Something in the Air

An introduction to amateur radio and Web SDR

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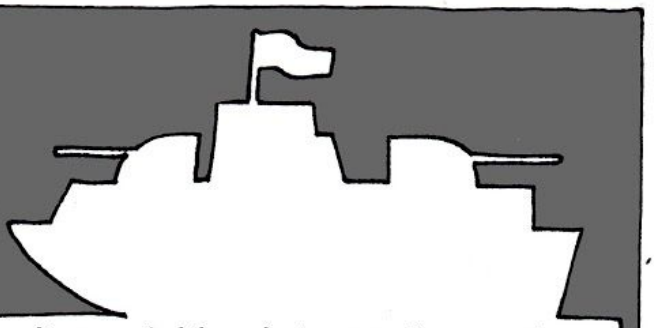
rustyrocket.co.uk



You may not be aware of it but you're surrounded all around. Surrounded by radio waves. And these ghost conversations are out there for you to monitor and harvest whilst the world and its languages pour out of your speakers.

I was first introduced to Web SDR during a visit to HMS Belfast in London. We took several wrong turns and ended up getting completely lost, only to discover two guys in the old radio room buried deep in the ship transmitting Morse.

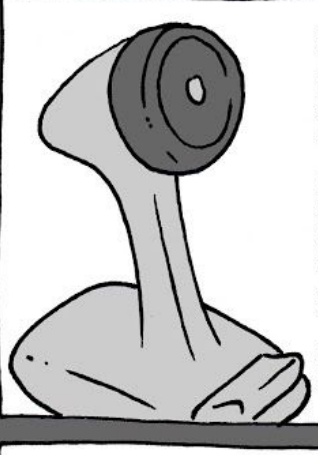
As well as giving me directions on how to escape to dry land, they also gave me a quick lesson in amateur radio before showing me how to trawl the megahertz by listening to transmissions without the need for any equipment, via the internet using Web SDR.

websdr.org -- -.-- / -.-- --- ..- -. --. / ... --- -. / .-.. --- ...- . -.. / .-.. . .- .-. -. .. -. --. / -- --- .-. ... . / -.-. --- -.. . / --- -. / - .... . / ... .--. .-.-.-

Web SDR allows you to connect to antennas all around the world and take control of them, tuning them to various frequencies to allow you to listen to conversations being bounced all over the globe.

It's staggering how much is out there: voice, Morse and data transmissions. It's all out there for you to discover.

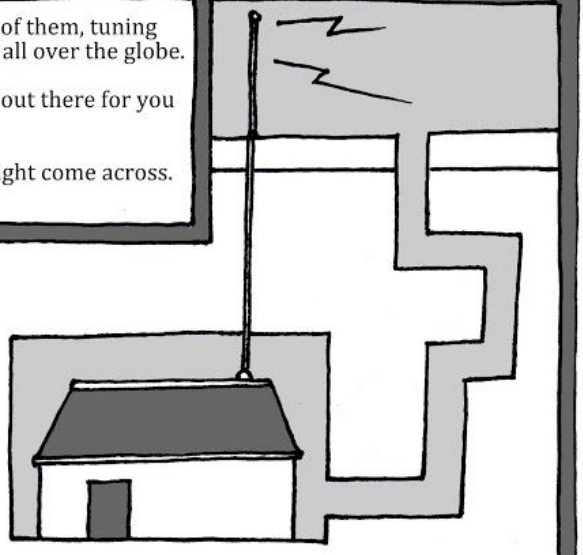
Contrary to popular advice, please do adjust your set. You never know who you might come across.



Ever since I was young I've always found listening to the radio a comforting experience and listening in to amateur radio operators for me is equally as enjoyable.

I love the fact that although this is an old form of communication it's still being used by enthusiasts everywhere and by listening in you get a unique snapshop of people's lives on the airwaves, whilst exercising the imagination at the same time.

I'm listening to someone now discussing how best to photograph the moon.

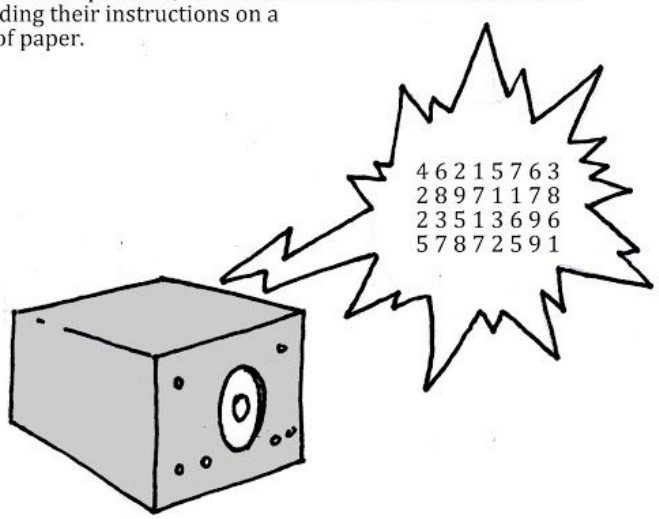


My favourite antenna is one that is located on the site of what was once a secret underground bunker called Hackgreen here in the UK. The 70cm and 2m bands are the better ones to hunt out conversations.

hackgreensdr.org:8902

One evening whilst casting my net into the airwaves, I stumbled on a robotic sounding voice reading out a repeating series of numbers. This spooky transmission was one of a series of mysterious numbers stations. Number stations are old relics of the Cold War where countries would communicate with their spies in the field through these cryptic messages.

I like to think that the transmission I found was also heard by an undercover operative, huddled over a shortwave radio whilst decoding their instructions on a pad of paper.



The interesting thing about number stations is that they vary so much in their message deliveries. Some, for example introduce themselves with a musical introduction, some with automated male and female voices. One is even just a buzzer.

Luckily they all run on a schedule, making them easier to find and listen to. There is a really useful site dedicated to number stations and their scheduled transmissions if you fancy playing at being a spy yourself.

priyom.org

73

(Operator code for 'Kind Regards')