

The GB2CW Protocol

Outline

GB2CW was instigated a number of years ago to allow prospective amateurs to complete their Radio Amateur Examination to allow them to use HF. Volunteers helped prospective licensees attain their 12 wpm test which was then mandatory.

When Morse was discarded from the exam and all amateurs allowed access to HF, the scheme more or less disintegrated. A few carried on tutoring but very little publicity appeared and it was in 2007 that G3LDI questioned the viability of revising the GB2CW scheme. The rest, as they say, is history.

We now have a working scheme with between 35 and 40 transmissions on a more or less even split between HF and VHF from a team of volunteer tutors once again. Not only that, but we have a list of volunteer assessors that can invigilate at an organised Morse test with a very attractive certificate being available from the RSGB. This is endorsable for speeds up to and including 30 wpm.

Some view Morse as an avoidable chore, especially when the dreaded word “practice” is mentioned! At the other end of the spectrum, the devotees regard Morse as the most efficient means of communication, an art form, and a pleasure to use on the air. Those in the former camp don't realise what they are missing. This usually applies to the newbies. The majority seem to be stuck on two metres and soon become disillusioned by the limitations of the band. It is therefore incumbent upon older amateurs to educate the newbies and show them just what can be done on HF with Morse and also point out to them what DX they are missing. Limiting themselves to SSB only immediately makes 40% of the HF bands territory that they cannot use. Working DX using Morse is also much easier, especially with limitations of small aerials and low power.

Your Club

In order to address this situation it would be good to see every Club in the UK, affiliated to the RSGB, have their own GB2CW scheme. There already are a pool of volunteers scattered around the country, but despite requests in various places, DX magazines and so on, there is not exactly a deluge forthcoming! It only takes an hour per week on two metres FM to put something very worthwhile back into the hobby that we all enjoy so much. It is hard work, as we have found, to try to persuade newbies to learn Morse and gain a certain standard, but it is also very rewarding

when another good CW operator matures and goes on to use the mode on HF and achieve the same satisfaction and enjoyment that us G3s do, especially when helping to boost the scores in the RSGB CC contests! It is quite likely that your Club has a few CW operators and also an influx of newbies, so why not consider putting a GB2CW scheme into operation? You can even share the slot between several thus reducing the workload. The G3s are becoming a rare species so we have to leave behind a legacy of good operators to take our place!

How it works.

It's quite simple and straightforward really. As co-ordinator for the GB2CW Project, I have to issue a letter of authorisation to each volunteer. The information needed in order for me to do that is:

- 1 Your RSGB membership number.
- 2 Your full name and address and contact Email and/or telephone.
- 3 Day, time and frequency you will operate.

You can use either HF or VHF. If you look at the schedule in the RSGB Handbook or Yearbook, you will find it there. www.rsgb.org/morse This web site will give you the full details. If it is a local Club project aimed at members, then VHF, 145.250MHz FM would be better. You can have interaction between you and the class, using your own call and use GB2CW when transmitting the Morse to the class. I find this is better because you do attract a regular class each week and build up a knowledge of their progress, plus it becomes a fun thing to do with the banter that goes on too. Plain language, groups of figures, some punctuation and standard QSO formats are all used. I download some news items from the NASA site because these contain mixed text, a lot of which cannot be anticipated.

When I run my session here in Norwich, I play to the audience. In other words, if I have a class with a standard of around 12 wpm, I will start at around 15 wpm, just to give them brain-strain. If I have a beginner, then obviously go through the whole code with them and get them started. If, however, someone signs in capable of 25 wpm but just wants a little practice, then 30 wpm will be sent. We have a target locally of 30 wpm, which I think is about right. After that, they can go their own way.

Fig 1 shows Andy Kersey, G0IBN, one of our volunteers. Here is what Andy has to say:

Operating GB2CW at 2015 on a Wednesday evening, on or around 3555, makes me feel I am doing my little bit for our fantastic hobby. I get a great sense of achievement when one of my pupils plucks up the courage to call me back at the end of my QRS transmission. I think it is important that newcomers to CW get used to listening to Morse which is not perfect! Yes, I make mistakes, but with the help of my ex GPO PS213 key they are kept to a minimum. Please feel free to give me a call at the end of

my GB2CW transmission, I will be using my own call-sign - G0IBN

The Pinnacle

The other reason for doing all this is to enable the students to gain a Certificate of Proficiency. With the abolition of the Morse test, there is nowhere else to gain one of these. We have a pool of assessors to carry out the Morse Test, at whatever speed you wish to be examined and it is a proper test with an invigilator. There is a very attractive Certificate to be won and makes it all worthwhile.

As well as volunteers the GB2CW Project will always welcome Assessors, so if you feel you are competent enough for that, please do apply. Ideally we need the same number of each! Check out the web site for details of the schedule and the GB2CW scheme in full. <http://www.rsgb.org/morse/>

Thanks to those already doing this worthwhile job and I look forward to the deluge of emails from new volunteers and assessors! roger@g3ldi.co.uk