



Extracts from.... **THE VMARS NEWS SHEET**

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North Yorkshire Moors Railway Railway in Wartime



Pickering Station Busy St 1

The North Yorkshire Moors Railway operates from Pickering to Whitby and is run by enthusiasts. If you have seen the Hogwart's Express in the Harry Potter movies then you have seen this railway which is used in many films including the new Dad's Army movie which is about to start filming (other locations are in Scarborough and Bridlington).



Hercule meets a GI

Each Autumn, the railway holds a "Railway in Wartime" themed weekend which has grown into a major event. Visitors to the event come from as far away as Australia and the public get into the spirit by dressing in 1940s style. For re-enactment, Pickering is the British side and includes GIs. Levisham station is France under German occupation. Thus, the two sides in the conflict are kept apart for sensitivity to the older generation who attend.

This year, the Scarborough Amateur Radio Club was invited to 'exhibit' in the goods yard of Pickering station. We ran a special event station and the theme was "radio in wartime up to the present day" or, as some folks noted, "from real radio to X-box radio". We were allocated the Special Event Station callsign GB2YMR, prepared posters for the 'real' radio and we ran my 19 Set MkIII/T with the 38AFV Set as WWII equipment. We had one of PRC350s and PRC320s to represent the Falklands conflict/First Gulf War and the 'X-box' radio was the club Flex radio and computer logging. We had two antennas, a 60 m dipole and a 40 m vertical. We were positioned next to a railway carriage which had several inverters running lighting and found reception on our vertical to be swamped by noise. Fortunately, the 60 m dipole ran across the car park away from the railway carriages and worked well. We had to press this into service with the Flex radio which left us with no real operating options on the 19 Set or the PRC320. Despite these challenges, we managed many hundreds of contacts across Europe and in the UK, including a few AM contacts on 5317KHz



Pickering Radio HQ





Operating the WS19

We provided a Morse key with an oscillator and it was quite amazing how many senior operators were 'itching' to have a go. What was also interesting was that girls were fascinated whilst boys had no interest. We were astounded at the interest in the 19 Set. The first group were amateurs reminiscing about their first radio being a 19 Set. The second group was ex-forces 19 Set operators and radio mechanics, all keen to hear the 19 Set in operation. Some had not touched one since 1945. One senior gentleman explained the faults he saw in the sets during the desert campaign and told us that his job had been to repair Montgomery's set. The sound from the intercom and AM broadcasts on the headset brought tears to his eyes especially when he sniffed the contents of the spare valves case, many memories flooding back. His family took a number of photographs of him listening to the set. He said it not only made his day, it made his year. The third group were the re-enactors who are all desperate to get a 19 Set into their Willys Jeep. Many of these folks were seeking advice on what they should buy and where to get them restored to some level of operation.



Churchill speaking to Montgomery

A number of lessons were learnt. It is clear we need to expand the wartime equipment display, to sort out the antenna and hopefully move away from the staff railway carriages. We need to have some VMARS promotional material as there were a number of visitors with an interest in VMARS. It was reassuring to know that the equipment was secure on the site as there was night security patrolling but we had two people sleeping with the equipment too.

Next year, we would like to be able to have a T1154 and R1155 set-up as well. Being in Scarborough, we have GCHQ on our doorstep so we are going to ask for a loan of their Enigma machine. The club has been allowed access previously and there is no harm in asking.

The weather was fine and we all really enjoyed ourselves. With the benefit of experience we hope to make it even better for next year.

Stewart Gebbie G8YQN

