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Hospital Broadcasting Association
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Hi Everyone,

If you were wondering about the significance of the front cover, the photograph was sent in by our Scottish Regional Rep, Jim Simpson, who took the most of an opportunity while in Rome. Now I am sure you intrepid travellers can come up with some more photos from far flung places. I look forward to hearing from you!

It’s that time of year again when stations should be preparing their entries for the National Hospital Radio Awards. Member stations should have received an entry form in the post but if it is easier, you can download a copy of the entry form in Word format at www.hbauk.com. Entries can be submitted by post or online by email to awards@hbauk.com. Closing date is Friday, 11th December 2009 so don’t forget to leave sufficient time if you are going to post them. Good luck everyone.

Please keep sending in your reports, the magazine will be nothing without them.

Michelle

DIARY DATES
NORTHERN REGION AGM
28th November 2009
Radio Tyneside
2010 CONFERENCE
Normandy Hotel, Renfrew
26th-28th March 2010
2011 CONFERENCE
Ramada Hotel, Maidstone
25th-27th March 2011

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Welcome

Once again I’m able to start my report with a ‘welcome’ – this time, I would like to welcome back Radio Victoria in Blackpool.

Unfortunately, this time, I also have to say some ‘goodbyes’. Radio North Mid in north London and Riverside Radio in central London have sadly both ceased broadcasting in the last few months and are in the process of winding-up. The closure of Warminster Community Hospital has seen the Friends of Warminster Community Radio cease hospital broadcasting.

Six months after the start of the membership year, the membership of two other stations, as well as a number of individual Associate Members has, unfortunately been automatically terminated for failure to pay their subscriptions; despite our best efforts, we have simply failed to make contact with these stations, so their current status is unknown.

Finally, on behalf of all the Trustees, I would like to thank Mike Skinner for all his hard work over the past few years, both as PR Manager and, latterly, as Sales and Advertising Executive. Mike has decided to stand down so that he has more time to spend on other interests.

HBA Enterprises

The issue of getting HBA’s former trading company closed down has been a fixture on the agenda for Executive Committee and, more recently, Trustee Board meetings since November 2003. I am pleased to report that, in late September, the directors of the company submitted an application to Companies House for the former trading company to be struck off the register of companies. If there are no objections, it will be removed in three months’ time.

Restructuring

Progress is still being made towards the restructuring of HBA. Discussions at the September meeting of the Trustee Board focussed on the role description for the position of Chief Executive. We hope to be in a position to ‘sign off’ on that and also to discuss the role descriptions for the Trustees at our meeting in November. It may seem that progress is slow – it is but the Trustees made a conscious decision that we would much rather move slowly and get things right rather than move more quickly and regret a decision made in haste.

HBA Training Network

By the time you read this, our first National Hospital Radio Training Day will have taken place. Ninety-six delegates will hopefully have spent an enjoyable and useful day learning about one of two aspects of running a hospital radio station. We will be reviewing the day before planning any further events but from the numbers of delegates, it would seem that we have identified an unfulfilled interest in training. Any feedback or input would be most welcome – from those who attended, telling us what you thought of the day, from those who didn’t attend, telling us why it wasn’t for you and from anyone suggesting ideas for future events.

Public Benefit

Those of you well-versed in Charity Law will know about the increased emphasis being applied on the need for charities to prove that they provide public benefit. The case for hospital broadcasting is quite clear and, in any case, most hospital radio stations have an income such that the reporting requirements are met by a simple statement in the Trustees’ Annual Report. HBA itself is, however, rather different; it has an income large enough that we have to report in slightly more detail and our activities result in indirect benefit – we aim to benefit member stations and their volunteers who will in turn, we hope, provide improved public benefit. The Trustee Board spent some time at our last meeting reviewing all the significant activities that HBA undertakes, ensuring that they could be related back to the Association’s charitable object, noting the public benefit being provided and discussing whether any private benefit obtained by individuals was no more than was necessary for them to undertake their charitable roles. I now have the task of writing-up our conclusions, which will eventually be published on our website.

I think all of us found the exercise worthwhile and I would encourage all members to find time in a committee meeting to list all the activities that the station undertakes, then dig out the station constitution, look at the ‘objects clause’ and see if you can link what you are actually doing to what you should be doing. It needn’t take very long and it could avoid later problems, as Trustees can be held personally responsible for any significant departure of a charity’s activities from its charitable objects.

Vetting & Barring Scheme

We have received a number of enquiries regarding how exactly the new Independent Safeguarding Authority and its Vetting and Barring Scheme (VBS) will affect hospital radio stations. We are currently investigating the details but it would appear that it will affect most, if not all, hospital radio stations. Once the scheme is up and running, new volunteers will need to apply to join the VBS at the time of their initial CRB check. There will be little practical difference other than that their suitability for working in a hospital will then be continuously monitored, unlike at present. The main difference would appear to come with the requirement that all existing volunteers submit themselves to a CRB check and VBS registration.
HBA Meeting with Hospedia

Ben Packman, Commercial and Media Director of Hospedia, met with the HBA Trustee Board on 18th July. Ben gave an introduction to Hospedia from its inception in July 2008 to the present and also set out the management’s plans for the company. A number of questions had been submitted by representatives of HBA members ahead of the meeting and, where these had not already been addressed, these were covered in the subsequent question and answer session. The answers have been merged into the appropriate section below.

Introduction and Background to Hospedia

On 25 July 2008, Patientline plc was placed into administration and Hospedia bought Patientline UK Ltd, the UK operating company. The original intent was to merge with Premier Telesolutions but the intervention of the Office of Fair Trading and its proposal to subject the merger to an investigation by the Competition Commission meant that this idea had to be abandoned due to the costs and delays involved.

The management team of Premier restructured the business to make it viable in the long term and then around half a dozen of the Premier management joined Hospedia on 5th November 2008. Only two of the original Patientline senior management team remain with the company.

The company debt has been reduced by £35m and a further substantial amount of funding has been recently agreed. The banking syndicate is fully behind the new management team and have given them the go-ahead for the necessary capital expenditure and recruitment to ensure the long-term future of the business. The impact of the use of mobile phones in hospital is expected to be ‘massive’ but has been factored into the financial plan.

Today, Hospedia serves 71,000 beds in 152 hospitals.

Plans for the Immediate Future

Repairs and Maintenance

Substantial funds have been pumped into repairs and maintenance. Repairs of bedside units is being brought in-house (it previously having been out-sourced). Two service centres have been established, resulting in greatly increased numbers of operational ‘T1’ terminals. ‘T2’ terminals will be the next focus.

Back-Office Systems

New back-office software is being developed and a new user-interface will be rolled-out in August/September. The call centre software is being upgraded to allow patients to purchase credit from the operator.

Registration is so fundamental to the operation of the system that it cannot be removed at this time. However, increased numbers of staff are being employed at the call centre to reduce delays. Self-registration by patients has been removed, as it has been found too complicated. Short-cuts to avoid the registration queue and the ability to perform a ‘guest’ logon will be retained.

Upgraded Bedside Units

All 13,500 of the original ‘T1’ bedside units are being phased out over the next 18 months. They are being replaced with new digital ‘T3’ units, with 15” touch screens. The swap-out will start in October and will continue throughout 2010.

The software from the ‘T3’ units will be pack-ported to the ‘T2-Digital’ units. The longer-term fate of the ‘T2-Analogue’ units has yet to be decided.

New Inter-Site Network

A new inter-site data network is being installed, with completion due in November. Once complete, it will be the fifth-largest IP network in the country. This network provides options for service provision at smaller hospital sites and could also potentially be used by hospital radio stations for inter-site links.

Staff

There is a switch in focus from the ‘hard sell’ to customer relations, with an intensive programme of staff re-training. It is acknowledged that this will be a long process.

170 new vacancies for on-site staff were opened in June. Thousands of applications per month are being received but it is proving very difficult to fill the vacancies with appropriate people.

Cost of Service Use

It has been decided to focus on the cost to patients, rather than on the inbound call charges. The current outbound call charges are considered ‘fairly reasonable’ but Hospedia is experimenting heavily on pricing. At the time of the meeting, there were 27 price trials in progress.

There are no plans to charge for access to the radio channels; this was discussed and dismissed immediately. Neither will there be any charges for headphones. Better quality headphones may, however, be available for sale at the hospital shop.

The free-call facility from the bedside units to the hospital radio studio will remain, where the studio is on the same site as the Hospedia control room. Where the studio is off-site, the possibility and/or cost of such a facility will be considered on a case-by-case basis. The new inter-site network may offer further options for connection.

Re-Branding

Re-branding from Patientline to Hospedia will be an on-going process but the official change will be from 9th September 2009.

The re-branding is being used as an opportunity to re-engage with ward staff; currently ward staff appear to be either very positive about the system or extremely negative. Efforts will be made to explain the benefits of the system to ward staff, and information and training provided about how the bedside units work.

New Installations

Apart from a couple of sites, no new installations will take place before mid-2010. These installations will mainly be at PFI-funded new hospitals replacing existing Hospedia sites.

An audit is currently taking place of which beds in which wards at existing sites have bedside units. The plan is that if bedside units are installed in a ward, then all beds will be equipped.

Communications between Hospedia and Hospital Radio Stations

Site managers will be encouraged to engage with the management of the hospital radio station carried on their system. [To this end, HBA has provided Ben with contact details of each member station which our database indicates is carried on a ‘Patientline’ system.]

A newsletter and user-guide for hospital radio volunteers will be produced by Hospedia later this year providing up-to-date information on available short-cuts to logon patients to the bedside unit, contact details and answers to frequently-asked questions.

Hospedia will continue to liaise at a national level with HBA. [Ben has been invited to attend the HBA National Conference and AGM in Blackpool in March.]
Awards Head to Glasgow

The National Hospital Radio Awards Ceremony will be held in Glasgow as part of the HBA Spring Conference.

It is now time to submit your entries to find out if your Hospital Radio Station will lift the trophy in your chosen categories. The awards are a great way for your station to gain publicity for all of the hard work that your volunteers put in during the year.

We have tried to take on board some of the comments that we have received over the last couple of years and we do listen. Many people have told us that the ceremony has become too long since we started presenting all of the certificates on the night, further they have said that it has taken the prestige of winning an award away from the Gold, Silver and Bronze placed entrants by turning the ceremony into a procession.

I realise that whichever way we go on this issue we are going to please some and disappoint others. However, after discussion we have decided to go the way of similar competitions and only present Gold, Silver and Bronze on the night in Glasgow. When the shortlist is announced ‘Certificate of Nomination’ will be sent out to those in the Top Ten. At this stage, stations will be able to seek publicity in their local areas for making it to the shortlist. This will restore the importance of the top three and allow the ceremony to flow more easily but we will of course be naming all those in the shortlist as part of the evening.

Now to the competition categories:

Unless otherwise stated there will be trophies for Gold, Silver and Bronze for each category.

We will, as in recent years, announce those who have been short listed prior to the ceremony and would urge anyone who appears on the shortlist to be present at the ceremony.

Please note that if the judges do not feel that a standard has been reached in each category then they may not shortlist a full ten entries. Following the success of accepting online entries last year, we plan to continue with this method. If you wish to take advantage please e-mail awards@hbauk.com with your name and station name and I will forward you a username and password complete with instructions.

Entries via this route should be in mp3 format and the entry form completed in Word Format. Alternatively, you can still enter by post as detailed below but be aware that this method may be affected by postal strikes so please do not leave it until the last minute:

Each station entry must be accompanied by the official entry form.

Every entry should be accompanied by your station logo.

Entries for the audio categories should only be submitted on CD. The CD can either be an audio CD or a data CD with MP3 files on it. Please include a station jingle as the first track. It is not necessary to incorporate a station jingle at the start of the audio on each category. It is also not necessary to send separate CDs for each category.

Entries on other formats will not be admitted.

All material should have been broadcast on your station between the dates of 1st December, 2008 and 30th November, 2009. It is time now to start work on your entries. When you are happy with them please send them in to arrive by the closing date of Friday December 11th, 2009.

You can download an entry form from the HBA Website www.hbauk.com

Details of the categories can be found below but for now I wish everyone the best of luck and look forward to seeing you in March. If you have any unanswered questions then you can e-mail me at awards@hbauk.com

Iain Lee

Station of the Year
You are required to submit a maximum 15 minute stand-alone documentary style recording featuring extracts from your station output.

The entry should give the judges an insight into your station, the hospitals you broadcast to, style of presentation and programme content. Also include material from any special programmes or events covered during the year.

Presenter of the Year (Male/Female)
You are required to submit a five minute entry showing the judges the diversity of your presentation and your awareness of the listeners.

Include as many different on-air clips as possible, not all from the same programme.

Special Event
This award recognises a one-off programme broadcast by the station. A 15 minute compilation of the programme is invited, please do not play music tracks in full.

It must be a one-off event and not part of the station’s normal day to day output e.g. an outside broadcast or a hospital event.

Best Speech Package
The entry should be a maximum of five minutes taken from a programme or interview that has been broadcast on the station. All music should be edited out of the entry.

The material must have originated from station presenters and not from any other source.

Best Specialist Music Programme
The entry will be five minutes and should show the judges the presenter’s knowledge of the music in question and should also include any content applicable to the
programme. E.g. an event guide/what's on feature relating to the show. Programmes could include jazz, classical, country, etc.

Station Promotion
An entry of up to 60 seconds is required and should be a station promotion or programme trailer that has been produced ‘in-house’.

The judges will be looking for how well the message is conveyed and whether they feel it will attract the ear of the listener. To be clear this must be a promotion rather than a 'jingle' and must not have been produced by a third party.

Best Newcomer
The award is open to anyone who joined a hospital radio station for the first time during the two years prior to the closing date. It should take the form of a five minute compilation.

The judges are looking to hear what you have achieved on air in the short time you have been broadcasting. An individual may only enter this award once.

NB There is only one award in this category.

HBA Volunteer of the Year
This award is open to all members within hospital radio and requires a written submission of no more than 300 words on the station's official letter heading, explaining why the award is justified of actions taken within the eligible dates.

It could be for a presenter who has gone beyond the call of duty, a request collector, an engineer or a fund raiser. It is aimed at recognising the hard work that goes on behind the scenes that often goes unrecognised – it is for off-air not on-air achievement.

NB There is only one award in this category.

The John Whitney Award
Open to anyone working in hospital radio. Entries should be written (no more than 500 words) and be on the stations official letter heading.

The award will be made to the person who has made an outstanding contribution to Hospital Radio over a period of years.

The winner may be drawn from broadcasting but might equally be found from a technical or administrative background.

They may have worked for a single station or a series of stations.

The nomination should explain why the candidate has made a real and long lasting impact.

NB There is only one award in this category.

Happy 80th Birthday, Ena

I have known Ena Montgomery since 1974 – we met when York Hospital Radio was responsible for organising the conference in the Autumn of 1974 and at that time Ena was Secretary of the National Association. Brian, my late husband, had been on the National Committee since before the organisation had been formed having supported Ken Fulstow in his work to set up the Association and had already known Ena since she and her station joined the Association.

It was not long before Ena and so many of the committee became life long friends and Ena became Aunty Ena.

Over the years, Ena has been an inspiration to lots of people and a well respected person, particularly in her own community in Chorley where she was involved in and Chaired or was President of many organisations locally including Soroptimist International Chorley, The Business and Professional Women’s Club. She was also a local J.P. Of course she has also been a President of our Association too.

Ena was also recognised and awarded an M.B.E for all her good work. It was one such organisation – the Citizens Advice Bureau – who gave the game away. I am grateful to Sarah Boocock of that organisation, who through our website, contacted us to advise that Ena would be celebrating her special birthday on 5th October. I knew that Ena had kept her birth date a secret for all these years but speaking to Sarah knew that it was important we should acknowledge this and so it was that I arranged for flowers and a card from the HBA.

I knew that Ena had kept her birth date a secret for all these years but speaking to Sarah knew that it was important we should acknowledge this and so it was that I arranged for flowers and a card from the HBA.

MANY CONGRATULATIONS AUNTIE ENA, A VERY HAPPY BIRTHDAY and thank you for getting the message to Sarah that the flowers safely arrived and now the secret is out – I know your birthday date, I have it in my diary!!

Take care and Best wishes and thanks for all the work you have done for our Association from us all at the HBA.

June Snowden, OCTOBER 2009
It is always wonderful to be invited to visit stations for whatever reason and 2009 has been no exception. I have been pretty busy this year as I was also President of my Rotary Club until the end of June but that has now finished so I have even more time to spend visiting stations. It has also meant that I was able to visit and catch up with all my wonderful friends in Germany this summer and I had a great time. The hospitality in Germany is as good as the hospital radio station visits.

Many, many congratulations to both Hospital Radio Bedside and to Hospital Radio Norwich upon receiving their Queen’s Awards – it is a wonderful achievement and I look forward to being with Radio Bedside for their reception being held at the hospital in October. It really is good to know that Hospital Radio is being acknowledged in this way.

I managed to visit Scotland for the day – yes the day, thanks to the help of various members of the Scottish stations and was able to attend the Scottish Region Meeting held in Perth. Unfortunately it was impossible to get to Perth a few days later for their presentation of Long Service Certificates. On my birthday I was in Weston super Mare for the Wales and West Regional Training Day and I was delighted to see that it was very well supported.

Shortly after that, I attended Radio Addenrooke’s AGM and it was also a very enjoyable evening, like all my visits. A few days later I was off to Whips Cross who had a great celebration evening for their 40th Anniversary party and I was able to present certificates there.

My first visit to High Wycombe took place in early July and it was great to meet everyone for their AGM. It is really pleasing to catch up with stations whose members I have met perhaps at Conference or at SBES or even at another station but to actually visit those stations I have not had a previous chance to visit is also really good.

Between a quick visit to my Danish friends and my visit to Germany, I managed to get to Harlow Hospital Radio for their AGM too and will be returning to see them all later in the year as they are at this time preparing to celebrate their 40th anniversary.

On arriving home from Germany, I was able to visit Radio Gwendolen, Leicester for their 35th birthday and it was so lovely that after all these years that I could introduce my cousin and his wife to the work of hospital radio – they had come to visit me for the weekend and I was able to take them along.
I also recently went along to Radio Addenbrooke’s to record an interview as Lesley and Rosie, two of their members, were planning and preparing for their 12 hour broadcast in September – so I wish the ladies all the best and have a great day, too.

My most recent visit has been to Radio Cherwell in Oxford for their AGM and once again was delighted to have been invited to present Long Service Certificates to their members. I was also pleased to present on their behalf, the Peter Baker Award to one of their newer members – Juliet.

My next visit, which is in a few days, is to Winchester where they are celebrating 25 years of broadcasting and as well as attending their Civic reception, I look forward to presenting 14 Long Service Certificates.

And a reminder ... Long Service Certificates are there for you – to acknowledge the hard work, dedication and commitment everyone gives to Hospital Radio – locally, regionally and nationally. I thank you all and it delights me to be able to produce the certificates as well as present as many as possible so that I can personally thank members on behalf of the HBA.

I have already issued over 220 certificates this year and that is totalling well over 3,000 years of service – this really is a wonderful record of how much everyone gives to their stations. So do please continue to request these certificates and I or one of the HBA committee will do their best to make the presentation to you.

I am looking forward to several visits already pencilled in the diary including Plymouth, Winchester Glan Clwyd and hopefully the South East Regional Meeting in Goodmayes.

Many thanks to you as always for your excellent hospitality – I really do enjoy being with you and seeing just how your stations are getting along and in these difficult economic times I hope that you are all not feeling the pinch for your fund raising too much.

Best wishes to you all

June Snowden
President, HBA
September 2009
What has been your greatest achievement so far in this field?
Getting to the studio most weeks, despite my work commitments!

How and where are you employed in the veterinary profession?
I qualified 20 years ago this summer and have been employed in the Mid Sussex area ever since. For the last 13 years I have been principal of a small animal practice I set up myself from scratch. I still enjoy practising first opinion ‘GP’ small animal medicine.

What is your sideline?
My sideline is hospital radio presenting. I present a weekly show called ‘The Afternoon Delight’ on Mid-Downs Hospital Radio (MDR) 1350 AM at the Princess Royal Hospital, which is just up the hill from my Veterinary Clinic in Haywards Heath. It is the only classical music show in the week for the patients of the hospital and includes regular snippets about the animal patients I see and the trouble they get into.

How did you get involved in your side interest?
I have always enjoyed doing voluntary work, from Riding for the Disabled to tin shaking and then PAT (Pets As Therapy) visiting at a local nursing home with my terrier, Bella. When she became too old to enjoy jumping onto beds and accepting chocolate offerings, and my son became old enough to start school full time, I needed a new hobby. I’ve always loved music. I used to dance for Cambridge University Ballroom Dancing Team and never missed a ‘sweaty bop’ whilst in college. Gradually I learnt to appreciate classical music, especially during my pregnancy. Then I bumped into MDR’s tinshaking team, just outside the Veterinary Clinic and decided to volunteer. I’ve always enjoyed performing; this seemed like a good way to combine that fun with a good deed.

What do you enjoy most about this activity?
I like the freedom of choosing my own output of music to broadcast for two hours. I imagine myself or one of my family in a hospital bed, not feeling too great and try to think what music might lift them out of their sadness and help them through the day. I also enjoy the challenge of running the studio, which is fairly technical and try to manage without any errors – not always successfully!

What are your ambitions – immediate and distant – in this area?
I have no ambitions, except to continue to provide a service that hopefully helps people through a difficult time in their lives. My ambition for MDR is to extend awareness of the service we provide so that more patients tune in to enjoy it.

Has your sideline taught you any important lessons?
Going from operating in the mornings at the veterinary clinic to broadcasting in the afternoons at the hospital really helps me keep my own importance in context and to be grateful for my health and family.

Does it take up a lot of time and, if so, how do you manage this?
It is not time consuming. I rarely prepare for the show. I just take in my favourite CDs and ensure I play music I enjoy, which I hope the audience will love too. The training took about five months, with weekly sessions and I now chair the committee of MDR, which is time consuming but the presenting is fun, if tiring.
How does your sideline compare to your role in the veterinary profession?
In some ways they are very similar. I am in control, guiding what happens; I am communicating with a listener (hopefully); I am a friend at the bedside. In other ways they are disparate: I cannot see my listener on the radio, which makes communicating and staying interesting much harder. At the radio station my goal is to be amusing and uplifting, whereas, of course, it is about being understood at work.

Would you ever consider leaving the profession to make a full-time career out of it?
Hmm ... if the BBC came knocking, yes – I could be tempted! Terry

Are any other veterinary professionals involved in this activity?
Not that I’ve come across. One of MDR’s sidelines is to earn money by providing discos and a PA service. I know of other vets who are disco DJs but not in hospital radio.

Would you advise your colleagues to get involved – and, if so, how?
Certainly, I really enjoy it. It’s challenging and requires concentration but it is very satisfying ... I’ve made some good friends and hopefully raised some patients’ spirits.

How else do you spend your time?
I work full time, manage a household, am raising an 11-year-old son and chair the MDR Committee – that’s about all I CAN do!

Our thanks to ‘Veterinary Management Today’ for this article
The Antidote

It seems that both suppliers and customers relied on SBES rather more than we perhaps imagined – and it is a great shame that it has gone. Looking back at the people we have met over the last couple of years, about half the people we spoke to were from Hospital and Community Stations with the BBC and larger radio groups making up the rest with just the odd sprinkling of overseas customers.

The early days of SBES – the Sound Broadcast Equipment Show – were great fun. The exhibition started life as an add-on to the IBA Chief Engineers’ conference which took place at the Albany Hotel in Birmingham. We would turn up as early as we could on the second morning of the meeting, hire a baize cloth from the organisers to cover a trestle table from the hotel and lay out our wares as best we could. Then at 12 o’clock, there was an Exhibitor’s lunch after which we waited to meet the “hordes” who were actually our friends who had spent the last day-and-a-half at the Conference. Everything finished at 7pm at which time we packed up and retired to the bar for the evening or went home. It was a splendid opportunity for we suppliers to show-and-tell and for the buyers to take a look-see at what was new. Those were the days.

As the show became larger (and longer), it became for us exhibitors a very expensive activity after you take into account the space (for 2 days), the stand, the electricity supply, the hotel bills and all the infrastructure that goes with it. Nonetheless, last year for sure, it was a very worthwhile show as far as we were concerned.

The sad fact is that we do not have any other show tailored to “Radio” as opposed to “Audio” – which is not the same as we all know. We approached the Hospital Broadcasting Association, the Community Radio Association and the BBC for some informal discussion and there could still be mileage in having some smaller shows linked to various “other” meetings – déjà vu all over again.

However, this will all take some time to set up. It was also clear that quite a number of people are not aware that SBES is in fact cancelled and – with an ex officio-promoter on our staff – we decided to organise something along the lines of the early days.

You are therefore invited to join us at our ANTIDOTE TO SBES – to be held at the NEC on THURSDAY 11TH NOVEMBER from 10.30am to 5pm. Please register in advance either online or by returning the form to us – Registration is £5 per person which includes buffet lunch – but here is the really good bit – ALL the money is going to Children in Need – we just need to know numbers!!

We decided that the NEC is a good, central place with excellent rail, road and air connections and at this relatively short notice, we managed to book conference rooms at the RAMADA-ENCORE Hotel which is within walking distance of the NEC / Birmingham International Station. There is also lots of parking available at the hotel.

We have arranged a series of short technical talks – on IP Audio Coding, Interfacing Telephones and Time and Frequency solutions for Radio Stations – which will take place throughout the day depending on the demand. There will be working equipment to get hands-on experience and we hope that everyone will take the opportunity to get involved in open discussion and to ask questions – not just on our own particular solutions but about the subjects in general.

Tom Hartnett – Director of Engineering from Comrex – is flying in from Boston to give the talks on IP Audio Coding. He is a world expert in 3G and Internet Audio coding, has presented technical papers on the subject at NAB and other conferences and sits on a number of standards committees, so we are lucky to have him at the NEC.

THE ANTIDOTE TO SBES - REGISTRATION INFORMATION

NAME: ____________________________ COMPANY: ___________________________________________ PostCode: ____________________________
ADDRESS: ____________________________________________________________
TEL: ______________________________ E-Mail: ____________________________________________
I AM INTERESTED IN: IP Audio Coding ______ Time and Frequency _____ Telephone Interfacing _____
I will be there: Morning ______ Afternoon ______ Both ______
I am happy to donate £5 to CHILDREN IN NEED: Cheque Enclosed ______ or Please Debit my Card ______
CARD NUMBER: ____________________________ Exp: ______ Start: ______ CVC: ______
NAME ON CARD: ____________________________ Signature: __________________________
BILLING ADDRESS: ____________________________________________________________

Please return to: Vortex Communications Ltd, 75 The Grove, Ealing, LONDON W5 5LL - or call 020-8579 7105
to SBES

IP AUDIO CODECS AND USING 3G AND THE PUBLIC INTERNET FOR OUTSIDE BROADCAST.

First there were music lines, then along came ISDN codecs – followed by PSTN or POTS codecs (Plain Old Telephone System); these then worked over GSM making them completely mobile – and now we have IP codecs that use 3G and the Internet for live Outside Broadcasts. We will discuss audio codecs and bitrate reduction, circuit-switched and packet-switched data (the difference between ISDN/PSTN and IP connectivity), the difficulties of real-time audio (and video) streaming and the importance of error correction and jitter buffering. We then dive a little bit into various IP Protocols – TCP, UDP and RTP – and move swiftly onto firewalls and routers – and how to penetrate them – and the latest audio coding algorithms and compatibility between different IP Audio Codecs.

TELEPHONE INTERFACES AND TALK SHOW SYSTEMS.

It is said that there are only two things required to set up a radio station – a Talk Show System and a cash register and it is the black art of telephone interfacing that we will cover in this talk. A standard PSTN dial telephone line comprises a pair of wires that carries both halves of the same conversation – and also the signal to make the telephone ring. On the other hand, a telephone apparatus has its separate microphone and earphone so has somehow split the telephone signal into two. Telephone Hybrids provide this functionality and we will discuss what they do and what they do not do. Mobile connectivity is a different matter and we will look at cabled connections to a mobile phone and also 4-wire adapters using Bluetooth. Finally, we will look at telephone conferencing – Phone-In and Talk Show systems - and the importance of clean feeds / mix-minus.

LOCKING TOGETHER TIME, FREQUENCY AND REFERENCE SIGNALS FOR RADIO STATIONS.

Consistent and accurate time-keeping is vitally important in live situations such as Radio Broadcast especially at programme junctions and switching to and from live news feeds. Just a second out can lose one “pip” or clip the first or last word. We will discuss the various external atomic time references such as GPS or MSF, NTP Time Servers for locking computer networks, EBU timecode used to provide accurate time information to playout systems, digital clocks and stopwatches – and analogue clocks (with hands). We then move onto the need for digital audio reference signals such as AES-EBU Word Clock or AES Silence and how these can be locked to atomic references - and in passing, discuss their relationship to SD and HD High Definition Video.

SEE YOU THERE - WHEN YOU WILL BE ABLE TO GET YOUR HANDS-ON ALL THE ABOVE

The Antidote to SBES
The Ramada Encore NEC, Birmingham - 12 Nov 2009

Hands-on Training Workshop & Technical Talks

Join us for some short technical talks, hands-on demonstrations & discussions throughout the day - Buffet lunch included - within easy walking distance of the NEC & Birmingham International

Technical talks include -
- IP Audio - Using 3G and the Public Internet for Outside Broadcast plus Compatibility & Interworking
- Connections - Telephone Interfaces & Talkshow Systems for Landlines & Mobiles
- Time - Referencing Time and Frequency for Radio Stations

The Ramada NEC, 12th NOV 2009
10.30am - 5.00pm
Registration Hotline - 020-8579 7105

Registration is £5 - All money goes to Children in Need
Tel: 020-8579 2743 or E-mail: info@vtx.co.uk
Vortex Communications Ltd, 75 The Grove, Ealing, London, W5 5LT • www.vtx.co.uk
Eighty and Still Ruling the Airwaves

Born in the same year as Trafford General (or Park Hospital as it was) opened, the longest serving member of the hospital’s Radio Wishing Well has notched up a milestone 80th birthday. Alan Thorpe has been a presenter and much valued personality at ‘The Well’ for nearly 20 years and has produced a regular Monday evening show for most of that time.

During the 1948 Olympics, while he was serving with the armed forces, Alan stood at the finish line of many events and would race to the radio room with the results so they could be broadcast to the waiting world.

A few members of Radio Wishing Well dropped in at the end of a recent show to help him celebrate. Alan is regarded a legend at Radio Wishing Well and has mentioned his retirement from broadcasting, to which, Station Manager Richard Parkinson replies, ‘Over my dead body’.

Mike Williams, who takes over from Alan after his show, added, ‘I first knew Alan in the early nineties during my first period at Wishing Well and I was so pleased to still see him there when I came back almost four years ago. Alan is a perfect example of what makes hospital radio great. He speaks to his audience about things they will remember and stirs memories with his blend of music.’

Everybody at Radio Wishing Well would like to wish Alan a very happy birthday and long may he rule the airwaves.

West Fife Relaunch

The station relaunch at Queen Margaret Hospital, Dunfermline was held in the hospital’s board room on Sunday, 20th September.

Chairperson, John Mingay, provided an introduction outlining the role of hospital radio and its ever-growing importance in the world of new technology: ipods, portable music, etc. He spoke about the history of the station which has been broadcasting from various locations, including a caravan on the grounds of the old Dunfermline and West Fife hospital. We have been serving hospitals in Dunfermline since 1954! He then introduced ex-Deacon Blue drummer and Sportscene presenter Dougie Vipond, who talked us through some of the highlights of his career and gave us some very amusing examples of his experience in media. He also gave us some very useful tips in terms of preparation for our shows!

The group then visited our new state-of-the-art studio and The Courier newspaper took pictures of Dougie Vipond cutting the ribbon and opening our new studio. This was followed by ‘Saturday Night Live’ presenter Gary Peattie interviewing Dougie live on air.

The group then retired to the board room for food and drinks.

Members of the team from the Victoria Radio Network in Kirkcaldy also offered us help and guidance towards making great radio and we look forward to establishing links with their station.

The relaunch was followed by the station’s AGM and we now have a very strong committee who are already working hard to ensure the service to the patients of Queen Margaret Hospital offered by Radio West Fife goes from strength to strength!

Asda Make It Better!

When Radio Halton volunteers found two machines in the hospital studio no longer worked and needed replacing, volunteer presenter Margaret Longworth contacted Asda to see if they could help.

She was pleasantly surprised when Asda Runcorn phoned to say they had a cheque for £503.13 to present to Radio Halton.

Volunteer Pam Eastwood said, ‘This big-hearted donation has helped to buy a new dual CD player and a minidisc player to ensure the tunes keep playing for patients, staff and visitors at Halton General Hospital’.

Members drop in to help Alan celebrate.

From left to right: Chris Hogan, Alan Thorpe, Dave Thompson, Richard Parkinson and Dilys Bray
Robert's Roundabout

Southampton PCT Chief Executive, Bob Deans, was a guest on the Tuesday 'Roundabout Show' on the Hospital Radio Channel – a bit like Desert Island Discs.

Bob brought with him six pieces of music and between the musical interludes Bob enlightened listeners not only with the duties and responsibilities of being the Chief Executive of the Southampton PCT but he also recalled some of his personal history as well.

Bob came 'over the blue' from his homeland at the tender age of 17 and started his career as a nurse alongside his Uncle in a hospital that cared for young people who were unable to take care of themselves. He spent ten years as an active front line nurse in various locations and then 'crossed over the line' into management, where he felt he could better serve the community. His experiences included the time in our recent history when the large 'institutional' hospitals were being closed and he spent a great deal of his time assisting patients to become acclimatised into the more domesticated situations as we know them.

His feelings for the staff 'at the coal face' are very close to his heart and he remains convinced that although the 'men in suits' are always considered to be unfeeling in their approach to the present day problems, his own experiences stand him in good stead to ensure all his actions are aimed with the benefit of both the staff and patients very much to the fore.

Following the programme Bob was given a tour of the studios and remarked on how well organised the 24 hour radio service is operated, all by volunteers.

Dave Celebrates 30 Years' Service

On 5th October, Station manager Dave Smith received his thirty years' service certificate from the Chairman of the League, Roy Ryman. David joined Radio Heatherwood in 1979 after an old school friend invited him along. David was bitten by the bug and became a regular contributor to the programmes on a Saturday.

In the early eighties, he became a rep on the radio committee and then manager for the station. In the eighties, he was appointed treasurer for the League of Friends as well as holding the post of manager for the radio service.

Since David joined the station, it has undergone some radical changes in the way the service is received and developed. In the early days the station was run on a shoestring with little money to develop the service. David oversaw the introduction of regular fundraising for all presenters, a code of conduct for staff and better training for all members.

New studios have been built, a move to new premises and the introduction of the AM inductive loop service. It's been a rollercoaster ride for David who with his brother Peter have created a valuable asset. David is still treasurer for the League as well as station manager. David can still occasionally be heard on a Saturday morning doing what he loves best: spinning the discs and sharing his experiences with the audience.

Chairman Roy Ryman, thanked David on behalf of the League for his service and dedication. Two certificates were presented: one from the League and one from the HBA.

Radio Enfield – Giving Patients a Real Tonic

Radio Enfield, based at Chase Farm Hospital, Enfield, celebrates 40 years on the air next May and to mark the occasion, a book has been published telling the Radio Enfield story.

Written by Deputy Chairman and Sunday night presenter David Scarff, who has been with the station since August 1970, it tells the story of how the station started and expanded from a weekly two-hour programme on Sunday evenings to its current 24 hours-a-day service for patients. Also detailed is how the service covered North Middlesex and Highlands Hospitals and incorporated football commentaries from Enfield and Tottenham football clubs.

‘Looking back on what we have achieved over the years, we are proud of what we have done and this book is an attempt to cover the Radio Enfield story and pay tribute to all those people – members and non-members – who have helped us through the years’, said David.

‘It has been terrific tracing some long lost members and friends of the station and re-living some memorable moments that still stick in our minds today’, he added.

‘There are too many highlights to pick a favourite’ said David ‘but the various hospital fetes we took part in were memorable plus many of the studio guests such as the Mayors, local MPs and a very interesting interview with orchestra leader and composer Geoff Love who came to our studios to talk about his life in show business. More recently Chief Executive Averil Dongworth paid a visit to tell us about her role at the hospital’.

The book at £14.99, contains over 200 pages with more than 100 photographs from throughout the station’s history and anecdotes from many of the current and former members.
Harlow Celebrates 40th Anniversary

Harlow Hospital Radio is fast approaching its 40th anniversary in 2010.

The station was formed in 1970 and is based at Princess Alexandra Hospital in Harlow, Essex.

The 40th Anniversary Committee first met in May 2008, under the leadership of the station’s Vice-Chairman Jane Bryson and Jane and her team have plans at an advanced stage to celebrate the anniversary.

The first event to launch the celebrations is a Christmas Concert at Matching Tye Village Hall, near Harlow on the evening of Sunday December 6th, 2009. The main entertainment is provided by The Entertainers, all of whom are members of the Bishop’s Stortford Musical Theatre Company and they will be singing songs from the shows as well as seasonal numbers.

Principle guests who have already accepted invitations include the Lord Lieutenant of Essex, Lord Petre, Bill Rammell MP for Harlow, Edna Stevens, Chair of Harlow District Council and June Snowden, HBA President.

Further events are scheduled for 2010, including an enlarged annual Open Day and a 40th anniversary dinner.

For more details please visit the station website, www.harlowhospitalradio.org or contact the station Secretary, John Bryson, via the station mobile on 07538 403432.

Andy Meadows
Chairman
Harlow HR

The Holy Grail

“It has been akin to the search for the Holy Grail to have all the broadcast spots filled with a live presenter,” said Peter Burrage, programmes manager of Hospital Radio Yare. He went on to say, “I have been trying to achieve this aim as an ideal for five years but this week it came within one live show from a reality.”

Recruitment has been steady this year with most volunteers making it through the training with the younger people being well represented. The station’s live broadcasting time is from 10am, after the previous day’s repeat of the request programmes, until midnight. The overnight broadcast times and the few unfilled live times are delivered by the computers which put out popular music with the station identities and current news reports, cleverly aired by the wonders of the computer system on the hour every hour giving, 24 hours a day, seven days a week service.

Peter would like to know if other stations pursue this as a Holy Grail or if full daytime live broadcasts are commonplace within hospital radio stations. As far as he has been able to ascertain this is the nearest we have ever come to achieving full daytime live transmissions. But with just a few more presenters, which is being worked on, he feels certain it will be done on Radio Yare in the near future for short periods at least. The station will be unlikely to keep it up week in week out but you never know, where there is a will there is a way

Peter said, “Although computers do a great job, there is nothing as warm and friendly as the human voice speaking and reacting in the instant.”

Cliff Richard Tops!

Our request collectors log every patient’s request on a slip which is then passed onto the radio presenter each day. We have a live request show broadcast every evening between 8pm and 10pm which is repeated the following morning 12 hours later.

The presenter or presenters, as there are often two working together, put the request slips into a secured box after each show. At the end of each week the information is transferred to a computer database.

Every October the data is analysed to reveal the results which help the station provide the patients with their programming content.

This year there were around 500 requests taken which covered a huge variation of artists and material.

Software engineer, Shane Carson said “It is not a huge sample but it is meaningful data delivering enough information to be analysed into very interesting indicators. As there is no longer a National Radio request show and when there was, because of huge numbers requests, they had to be selected. Every single request a local hospital patient makes is played on air by our radio station which is also making a contribution as a scientific survey.”

He went on to say, This result shows just how many fans Cliff has and that is in spite of the virtual ban on the air play given to his records by the BBC.

The second most requested by a large margin was Daniel O’Donnell and a close third was Frank Sinatra.”

Brian Frederick
Press Officer
Radio Yare
New Broadcasting Studio Opens
The great day has finally arrived, after a long campaign to raise £20,000 in order to replace worn out broadcasting equipment, HR Stafford have now completed the task. Considering the current financial climate, this has been no mean feat. It would have not been possible without the encouragement and financial support of Penkridge Rotary Club, Staffordshire County Council, William Cadbury Trust, Hospital Broadcasting Association, Barclays Bank and the Government Office of the Third Sector.

The Grand Opening Day of the new studio will be held on 15th October starting at 5.30pm. Antony Sumara, Chief Executive of the Hospital Trust, will perform the opening ceremony.

The new studio will now allow for future expansion of the service during the next ten to 20 years.

Hospital Radio Stafford broadcasts for 24 hours 7 days a week, to the patients in Stafford and Cannock Hospitals. We started broadcasting in 1972.

Richard Ellison
Hospital Radio Stafford

Ears to You

HRM presenter and Disney employee, Adrian Last, applied for funding and was delighted to receive the maximum amount – $2,500, around £1,655.

Adrian, who is also secretary of the HRM, said, ‘It’s great that my job has been able to benefit Hospital Radio Medway.

‘The money from Disney has helped us make some recent changes at HRM – buying some new equipment and redecorating part of the studio to make it more welcoming to visitors.’

Tommy McFeggan, Disney’s Director of Community Affairs, said, ‘It is for this very reason the Ears To You grant exists, so that employees who volunteer in their local communities can direct their funds to local charitable organisations. We are thrilled to support Adrian’s volunteer talent and creativity with a donation directed to Hospital Radio Medway.’

Happy Birthday

Seaside Hospital Radio

Seaside Hospital Radio is celebrating 37 years of radio programming and support to the Shoreham and Worthing districts.

The station was launched on 24 September 1972 from studios housed in a disused butcher’s store within the ground of Southlands Hospital, by the unmistakable tones of Dean Martin singing ‘Gentle On My Mind’. Originally established in February 1972, the organisation took seven months to raise the necessary funds to build the studio, purchase equipment and train volunteer presenters before the official launch could take place.

Initially known as Southlands Hospital Broadcasting Service, the organisation changed its name to Radio Southlands in May 1974 and moved to its current studios within Southlands Hospital.

In May 2004 the organisation grew again with the inclusion of Worthing Hospital to its happy band of listeners and was rebranded Seaside Hospital Radio.

Chairman Dean Fieldus said, ‘As an organisation run entirely by volunteers, we are exceptionally proud to have been an integral part of the community for almost four decades. Music, technology and the regulatory framework may have changed significantly since 1972, however Seaside Hospital Radio has always kept pace with these changes and has never lost sight of why we formed – to help in the relief of sickness, infirmity and old age amongst hospital patients by providing professional radio programming for the patients, staff and visitors to Southlands and Worthing Hospitals’.

Dean Fieldus
Chairman, Seaside Hospital Radio

Officially the Best in the West

It’s official, Radio Lollipop (Glasgow) is now the best team in the west according to Scotland’s best selling evening paper, the Evening Times. More than 200 people attended the Glasgow Community Champion Awards, sponsored by Strathclyde Police, Strathclyde Fire & Rescue plus many more in Partick Burgh halls recently.

Radio Lollipop managed to scoop the award for the best team in the west of Glasgow, presented to us by the Lord Provost Councillor Bob Winter of Glasgow City Council. The awards are gained by voting from members of the public.

A delighted Rik Devlin, who accepted the award on behalf of the Glasgow team said, ‘To get an award for behaving like a big kid, you can’t ask for anything more really. It’s a licence to go daft. The Kids love it’. Radio Lollipop will now go through to finals, which will take place in October at Glasgow’s City Chambers.

So well done to all the hard-working volunteers at Yorkhill as their work doesn’t go unnoticed and an achievement for Glasgow to receive this on Radio Lollipop’s 30th birthday. Plus we even got a well done from MSP Sandra White who mentioned our work during her opening speech on the 1st of June in the Scottish Parliament.

Stephen Quinn, Radio Lollipop
**News Round-up**

**RAF Musicians Tune Up for Nationwide Tour**

BBC Radio 2 broadcasters Sarah Kennedy, Lynn Bowles and Alan Dedicoat and Dad’s Army star Ian Lavender will share the role of compere on the prestigious RAF in Concert tour, which embarks on its 13-date trip around the UK in October in support of the Royal Air Force Charitable Trust.

The tour starts at Manchester’s Bridgewater Hall on October 23 and takes in venues from Gateshead to Eastbourne and the recently refurbished Colston Hall in Bristol.

Each concert features one of the main RAF bands of the Service – augmented by the RAF Salby Orchestra and either the big-band sound of the Squadronaires or Swing Wing. Squadron Leader Duncan Stubbs, the RAF’s Principle Director of Music designate, will be conducting the programme, which includes a rousing Armed Forces Salute; timeless classical pieces as well as more contemporary favourites from stage and screen.

For further details, visit www.airtattoo.com/Concerts_and_Events/RAF_in_Concert

**Royal Marines in Concert**

Calling all Hospital Radio Stations!

If you would like to stream a LIVE broadcast of HM Royal Marines Band in concert to your listeners on Friday evening, 22nd November 2010 please contact Hilary Forde on 01442 866006 or e-mail hilfor_us@yahoo.co.uk.

The Rotary Clubs of St. Albans area have put this sell out concert on for the past 15 years at The Alban Arena and we were invited to broadcast it in January this year to a couple of hospitals and it was a resounding success. And it is because of this success the Rotary Clubs have asked us to open it to more Hospital Radio stations.

**Tracey Swims for Children of Alcoholics**

I am a child of an alcohol dependent parent and my mum lost her life to the disease three and a half years ago. Unfortunately, I’m all too aware of the volatility and heartache that exists in the lives of the 3.6 million young and old children of alcoholics in the UK.

In September I swam across Lake Windermere in The Great North Swim to raise money for NACOA, The National Association for Children of Alcoholics, an incredible charity who offered a helpline and line of support for some 36,000 COA’s last year.

I’ve had my wetsuit on (an attractive and unforgiving little neoprene number) and head down surviving the summer holidays with the kids and training. I’ve never done anything like this before and please forgive me for asking if you could possibly do any or all of the following:

- find £1.00 to donate towards my swim via my Just Giving page.
- ask your work colleagues if they’d like to donate £1.00 too. I don’t work in an office any more and simply don’t have that many contacts!
- circulate my email or a link to my Just Giving page to anyone you think may be able to help,
- and now a BIG ask to any media contacts, PLEASE pen a short note for your blogs, websites, newsletters or give it a blast on your radio stations, I really need your help to spread the word.

I am immensely grateful for anything you can do to help the plight of children of alcoholics.

With love and thanks always Tracey xxx

**Royal Marines in Concert**

**Radio Marsden Celebrate**

Radio Marsden was founded in November 1969 and, to commemorate the 40th anniversary, we will be broadcasting on 87.7FM from 2nd to 29th November 2009 to Sutton and all surrounding areas. With a focus on celebrating the work and achievements of both the station and the two Royal Marsden hospitals (in Sutton and Chelsea) which the station serves, we will be broadcasting a mixture of music and magazine-style programmes, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

A number of celebrities will be joining in the fun, with many taking part in our ‘All-star Request Show’. Sir Tom Jones and Scouting for Girls; Barbara Windsor, Philip Schofield and Dermot O’Leary; Tony Blackburn and Paul Gambaccini; Tony Blair, David Cameron and Mayor of London, Boris Johnson.

Programme highlights include a local sports show each Saturday afternoon, featuring player and manager interviews with the likes of Sutton Utd, Carshalton Athletic, Epsom & Ewell, Kingstonian and AFC Wimbledon, along with many other local teams. Listen out for a special live sports show direct from Gander Green Lane during one of Sutton United’s home games too.

There will also be guest celebrity programmes hosted by the likes of BBC Breakfast Newsreader Sarah Irving and the National Lottery’s ‘Voice of the Balls’ Alan Dedicoat and ‘Strictly Come Dancing’s’ Anton Du Beke.

The whole thing starts at 6am on Monday 2nd November with Radio Marsden Chairman Jason Reynolds bringing you the Breakfast Show (Mon-Fri 6.00 till 10.00am).

**BHBN Back on Air**

BHBN is back on air – two months after a technical glitch broadcast shows to planes jetting in and out of Manchester Airport. Problems with the transmitting equipment at Birmingham Hospital Broadcasting Network meant planes in the flight path of Manchester Airport picked up the station’s signal.

Patients had to endure the sound of interference after the equipment fault forced the station to cease transmission at Heartlands and the QE for six weeks. But the 24-hour station is now back on the air after spending £3,000 on new kit to replace the broken main transmitter.

Technical controller Dave Horton said, ‘We were surprised to find out we were broadcasting so far on the wrong frequency. Being responsible, we took it off the air as soon as we found out.’

The station raised £600 towards the transmitter by holding OBs at Asda in Small Heath.

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ON AIR <http://www.hbauk.com>  Page 16  September/October 2009
Volunteers from Radio Tyneside were up bright and early on Sunday, 20th September and for two reasons. Our new studios are situated close to the start of the annual Great North run so to get access, we had to be in the building by 7.30am.

The other reason was we had decided to cover the start of the race, a mammoth task for a hospital radio station.

As I said we are close to the start so we were able to talk to many of the fun runners heading down to the central motorway where the race actually starts, using a radio mic. The big task for us was to get a signal back from the press area next to the start. This was way out of a radio mic link. This is where our colleagues, in particular, Craig Robinson from Auckland Hospital Radio, came to our help. He arrived with a computer and using an internet stream with a mobile data card and VPN we were able to link back to the studio.

Auckland HR and South Tyneside HR had also agreed to broadcast our coverage and it was also taken by the community radio station Lionheart Radio based 30 miles up the A1 in Alnwick.

After a rather sleepless night worrying if everything would work, myself and seven other colleagues arrived at the studios without any hassle in getting to our studios. It had been decided that our coverage would be from 9.00am until 11.00am, the main race starting at 10.45am.

Brian Lee and Ron Cameron from South Tyneside HR were to present the programme from the studio whilst Bill McGregor and Richard Finch would cover the fun runners and myself with technical back up from Craig and our engineer, Steve Emerson, would talk to the elite runners and the many personalities that do the run each year to raise thousands for charity.

We hit the air at nine and I am pleased to say everything went without a hitch. Bill spoke to many of the fun runners learning about the charities they were running for and hearing from their friends and family who had come along to support them. He spoke to one person from up north, Aberdeen whilst from the south another fun runner from Hastings. There was also a number from Northern Ireland.

Down in the press area we talked to a large contingency from the ITV soap Emmerdale, who were all supporting Leukaemia Research (they do it every year), also to Ben Fogle, Nell McAndrew, Kara Tointon and Joe Swash, both recently having left EastEnders plus Nasty Nick (Nick Cotton) actor John Altman.

Our new Lord Mayor sent a special message to those in hospital and an interview with chef, Gordon Ramsay went without any swear words. Saying that back in the studio presenter Brian Lee had his finger poised above the mute button on the desk.

It was a beautiful dry day and everyone enjoyed themselves and the race got under way being started by local lad Sting.

As we came off air at 11.00am, it was interesting to note that some runners at the back had even started. It takes nearly half an hour to get all the runners moving. We were so pleased with our coverage and the wonderful working relationship with the other hospital stations that next year we are already thinking of being at the start and the finish in South Shields.

Dave Nicholson, Station Director
In Defence of Show Prep

by Paul Deacon

You know the scene. You’re ready to present the best show of your life. You’ve got a great hour opener lined up and you’re buzzing like a hive of bees from the four cups of coffee you’ve just drunk. And then you remember, when you open the mic, you haven’t really thought about what you’re going to say.

It happens to all presenters. You hit a flat spot. Things don’t flow. It’s not that you’re not talented, it’s just that you’re running a bit short on inspiration. What do you do? You might have a quick flick through the newspapers and that might throw up a quirky story. But you need to work an angle to make it interesting. What you need is a team of writers and producers working for you like Moyles and Evans do.

That’s where show prep comes in. Now before we start, you might have the wrong idea about show prep. You might not even know what it is.

So, what is show prep? Put simply, in the wider sense of the term, show prep is preparing your show. That might mean choosing the music (if you have that luxury!), buying a cup of vending machine coffee or it might also mean planning all the witty, relevant and incredible things you’re going to say between the songs. A show prep service is a resource that provides a big chunk of all the stuff you’re going to entertain your listeners with. The stuff that comes out of your mouth. Show prep services have flipped through newspapers for those showbiz stories and surfed news sites for current events for you already. They also provide lists of events, birthdays and anniversaries and these often carry relevant gags and one-liners. They offer topical jokes, comedy audio skits and lots of other engaging things for the presenter to talk about. It’s usually delivered over the internet or by email and is usually paid for by monthly subscription.

But it is a controversial service that divides opinion. Some people believe it to be the work of the devil, while others embrace it and see it as a valuable addition to their own life experience-led links. Even presenters on the big stations use it. Chris Tarrant used show prep for example. I could name more but it would be wrong to ‘out’ these people for fear of them being the target of unnecessary abuse.

Visit one of the radio forums on the internet and do a search for ‘show prep’. In all likelihood you will come across some poor jock asking a perfectly innocent question about where he might be able to find some show prep for his show. Before you read the responses to his question, you might tell him you’ve written yourself behind your sofa wearing the largest saucepan you can find on your head. Maybe read the first few responses through your fingers until you get acclimatised to the vitriol that awaits the hapless jock who had the audacity to ask the question.

You think I’m exaggerating. The point is this – show prep is an emotive subject. For some reason people get very worked up when discussing it. The people who object violently to the very idea that somebody might use material written by someone else for their show are obviously all very successful presenters who have a natural God-given talent for entertaining their listeners with their self-penned observations and amazing repartee. We all envy them and we feel small in their presence. They say that using show prep is lazy. Using show prep demonstrates that you have no talent. Using show prep means that your show will not be local to your listeners.

So let’s clear a few things up if you’re acclimatised to the vitriol and haven’t gone onto a radio forum to vent your anger about this article.

There’s no right and wrong when it comes to show prep. You either use it or you don’t. It’s a service. How can it be wrong to use it? If you get some material out of it that entertains your listeners and maybe sparks a riveting phone-in then what’s wrong with that? Ah, but it shows that the presenter hasn’t got any talent, you might be thinking. How does it do that? Do you think that every talented person on radio and TV writes their own original?
presenter on the station in a nearby TSA. Assuming that the presenter in that TSA subscribes to the same service, assuming that he uses exactly the same features as you do, assuming that he doesn't make the most of the material by making it work personally for him and his audience and assuming that you do exactly the same, then yes, you'll sound the same. Let's also assume that your listeners all listen to your station and then flick over to the other station to listen to what they have to say to try to spot any similarities. Not many people do that do they? I'll say it again, show prep is what you make of it like any other info you get from other sources.

Rather than use show prep you should use your own everyday life experiences and draw material from that. Makes sense. But not everyone can relate to your lifestyle can they? Getting up at four in the morning, spending half the day in a radio station, an afternoon nap, in bed by 9pm, no real social life. That's the reality for many breakfast show presenters. That's not to say they don't have any life experience. Everybody does. And the challenge of using show prep is to relate the material they provide to your own experiences. They don't include features on what it's like to live in a colony on the moon. They write stuff that people can relate to in their own lives. Make the material work for you. Believe it or not, it might even take more time to get the best out of it rather than save you time.

Everybody preps their show unless they're so unbelievably talented that they can just present an entertaining show on the fly. You have various options on how you do the preparation. Show prep is just one of them. Some people rule it out because of some kind of misguided snobbery. Surely you want to be armed with as much ammunition as you can when you open the mic at 6am in the morning. This is the information age. Embrace it all.

Paul Deacon is an experienced commercial radio presenter who started in hospital radio at King's College, South London. He has also been working behind the scenes for many years writing and producing funny things for other radio presenters. He now works for TXmediasuite show prep service (www.txmediasuite.com) as a writer and producer. He's also a rather lovely voiceover artist. TXmediasuite has recently introduced a new special low rate for hospital radio broadcasters. The discount price of £29 per month gives access to the full TXmediasuite service including topical jokes, comedy audio skits and lots of things for the presenter to talk about.

What I’ve Learnt
Matthew Hulbert
Vice Chairman of Castle Mead Radio

Getting Out and About
Getting out and about in the community is fun and rewarding! In the last edition of On Air I wrote about our excellent series of podcasts at Castle Mead Radio, which enables the cream of our broadcasts to be heard by the local community outside of the hospital walls.

Recently this has included going out and about in Hinckley and Bosworth recording a number of local events, so listeners in the hospital (and, indeed, our podcast listeners) get a feel of the atmosphere.

To give one example, I had a great time towards the end of August at a brilliant afternoon called 'WorldFest' at Hollycroft Park in Hinckley. It featured musical styles from around the world, as well as a number of groups promoting good causes.

I interviewed representatives from 'Amnesty International,' 'Mercy Ships,' the local 'Fairtrade Forum,' and the town's own 'International Friendship Centre,' which is a twice-weekly club where people who are visiting/living in Hinckley from other countries can meet over food.

I then edited these interviews together and produced a nice ten minute programme. Not only did this make a interesting listen for our patients and via our podcasts the wider community but it was really fun too.

As I know many of you are already aware, we in hospital radio truly are the most local form of radio that there is, we can, and do go, to events that for whatever reason, commercial stations and even the BBC won't.

I believe getting out and about also has the great benefit of spreading the word about our cause and encouraging others to get involved.

I look forward to being able to go to many more events, showing the support of Castle Mead Radio for them and, hopefully, providing entertaining and informative broadcasts for all of our listeners.

* You can e-mail Mathew via: comedymat@yahoo.co.uk
In my role as a teacher, I teach Business Studies and Enterprise. The latter involves teaching classes of year 10 students about Philanthropy. In a recent lesson I explained that they were to undertake a project in which they 'link up' with a local charity in order to raise some money and present their findings and the winning team would win £3,000 for the charity.

Inevitably the question asked with both groups taught was the same ... 'what's in it for us?' The same can be applied for any person undertaking any philanthropic or charitable work such as you and your hospital radio involvement.

This question was handsomely answered once I had shown them an episode of Channel 4’s 'The Secret Millionaire' in which property millionaire Kevin Green donates around £60,000 of his own money to causes personal to himself.

Although I am sure that anyone showing up in a deprived town with a camera crew in tow under the guise of ‘I’m filming a documentary on care work’ is bound to be sussed, I can nonetheless still appreciate the sentiment. Kevin Green's sister had died when he was aged 21. One of the most heart-wrenching scenes was his visiting a children’s hospice and visiting the same children in their homes. He listened as a mother explained that she slept downstairs with her daughter as 'she didn’t want her to die alone when the time came'. Heart-wrenching indeed.

This philanthropic approach, helping those with issues close to your heart, made me question my involvement with hospital radio and where this seed was planted 20 years ago now. It cannot be a coincidence that my grandfather, who died in 1989, was in and out of hospital in the last few years of his life where he received fantastic levels of care from all at St Helen’s Hospital (now a housing estate, sadly) in Hastings. Subliminally, this must have been influential in my decision to join Hospital Radio Hastings.

Another example is the bravery and dedication of those who not only undertake charitable work but make this work a vocation. Two such people are Phil Pring and ‘Skippy’ of Vision for Cornwall. Phil, whose grandmother is blind, decided the best way he could help would be to row the Atlantic for the Cornwall Blind Association. The only problems they faced prior to their voyage were that they (a) didn’t have a boat and (b) they didn’t have any funding. To overcome these problems Phil has given up his job to gain funding and they have both built themselves a boat from scratch.

The next time it is raining, I’m head-achy, stressed at work and I’d rather be at home with my daughter, I will think of people such as these two. Via the Canaries and past Antigua, the pair will encounter extreme weather conditions and the possibility of losing their lives as seven others have attempting the same feat.

So do they help charity such as the CBA for charitable purposes alone or do they get something much more personal out of it? Suffice to say, no one rows 3,000 miles unless they are a salty sea dog at heart and they enjoy a life on the ocean wave as well as the thrill and sense of achievement they will embrace upon completion of their voyage. It is not just about the charity and the money raised. That really is the bi-product of such a journey. The real interest should be in their back story.

The back story principle is not however carried through into our normal lives. We aren’t interested in finding out about the back story, we are only interested if it is carved up and presented to us on an X factor shaped plate.

Next time you are in the local charity shop or you see someone tin rattling in the street, take the time to ask them about their back story. Chances are you will learn a lot about the person from having them explain why they are on their charitable mission than you will from just putting a few coppers in the tin and walking away.

If you would like to donate to ‘Vision of Cornwall’, go to www.visionofcornwall.co.uk

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