

MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



Each month one of our members is randomly selected and asked to share their ham radio biography with all of us. Questions or comments should go to Paul, KD2MX.

DISCLAIMER: Any views expressed in this section are those of the submitting member and may or may not be those of the NAQCC or its officers.

PETE WALTON, MW0RSS, #5835



It's all my dad's fault! One evening when I was about 12 years old he threw a piece of wire out of my window and tied it to a tree. He then plugged the other end into a MW transistor radio and left me to it. Wow! Stations from all over Europe came blasting out of the little speaker. I soon acquired the family's 'redundant' old valve radio to listen to SW broadcast stations, and some amateur AM transmissions. Unresolved SSB and CW sounded other-worldly and caught my ear. I wanted to know more.

Seeing my interest in radio develop, my parents gave me a lovely WWII-era Eddystone 358x for Christmas, which had a BFO that enabled me to resolve SSB and CW. I was fascinated by the sound of CW, and how musical good code was to listen to.

I wanted to understand code, so I taught myself by memorizing the Morse characters from the 1960 Collins Radio Diary. I listened a lot, and practiced sending using a doorbell buzzer and a key made of a bent paper clip and drawing pins on a piece of wood (I am sure this drove my parents nuts!). It did not occur to me that you could be taught code. None of my friends were into radio, so I just got on with it, blissful in my ignorance.

I studied for the Radio Amateurs Exam at an evening class in the local technical college, and passed at

the age of 14, the minimum age for a license at that time in the UK. I also passed the 12-wpm CW test at our local coastal radio station, Anglesey Radio. This was both a thrill and nerve-racking!

Two amateurs were very supportive of me at that time: Ron (GW5YB) and Tony (then GW4CZK, now G4CZK). They both encouraged me and were fine role models. Both good CW ops too.

All was going well, but just as I prepared to get my license I discovered rock music, girls and then motorcycles! Its a hormonal thing. My interest in radio dwindled, and then followed a long gap until the late nineties, by which time I had sold the old Eddystone (much to my regret).

In 1999 I saw a Radio Shack DX-394 receiver for a good price and snapped it up. I began casual listening; my CW came back quite easily. I was happy as an SWL until someone at work mentioned that licenses were now available on-line, at no cost. I finally received my license in 2011. Better late than never!

My first transceiver was an Icom IC-750, and the only antenna I had was the not-very-long wire I had been listening with. This is the main reason I started using QRP; my computer reset if I used more than about 10W! I started to have success with low power so decided this was a good way to go. I have since put up several decent wire antennas with proper feeders.

I love winking out DX with QRP CW or having a chat at a speed that stretches my brain a little. I don't really like big contests and sometimes feel bullied off the air when the 'big guns' fire up. I enjoy homebrewing and have built several kits. I have also modified and fixed a few rigs. I appreciate good operating, and despair of stations who get my call sign wrong several times then give me 599. I think proper use of the RST code has diminished. You won't upset me with 329 if that's how my signal arrives at your end.

I was introduced to the NAQCC by Carl (GW0VSW) who used to write for Practical Wireless here in the UK. I take part in some NAQCC challenges when time permits, and have done several including Homebrew, Milliwatt, and Europe. I have the NAQCC to thank for getting me into QRPp!

I own several radios, all QRP except an FT-990, which I use for QRP on digital modes. Favorites include my HW-8 (a boyhood dream finally come true!), and my K2. I also have a NorCal 40A that I love but which doesn't get quite as much action as it should. My YL is very supportive (tolerant?!) of my hobby, and I have a Ten-Tec Century 22 at her house, which gets occasional use, usually when she is out. There is a 'menu-driven' FT-817 too, which has done great service from hotel rooms and is getting some use on 6m at the moment.

I have several NAQCC certificates, including KMPW 100 and DXCC QRPp. I am working towards a 200 KMPW endorsement. I also have a few 1000 MPW awards, but stopped applying for these a long time ago – the shack wallpaper is fine as it is.

One of my most memorable QSOs was breaking a 'split' pile-up with the HW-8. I heard 1A0C (The Order of Malta's Italian Relief Corps CISOM) calling on 40m one evening, listening 1kHz up. I tuned to where the pack were calling and set the filter wide. A couple of calls got me through. Great fun!

I am most comfortable with a straight key, and own several old UK ex-military keys, including a few 8 Amp No 2 keys and an Air Ministry 'Type D' and have recently bought a Vibroplex Original, which I am learning to use. I also use paddles when things get pacey.

I enjoy cycling and sometimes take a little rig out with me for portable operation. I also play double bass and a few other instruments, so I am never bored!

In my professional life I am a sound engineer for a well-known broadcasting corporation in the UK. No other family members are involved in radio – they just smile sweetly when I get excited about propagation or dits and dahs!

