

NLTG NEWSLETTER 3

[This is *not* an exact replica of the printed version of the newsletter.]

10 March 2000

HAPPY BIRTHDAY GB3EN !

It was just one year ago, on the 13th March, 1999, that the North London Television Group (NLTG) switched on GB3EN, the London ATV repeater . Since then EN, located at the Enfield Civic Centre in north London, has performed flawlessly with no outages – a tribute to the skill of Adrian, G0OJY, the designer and constructor to whom we owe a great debt of gratitude. You may remember that, thanks to the apparently much-improved procedures in place at RSGB Headquarters, the GB3EN application went through the vetting process very rapidly and we received the go-ahead much earlier than expected. Consequently, Adrian had to burn gallons of midnight oil to finish the repeater hard and firmware and switch-on coincided with last year's Picketts Lock spring rally. We must also acknowledge the help and essential co-operation given by the management of the Enfield Civic Centre (anyone visiting the Civic Centre can do so with complete confidence in the fire alarm system – we know it works!). Credit is also due to Roy Powers, G8CKN, of Antec who supplied tailor-made transmit antennas at short notice and thanks go to Graham Hankins, G8EMX, and Graham Shirville, G3VZV, of the BATC for behind-the scenes work at the RSGB.

[Omitted: photograph of Enfield Civic Centre]

For the record, the first ATV contact through GB3EN was between Les, G4GYF, in Cheshunt and Andrew, G8FSL, in Southgate. The furthest known station to access the repeater so far is Tim, G6JDW, in Norwich under lift conditions.

Early Days

The repeater was found to work pretty well, right from switch on. Initial assessment of receive and transmit coverage was encouraging and the logic seemed to operate as desired. We immediately noticed, however, that some kind of signal near the input frequency was holding the repeater permanently open, although users generally seemed to be able to get over this and operate through.

The interfering signal, as seen through the repeater, was very like an encrypted Sky signal and first thoughts were that it came from a leaky feeder from a satellite dish. However, it was noted that the video content was pretty static and went brighter at dawn and darker at dusk so a radio-linked surveillance camera seemed a likely source. Accordingly, G8IUC. Roger set off in his trusty Metro loaded with expensive and very heavy direction-finding gear to roam the streets of north London in search of the source. He wasn't actually arrested for kerb-crawling but his activities were obviously noticed as the camera was switched off the same day, presumably by its nervous owner, and has not re-appeared since.

Coverage

The estimated coverage of GB3EN is as shown in the attached information sheet. Topography, for once, is acting in our favour as hills to the east and west restrict coverage in

those directions and thus reduce the risk of interference to users of neighbouring repeaters. In the event, no complaints have been received. G4DVG has a mobile ATV installation in his Bedford van (the little rascal!) and has investigated nearly every lay-by on the A2, A20, A12 and A13 heading out of London. Generally speaking, the signal drops off outside the M25 ring, although propagation along the A2 direction extends further than expected, to within 5 miles of the River Medway, but a handy ridge screens then users of the Kent repeater GB3KT and again it should be emphasised, no complaints of interference have been received. G4DVG hopes to continue his reception tests during the coming months, using this as an excuse to attend the more distant rallies.

Usage

As usual, the enthusiasts who put in the work and got the repeater up and running are surprised to find that their baby is not in use night and day, seven days a week. However, usage is probably about the same as neighbouring repeaters and one or two stations can be seen almost every night of the week while Friday night has developed into an activity night when a number of stations queue to work through the repeater. When not in use, the repeater reverts to beacon mode and this provides a useful signal source for people lining up preamps, receivers and antennas.

The following is a list of stations that can at least see GB3EN, many of whom have been seen working through.

G4DVG	Hornsey	G4GYF	Enfield
G4SYY	Cheshunt	G3WFM	Potters Bar
G4WGZ	Bromley	G7PNE	Stevenage
G7VVF	Enfield	G8FSL	Enfield
G8IUC	Chingford	G8ASI	Hemel Hempstead
G6MNJ	Hemel Hempstead	G0PIA	Hornchurch
G4MLY	Belvedere	G8JZT	Bexleyheath
G8ACT	Broad Oak	G8VDG	Birchhanger
G1BYS	Bromley	G4WYO	Broxbourne
G6PKS	Welling	G0OJY	Ware

Apologies if anyone has been left out: let us know who you are!

Development

With blithe disregard for the dictum "if it ain't broke, don't fix it" the logic and beacon boards were updated on 4th March. We also intend to see if anything can be done to reduce the amount of radar interference getting through the receiver since this is very annoying on weaker signals.

Other activities

The Cray Valley radio society asked for a lecture on ATV and G4DVG obliged in September. It was a good evening, especially for G4DVG who drew, and won, the raffle.

The Group also tried to put on a demo of GB3EN on the Southgate ARC stand at the Enfield Town Show. This was not successful, despite being only half a mile from the repeater. We subsequently noticed a very large building, hidden by trees, directly between us and the Civic Centre. We hope to do better next year.

Roger, G8IUC, and John, G4DVG, have been experimenting with computer video cards and editing systems while Duncan, G7VVF, has replaced the antenna mast which bent double during the autumn gales. Adrian, G0OJY is recovering from a move of QTH and we hope to see him through the repeater in the near future.

[Omitted: photograph of G4DVG's van and G8IUC (with Metro)]

And finally...

We hope you find the GB3EN repeater a useful and enjoyable facility and look forward to seeing you on the air or hearing of your ATV exploits.

The NLTG Newsletter is an occasional publication issued by the North London Television Group, whose principal activity is the operation and maintenance of the GB3EN ATV repeater.
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[Omitted: details of commercially available antenna, and commercially available VGA to PAL encoder board]

GB3EN

VITAL STATISTICS



GB3EN, Civic Centre, Silver Street, Enfield, EN1 3XA

NGR TQ329967 LOCATOR IO91XP

Antenna height above sea level 86m

ANTENNAS:

TX Bowtie, main lobes 30 and 150 degrees E of N
RX Alford Slot

INPUT FREQ. 1249 MHz
OUTPUT FREQ. 1312 MHz
OUTPUT POWER 14 dBW

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[The coverage map on the final page of the printed newsletter has been omitted to reduce file size]