



PHOTO 1: The Czech visitors celebrate their success after the prize giving. (All photos by David Williams, M3WDD).

International British ARDF 2018 Championships

The RSGB ARDF Championships returned to the Midlands this year and was staged on Cannock Chase and the Wyre Forest. We welcomed overseas visitors from the Czech Republic and Germany.

The late April weekend chosen, coupled with the late spring this year, meant that the forests were at their very best with the summer undergrowth barely emerging let alone being a serious impediment to movement.

Shoal Hill was used for the Sprint event and traditionally this format starts the

weekend programme. Planner Andrew, G4KWQ had concentrated the ten hidden transmitters and two beacons in the southern corner of the area, setting the scene for some fast and furious DF. By the end, most of the competitors admitted losing track of where they were on the map amid a plethora of paths in the largely runnable forest.

David Williams, M3WDD came in with the fastest time of an RSGB competitor but he was outclassed by Jiri Marecek, OK2BWN, one of the top Czech runners, who came in just over three minutes ahead of him and just under the 30 minute mark.

Day 2 saw the participants assemble at

Castle Ring, the Iron Age fort that stands on the highest ground of Cannock Chase. From here the competitors were able to get a superb set of first bearings, given that there was near line of sight to all the hidden transmitters. However, this early advantage did not persist for some. Whilst Cannock Chase does not have any precipitous mountain sides to deflect VHF signals, it is well contoured with many small hills scattered in the terrain. This caused some competitors a bit of grief, together with the usual poor choice, by some, of the sequence in which to visit the transmitters.

Planner Andrew, G4KWQ made the 'near-far trick' work by placing transmitter



PHOTO 2: Robin, RS213497 (L) receives the trophy from planner David, M3WDD.



PHOTO 3: David, MOCJO (left) was winner of the M40 category on Day 2.

#3 on a distant high spot in clear view of the start across the broad valley and putting a 'stonking' signal into the start. He then had transmitter #5 rather closer, located in a hidden valley away to the east and, as a result, much weaker. There were one or two competitors who chose to head for #3 as their first transmitter to be hunted, and they duly paid the price for making this choice.

The format adopted to determine the RSGB Champion is to assign more of the five hidden transmitters to the younger age groups and then the smallest number (three) to the M70 (men 70+) and W60 (women 60+) age groups. This year the planner placed two of the transmitters well away from the start, one to the west and one to the east. The RSGB winner was myself and I had only to find the three transmitters closest to the start/finish.

The top of the results list was dominated by the visitors. A notable performance came from Pavla Hazmukova, a W35. She managed to beat the hugely experienced Jiri Marecek OK2BWN (M50), by just 45 seconds when, by chance, they had been assigned the same set of four transmitters to find.

RSGB newcomer David, MOCJO, who only came to try ARDF after hearing about it at the 2017 RSGB Hamfest, also put in a notable performance to win the M40 category. In the early stages of participating in ARDF, the performance of an individual fluctuates quite a lot as they gain experience. David managed to put all his prior experience over the winter to good effect.

For the final day, the event moved to the Wyre Forest located just west of Kidderminster. It was the turn of 80m and on this band surface wave propagation provided the ground wave coverage. As a result the bearings are generally very good. The two things that can have an adverse effect on the direction of 80m signals, are power lines and metal fences. Therefore, it may not have been a coincidence that planner David, M3WDD had obtained permission to use Postensplain, which contains a munitions testing facility surrounded by 1.6km of high metal security fencing.

Notwithstanding this challenge, the top competitors were coming back in under an hour. The best RSGB competitor was Robin, RS213497 who was just over four and a half minutes behind the overall fastest Jiri, OK2BWN. This was a 'head to head' match since they were both in the M50 category.

Robin's achievement put a new name on the RSGB 80m trophy.

Full results (and the events programme, including the new 'Midlands Summer Series' that takes place from May to september) are at www.nationalradiocentre.co.uk/ardf. Select 'results' from the drop down menu. .



PHOTO 4: The youngest competitor was Jarmila Hazmukova, a W12 from the Czech Republic.

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