

## Tony G4YTG: My Life in Amateur Radio



My parents bought me an SX24 Hallicrafters Receiver when I left the Technical College to start work with the GPO as a Youth in Training. We used it as the main set at home and I used to listen to "The Shaving Club" on Top band. (It is still going). During my two year course they allowed me Day Release to attend 'The National Certificate in Light Current Electrical Engineering (Radio and Telephone)' at the college, where I met some Marconi Apprentices and we had a mutual interest in building radio gear from ex government material from the scrap yard in Wood St. Chelmsford (most of it new and unused).

During these two years I was sent to work with all the sections for experience of telephone fitting, Exchange maintenance, and "Poles and Holes" (telephone wires and underground cable jointing - lead plumbing job in those days). These were the days of compulsory National Service and they delayed calling me up until I had the certificate. Then came the dreaded call-up and report to Royal Signals, Catterick Camp. After the initial square bashing where they made us soldiers(?), I used the radio qualification to persuade them to send me as a Radio Mech. rather than a Tele.Mech. where most of the Post Office Employees went. I started the 20-week course which had a test each week that you had to pass or do the week again. I managed to pass top of the class each week as it was the same theory as my Nat. Certificate. They took me off the course two weeks before the end gave me an instructors course and a stripe(lance corp.) and put me on instructing at Week-10. This is where I had a regular soldier in my first class who had been re-doing the weeks and had started with me at Week-1.

The unit had an equipped Radio Club at which you were encouraged to spend your leisure evenings, two 70ft masts with a 280 ft dipole, two 25W army transmitters on a control desk with two AR88 receivers. Anyone with a licence was allowed to operate or listen on the 5 or 6 HROs spread around the Hut

I was eventually made Troop Sergeant in charge of some 20 instructors on the practical half of the course before I was demobbed.

Returning to the GPO I asked for a radio job if they had one, and they appointed me "Radio and Television Interference Investigation Officer". What a mouthful! This job included Amateur Inspections where Licensees, had to have the station inspected yearly to check the power and frequency accuracy of their transmitters (nearly all homemade in those days).

I sometimes spent half the night working DX with the very friendly Hams I met, inspected and signed off.

In 1960 I was moved to a new post at the HQ in London on the microwave link division. It was involved in the aerials and construction of the Post Office tower, including sorting out the loss of TV services after the bomb in the ladies toilet above the aerial galleries.

Whilst in this group I took my amateur licence exam and became G8ZWX, with mobile gear in my car being used as I visited the Microwave Stations in England Scotland and Northern Ireland.

My next move was to the Aerial and Structures Group, dealing with erection of Towers and Dish and Horn aerials for the inland microwave service. I was then offered the Head of Aerials and Structures post which I accepted, which was all BT, as we were then. This included Overseas Services Stations HF Aerials at Rugby with 900ft masts and Ongar, Dorchester, all the coast stations and the big dishes at Goonhilly. What a job for a Radio Ham! I was able to play radio with all this expensive gear, having also by this point passed the morse test, so I was G4YTG - and being paid as my job was my hobby.

My final move up was to the Chief Engineer of BT Maritime Services, from which I retired in 1989.

Rapid promotion from youth in training to chief engineer in 44 Years!

I enjoyed every bit of it and try to keep up to date, but have a certain amount of worry with these tiny three-legged fuse things called transistors.

**Tony Gilbey G4YTG President of C.A.R.S.**