



# MARS News

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## News from the President, August 2011



Hello Everyone,

I hope that everyone has been having a great summer, and enjoying some fun things with the family and friends. For myself, I have enjoyed myself as much as possible. I am continuing to get well, little by little. It's just not been quite as fast as I want. But, as always, keep me in your thoughts and prayers.

I would like to remind everyone that our club meeting this month will be about the National Multiple Sclerosis Society MS150 Bike Ride to the beach. Our speaker will be Jeff Viscount. He will be discussing all the things involved in volunteering for the ride. This is a wonderful and worthy cause to help. Please sign up to help at [www.ridemaps.com](http://www.ridemaps.com). I hope to see you on the ride I am looking forward to going myself.

Another thing I want everyone to remember is that at this month's meeting we will be collecting our donated school supplies to help needy children. We will be taking the supplies to some of our local area schools to distribute to needy students. Please plan to help out; there are so many families who don't have jobs, and if we can help I am sure it will be a blessing to many. Thanks for your support with this project. It will be very much appreciated by all the school children we help.

Well, I hope everyone will remember that over the Labor Day weekend will be the Shelby (@Dallas) Hamfest. We will be taking our MARS' club RV, to be set up in the Flea Market area spaces. I hope everyone will stop by and see us and sit down and chat awhile. The club will provide drinks for those who come by. We always have so much fun at Shelby (@Dallas). Look forward to seeing you there.

See you at the MARS monthly club meeting on the 30<sup>th</sup>,

73,

Jodie - KI4CXO

## Announcements and News

### Public Service Committee News from Mary Hunt, N4MH, Chairperson

Our biggest Public Service event of the year is right around the corner. MS BREAK AWAY TO THE BEACH. The event will be held on September 25-26, 2011.

We still need lots of volunteers for this event. We have openings for rest stops as well as SAG Vehicles. If you have never worked this event it will be great to have your help.

Come out to the August Club Meeting to learn about the event. Jeff Viscount, the MS Logistics Chairperson will be at the meeting. We will explain the duties of each of the positions as well as give out shirts and SAG kits for the event. At this event we ask that all ham radio operators wear their green Communication Volunteer shirt as it is used for identification.

#### **On Day #1 we will have three start sites:**

Start Site #1 – Monroe, NC for the Century Route

Start Site #2 – Pageland, SC for the 75 mile route

Start Site #3 – Camden, SC

The Monroe route will join the Pageland route, and they become one at that point. The Camden, SC route will join up in Hartsville, SC at the lunch rest stop. From Hartsville to Florence, SC everyone will be on the same route.

I am excited to announce that the Columbia Amateur Radio Club is going to support the route from Camden to Hartsville. We will use linked repeaters for this route that are part of the SC Heart group. From Monroe to Hartsville we are checking out a new repeater that was installed in Rock Hill this year to see if it will give us coverage. If this does not work, we will use the PALS Network.

#### **On Day #2 we will have two start sites:**

Start Site #1 – Francis Marion College in Florence, SC for 75 mile route

Start Site #2 – Lunch Rest Stop for 50 mile route

From Hartsville to Florence and on Sunday to Sunset Beach we will use the SC Heart linked repeaters.

We have determined the positions needed for the event and Elena has updated the [www.ridemaps.com](http://www.ridemaps.com) website so you can sign up for the event. All of the repeaters that will be used for the event are also on the web site. The repeaters will be updated for the Monroe link as soon as our testing is done. Also, you will notice when you go to Elena's web site there is a link to register on the MS Web Site. Please complete this registration also so we are covered under the MS insurance. Thank you Elena!!!

Gene Ribas, - N4UMI will be Net Control on the Monroe/Pageland portion on Saturday. John Crockett - W3KH will be the Net Control on the Camden Route on a separate frequency until all cyclists are in to the lunch rest stop. We will then all be on the same repeater for the rest of Saturday and all day Sunday. Gene and John will share net control duties for the rest of the weekend.

To book your hotel room for Saturday night, go out to the MS Website: <http://www.nationalmssociety.org/chapters/NCP/fundraising-events/bike-ms/event-details/accommodations/index.aspx> to see all the hotels that are offering special rates for the Bike Tour. There are no overnight facilities at Francis Marion College so even the cyclists will be staying at the hotels. I suggest making your reservations early as MS has negotiated some great rates!!!

## Field Day Critique Meeting

A critique of this year's Field Day was held at the American Red Cross, Park Road, Charlotte on July 17th.

Attendees: Ray Weeks-N4APR, Mike Wentz-KE4EHC, Stan Bagwell-AJ4ZL, George Hohas-W4GEH, Barry May-KC4SSS, Steve Davis-KJ4FEL, Jeff Blythe-KA4WYC, Don Eaves-KJ4ATJ, Shelly Eaves-KJ4ATK, Chris Price-WW4CP, Kevin Keyes-K4YYD, Andy Hawkins-K4GKK.

The meeting was brought to order at 5:30pm by Andy Hawkins, Acting Chairperson.

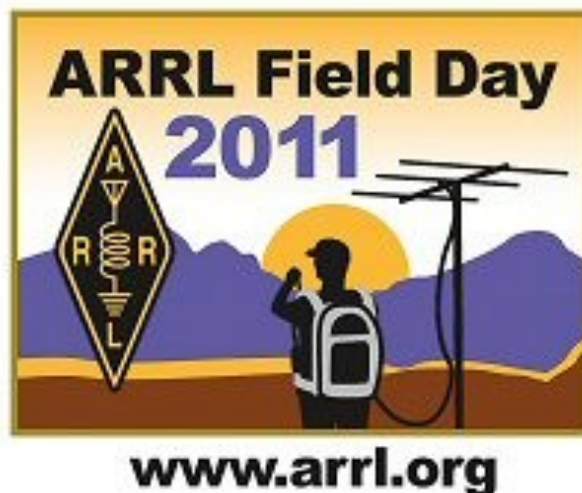
The purpose of the meeting was to determine how the club can improve the Field Day experience by being prepared before we head out to the site, instead of trying to figure out what we did the year before. Areas earmarked for improvement are :

- 1) The Beam Antennas.
- 2) Baluns- are they necessary?
- 3) The Club's crank up aluminum tower, and using the Rohn Steel towers.
- 4) Generators.
- 5) LAN for logging.
- 6) Publicity.
- 7) Set-Up the site and Take down.
- 8) Scout Merit Badge Class
- 9) GOTA Station.
- 10) More operating stations.

**Beam antennas:** This year the CW beam worked well, whereas the SSB beam failed to tune to the 15m and 10m bands. There was some confusion at the end of last year's field day and we believe the driven element traps were damaged when the beam was packed up for storage. We will investigate replacing the SSB beam with one that will also carry the WARC bands. Chris Price-WW4CP will check into what is available. George Hohas-W4GEH made another suggestion that we use a multi band Vertical in conjunction with the beam. George will investigate models available. Jeff Blythe-KA4WYC and Steve Davis-KJ4FEL will look into pricing some new lengths of coax, probably around 8 to 10 lengths of 100 to 150 feet each, complete with PL259 male fittings.

**Baluns –** Chris is going to looking into replacing the Baluns for the Beams.

The Club owns a 35' aluminum crank up tower, and two Rohn steel BX 35 steel towers. These are kept on the antenna equipment trailer. The club has the use of a trailer mounted aluminum crank up tower that is owned by the Charlotte Fire Dept. This field day we used the CFD trailer mounted tower and the club's aluminum crank up tower. This year the club's tower suffered some minor damage to one of its legs. This will require some welding, and Mitch Barbato-KM4AMB will try to have this taken care of. The two steel towers have not been used for a few years, but we have thought that they may be put to use if we expand our operating situation. Andy will investigate pricing for another 35' crank up tower and possibly selling the two Rohn units. We should also look into purchasing some new guy ropes, as the ones we presently have are worn and looking a little worse for wear.



## Field Day Critique Meeting, cont.

Generators- we have two generators at present, a 5KW Onan RV generator mounted in its own trailer and a smaller 1500W portable unit. The Larger generator has been used for powering up the SSB equipment and the club's RV. The smaller unit is used to power up the CW/Digital station. The GOTA station has been powered during the last couple of years by batteries supplied by John White-WB2NHQ. We discussed purchasing another 5 or 6 KW generator as a back up to the Onan. Jeff will look into pricing another unit. The Onan has been very reliable over the years but it is showing some signs of wear. Mitch Barbato and Brad Morris replaced the fuel tank and replaced the trailer tires. Mitch also spent a lot of time tuning the generator up including stripping down the carburetor during set up at field day this year. Don and Shelly Eaves lent the club the use of their back up generator in case an extra generator was required.

The WiFi LAN that the club uses between stations during operation did not work well this year. Ray Weeks-N4APR and by proxy Bryan Ferdinand-K4NET will look into improving the situation for next year.

Digital station snafus will be handled by Ray Weeks and Stan Bagwell-AJ4ZL. They hope to have a plug and play setup ready to go by next Field Day. The club has available a Ten Tec Pegasus system that was used as a digital station in the now defunct Discovery Place exhibit. We hope that this can be used.

Publicity: We will attempt to get more interest from the general public and various media stations to promote this event. Kevin Keyes – K4YYD and Mike Wentz- KE4EHC will work on this project.

Boy Scout Merit Badge: This year was the first time that we had incorporated this into field day. Don Eaves-KJ4ATJ and John White- WB2NHQ did a great job with this project and 4 scouts received their Radio Merit Badges. Don will head up this event for next year.

Set Up and Take Down: This went fairly well this year, despite the heat. The more experienced among us need to take the less experienced among us and show them the ropes, antennas, towers, tents, equipment, etc. We want to make 2012 Field Day an event that runs smoothly, so we need to practice and find our weak points. We suggest having two practice sessions before next year's event. The first would be the weekend of October 15<sup>th</sup> and 16<sup>th</sup>, which is Scout Jamboree weekend. Don will look into getting permission to set up at the Belk Scout Camp. The second training day will be some time in early May 2012. This should give us plenty of chances to work out the bugs.

Items not discussed included the Picnic which was well planned and carried out by Mary and Tom Hunt N4MH and KA3VVJ. We hope to keep this tradition going next year.

I am sure I have missed some points we discussed. Please let me know, and I will include them in the Meeting notes.

Sincerely  
Andy Hawkins K4GKK

## MARS Club Meeting 07-26-2011

The meeting was opened by Jodie-KI4CXO at 7:30pm

Jodie introduced visitors and any license upgrades. Visitors included: Sandra Jones-KK4DAW.

An announcement on the passing of Marty Killough-AD4KO was made. He was past president of the Union County ARS. Bill Turner- W4WNT reported the Bob Heil had another Online Amateur Radio Broadcast on TWIT.TV. It is under the Title of "Ham Nation."

Mary Hunt-N4MH talked about the MS Bike Tour to Sunset Beach. This is during the weekend of September 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup>. Plenty of Volunteers for manning Rest Stops and SAG vehicles will be required. This is the largest of our Public events. The club puts on a good show and provides vital support for the MS Society. You can sign up for this event on Elena—KS4OX's website at [www.ridemaps.com](http://www.ridemaps.com). The August meeting will be the primer for the MS Bike Ride. Jeff Viscount will be talking about the ride and also handing out SAG kits to those of us that have signed up to volunteer.

The Carolina Cycling Time Trials Assoc. (CCTTA) is going very well but is always in need of volunteers to help out on Wednesday evenings at Lowe's Motor Speedway. Contact Mary Hunt or Jeff Blythe if you are interested in helping out.

Jeff announced that the repeaters owned and operated by W4BFB will be changed to tone access units. Please change your radios to allow a tone access of 118.80Hz. This is to help reduce interference from neighboring repeaters.

Jodie announced the evening's guest, Craig Sharp-N6OJY, who presented a program on Photovoltaic Power (Solar Power). Craig started the presentation by stating that photovoltaic panels could be built at a cost of about \$1.00 per Watt. There are three basic types of cells, these are Poly-crystalline, Mono-crystalline and Amorphous, the Poly-crystalline being the most common. There are typically 36 cells in one panel which gives from 14 to 18 VDC. The rest of the package includes a charge controller and a Battery. DC loads would be connected to the battery and not the solar panel. If AC loads are used, a DC to AC inverter would be attached to the battery.

Output from the panels is dependent upon a number of factors including the positioning of the panels in relation to the maximum amount of sunlight. More elaborate systems have sun tracking devices. Panels connected in parallel will give an increased current output. Cloud Edge effect can also increase current output. A fuse or other protective device to prevent damage to the charge controller and other circuitry should always be used protect these systems.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:40pm, and refreshments were served.

Submitted by:

Andy Hawkins-K4GKK

Secretary M.A.R.S.

## MARS Board Meeting 08-02-2011

1- The meeting was called to order at 6.26 pm. Attendees included: Jodie Rowland-KI4CXO, Ben Antanaitis-WB2RHM, Tom Hunt-KA3VVJ, Stan Bagwell-AJ4ZL, George Hohas-W4GEH, Barry May-KC4SSS, Andy Hawkins-K4GKK, Kevin Keyes-K4YYD. Absent: Shelley Eaves-KJ4ATK.

2- Minutes for the board meeting of June 7th 2011 were accepted as presented in the May newsletter. Barry proposed the motion, which was seconded by Kevin.

3- Treasurer's Report: Tom presented the accounts report. This was accepted by the board. Tom made a motion to move the Discovery Place Funds into the general savings account. George proposed the motion, Ben seconded, and the board accepted.

4- Vice President's report: Shelley Eaves -KJ4ATK . Report not available; however, the August meeting will be on the MS Bike ride to the Beach.

5- Secretary's report: The club now has 131 members. The club roster has been published to the membership and the board.

### Committee Reports:

Repeater Committee: The board would like the repeater committee to confirm that the phone lines to the repeaters are working. Don Eaves has requested that the M2MEN 2m 9:00pm net preamble be changed. The decision was tabled until the next board meeting.

Public Service Committee Preparations are still under way for our largest public service event of the year, the MS150 Bike to the Beach. Mary Hunt - N4MH will have more details in the coming weeks, and Elena will have [www.ridemaps.com](http://www.ridemaps.com) up and ready for volunteers soon. The CCTA bike trials held at Charlotte Motor Speedway is still looking for volunteer help. Please contact Mary Hunt or Jeff Blythe.

Equipment Committee: Andy-K4GKK and George-W4GEH have started an inventory of the club equipment. We have also rearranged the equipment in the club room to make space for the Ten Tec Orion. We are still working on trying to utilize the club room space to better accommodate meetings and maybe even contests.....

Grants and Resources: A small amount will be rebated to the club accounts if you renew your ARRL membership with a form provided by Tom, KA4VVJ or Andy, K4GKK.

Field Day: Andy -K4GKK held a Field day critique meeting on July 14<sup>th</sup>. Please see the report elsewhere in this newsletter. We are trying to schedule a follow-up meeting on September 15<sup>th</sup> at 6:00pm at the clubroom.

Please note that ALL the committees are open for anyone to provide support and ideas that will help this club be successful in all its endeavors. If you see or hear anything that you have an opinion on or feel you can improve upon, please do not hesitate to contact any of the committee members and discuss accordingly.

Website: Ben- WB2RHM has the website running smoothly.

New Business: No new business

There being no more business for this evening's meeting, the meeting was adjourned at 7:43pm

Respectfully submitted by  
Andy Hawkins, K4GKK  
Secretary M.A.R.S.



## A DXpedition (?) to VP7

This past spring, my wife got together with Ellen, the wife of Chris—WW4CP. They decided that it would be fun for us to get together and take a trip to St. Maarten. ...and far be it from me to argue with going to a place with wonderful beaches, a great climate, and really good food. Chris decided that this would be a great opportunity to try out his “HF Go-Bag” rig, which some of you got to see at a recent club meeting. It includes an SDR 3000, laptop, a small switching power supply, headphones, a Buddipole, a small antenna tuner, some coax and a few bits and pieces to fit everything together, all somehow neatly stuffed into a backpack.

I made sure Chris went through a different security line at the airport than I did, since I figured his backpack would draw lots of scrutiny. It turns out he breezed through, but I almost had to strip to my skin, because I had left my reading glasses in my pocket!

Chris set up the rig soon after we arrived, and quickly made some contacts back to the states, including several with Charlotte area hams. I made a couple more contacts with his call (we were VP7/WW4CP.) Unfortunately, we had an extremely high noise level across the whole spectrum anywhere we tried to operate within the resort where we stayed. The interference just seemed to get worse as the week went by. We never did discover the source. That, and an urge to spend time seeing the island, not to mention eating some great food, kept the operating time down. We did make over 20 contacts operating rather randomly through the week.

So, I think it's fair to say that while our “DXpedition” was really a vacation, it did prove the feasibility and value of the compact HF/6m Go-Bag. In fact, when we got back, we found out that we had been showing up on spots quite often, but with comments like “good signal, but no ears...” How right they were about the “no ears.”

Chris is going to add an extra fused power cord with clips on the end to attach directly to a battery, so he can operate away from an ac power source. Then he'll have an even more useful emergency communication system for any occasion ...say for instance if we have an earthquake!

73,

John, NV4A



Here we are, hard(ly) at work



The Buddipole, pointed toward home

**Mecklenburg Amateur Radio Society – <http://www.w4bfb.org>**

**Club Meetings**

The Mecklenburg Amateur Radio Society meets on the last Tuesday of each month at 7:30 PM

We meet at:

East Baptist Church  
6850 Monroe Rd  
Charlotte, NC 28212

(Next to East Mecklenburg High School, near Conference Drive)

**Club-room**

Red Cross Building  
2425 Park Rd, Room 023  
Charlotte, NC 28203  
(704) 334-3900

**Club Repeaters**

Send	Receive	Offset (KHz)	Autopatch
146.34	146.94	-600	Yes
144.69	145.29	-600	No
144.63	145.23	-600	No
222.8	224.4	-1600	No
449.6	444.6	+5000	No

Mecklenburg 2m Emergency Net  
9:00 PM local time, daily on 146.94 (-600) featuring the ARRL  
Audio News feed on Sunday night.  
Alternate frequencies announced

**Club Officers and Board of Directors**

**President**

Jodie Rowland, KI4CXO, [ki4cxo@w4bfb.org](mailto:ki4cxo@w4bfb.org)

**Vice President**

Shelley Eaves, KJ4ATK, [kj4atk@w4bfb.org](mailto:kj4atk@w4bfb.org)

**Secretary**

Andy Hawkins, K4GKK, [k4gkk@w4bfb.org](mailto:k4gkk@w4bfb.org)

**Treasurer**

Tom Hunt, KA3VVJ, [ka3vvj@w4bfb.org](mailto:ka3vvj@w4bfb.org)

**Directors**

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