyl of G3NVK) elected to put on a Summer picnic for the Sunday afternoon as soon as the Contest ended.

Friday afternoon found Graham and Howard, in the famous red van, towing the caravan to the site and becoming snarled up in the Melton-Ab Kettleby section of the Round Britain Cycle Race and diverted into a lay-by by the escorting police for quite some time. However G4FOX was soon up and running and Jan (xyl of G4YSP) acting as Ration Party collected and distributed the customary fish and chip supper to the cadre. John himself and Dermot (one of our relative newcomers and now, with his sister Teresa and dad [Bill, G4HEE] very active in the Society) brought along their sophisticated telescopes and the night owls enjoyed the unpolluted views from the elevated position at the farm and made several interesting planetary observations on a night that was almost “made for it”.

Turning from astronomy to gastronomy Howard, in a short nocturnal wander of the local countryside stumbled (literally) across a giant puff-ball¹ (PUFF-BALL, in botany, the common name for a genus of fungi (known botanically as *Lycoperdon*), and so called because of the cloud of brown dust-like spores which are emitted when the mature plant bursts. They are common in meadows and woods and on heaths or lawns, and when young resemble white balls, sometimes with a short stalk, and are fleshy in texture. If cut across in this state, they show a compact rind enclosing a loose tissue, in the interspaces of which the spores are developed; as the fungus matures it changes to yellowish-brown and brown and when ripe the rind tears at the apex and the spores escape through the aperture when any pressure is applied to the ball. When white and fleshy the fungus is edible. The fibrous mass which remains after the spores have escaped has been used for tinder or as a styptic for wounds. The giant puff-ball, *Lycoperdon giganteum*, reaches a foot or more in diameter.)



¹ There is scarcely a dweller or stroller into the country that has not seen the giant puff-ball (*Lycoperdon giganteum*), sometimes attaining the size of a child's head, and in its earlier stages of a dirty whitish colour, becoming browner by age, in which latter condition, if broken, it emits a cloud of snuff-coloured impalpable dust. Very few persons are, however, aware that when in its young and pulpy condition this *Lycoperdon* is excellent eating, and, indeed, has but few competitors for the place of honour at the table. It is especially esteemed in Italy, and would be with us, not only on account of the impossibility of confounding it with other species, on which account the repast may be enjoyed without fear, but also for its own intrinsic value. Unfortunately this fungus deteriorates very speedily after gathering, and should be discarded if, when cut, any yellow marks or stains are visible, for then it is too old. When the cut surface of the puff-ball is white as snow, then cut it up into slices of a quarter of an inch in thickness, and fry it in fresh butter, adding according to your taste a sprinkling of pounded sweet herbs, pepper, and salt. Roy, G7ARB recommends that each slice be dipped in the yolk of an egg and sprinkled with chopped sweet herbs and spice. Then, he says, "*they are much lighter and more digestible than egg omelettes, and resemble brain fritters.*"

One wag suggested Howard needed spectacles so he produced a pair and applied them to produce this, wait for it, **FUN-GIVING** item!!



Ron, G4ASE, travelled from York to be present and lent a valuable hand to increase our score and Roy, GØWYM was a useful addition to the operating team.



With, respectively, Graham, G4PTK and Peter, G7PCT logging for them.



Terry, M1TEM discusses the finer points with Roy whilst John, Graham, Pete's dad and Bill prepare for the next session.

Pete, G3XYC is on the sick list with a pulled arm muscle but his dad came along to convey Pete's best wishes for the event. He was able to stay with us for refreshments on the Saturday and is seen here (extreme right) relaxing over a cuppa.





And Roy is closely observed by his XYL who was acting Tea Lady at the time.

Outside, **Metro-Goldwyn-Metcalf** (sorry Sam) studiously works for his RTFM degree with his new digi-camera:-



KEEPING IN TUNE



MORAL:

Do not go to 'Key Down' position until Graham has checked the aerial connections, tuned the beam and wound-up the linear fully!

If in doubt listen to the music from the organ:



The computerised log keeping



And a worm's eye view of the top of the Strumech tower



Ignoring the possible delicacy of *vesse-de-loup sauce bovine* (puff-balls with cow pat sauce to you!) Jo spent Sunday morning baking 2 dozen baguettes and served them to the troops with locally cured ham and fresh salad plus the usual accompaniments, followed by a selection of gâteaux. We sat, relaxed (Linda taking her first break from slaving over a hot coffee brewer throughout the Contest) enjoying the warmth and countryside until 5pm, had pipe-dreams of an expedition to the Mediterranean sun then reluctantly packed up the station. Total score 314 but who cares? We achieved the object: we enjoyed ourselves!



At the debriefing after the Contest closed we noted our next items, our 3-day assistance at the Leicester ARS Show, Donington Exhibition Centre, Donington Park Motor Racing Circuit, Castle Donington on 30th September and 1st October for which the roll-call is currently being made by Shaun G6PGP, prefaced by the 47th AGM on 16th September, and as always urge maximum attendance.

Eyes should be kept on the website (www.melton-mowbray-ars.org.uk) where a new permanent ticker heads the home page to remind members and others of upcoming events of an immediate nature.

Our October meeting will be the second visit to Newark Air Museum by popular demand.

Lessons learned:

- Bill's suggestion that the upward facing in-built 'speakers with even the most sophisticated of rigs aren't up to much and his recommendation for some external 'speakers both for the operators and those listening in the shack are being worked on.
- Steering Committees do not necessarily talk bullocks.
- The humour surrounding Howard's ball cannot be reproduced here but verbatim copies can be sent in plain brown envelopes (postmarked Amsterdam) on receipt of 10 International Reply Coupons!
- From Howard: The reminder that in the interests of our host farmer's livestock it is essential that all oddments (particularly loose bits cable, nuts and bolts etc.) be retrieved as soon as they are dropped and a good search of the site be made before we leave.
- It would be beneficial if more members came to "have a go" - either setting up, logging (non-licensees can do this) or operating (especially the newly-licensed), assisting with the catering and generally "being there" - as one disabled member said "*this is well worth it*".
- The more members who involve themselves in these activities the easier and quicker it becomes (to say nothing of the enhanced degree of safety to men and equipment) to mount week-ends such as this.

NOTE: Peter - G7PCT has also been appointed as a Registered Amateur Radio Instructor, and he joins **Geoff - G3STG** in this position. Geoff already has Courses under way and Peter is forming a Radio Club at the Upper School, Burton Road, Melton Mowbray with the obvious objectives.