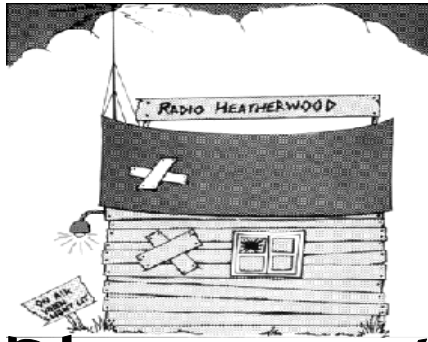


RADIO Heatherwood



Presenters Newsletter Iss 79 Spring 1999

The Radio Heatherwood staff newsletters took many styles and methods of production during it's publications.

The originals have been lost, but to show the flavour of the content we have recreated an issue (79) a newsletter originally published in Spring 1999.

This was produced using Microsoft publisher and was printed on a coloured sheet of paper. All the layout mistakes and poor positioning of items are still shown, so as not to change the history of the development of the newsletter.

A copy was then left in the team trays for each volunteer.

The only changes made to these have been the removal of personal phone numbers.

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Presenters Newsletter

RADIO Heatherwood

Low Power Am Special Edition

In this edition of the news letter you can read four different views on the visit to Stoke Mandeville. No editing has been done to the views and you read them as they were written by the individuals. I would like to thank those who attended and trust that other presenters will read the enclosed with an open mind.

PJ.

Turn Me On

On Saturday 6/3/99 Mathew Robinson opened the days proceedings with gusto and promised some great things for the morning. Sadly the hospital engineering dept must have heard this as the first record was due to be played they turned him off.

Do you ever get the feeling Mathew someone out there doesn't like you.

Arrivals

The station welcomes Rebeka Durk to Thursdays 25/3.

Departures

The station said goodbye to Belinda

Rolfe Saturday 20/3. Belinda wants her freedom as a single person.

Rebeka Durk:- No sooner have we included her in the staff list she fails to turn up: Blink and you missed her.

✓ *Loan Radio Sponsor (236)*

Mr A E Alvin made a £10 Donation 16/3 sponsoring a loan radio .Ada took the money and had a nice chat with Mr Alvin.

Stoke Mandeville

Belinda's View:-

Trip to Stoke Mandeville Hospital Radio ~ Saturday
March 13th 1999.

Driving towards S Stoke Mandeville Hospital with the radio tuned in to 1575hz, it was with growing excitement that the Radio Heatherwood fact finding team slowly began to receive more and more clearly audible sentences from the at first fuzzy and crackling frequency that carries SMHR. Hospital Bound listeners of all ages from the very tiny to the oldest pensioner (the Hospital serves a real mixed cross section of the community, with all the wards that there are at Heatherwood with various additions, including The Children's Wards and a Specialist spinal injury unit. Mark (who was showing us around) said that with such a variety

of potential listeners the programme planning and format was geared most closely to Radio 2's style.

Soon after arriving at the Hospital Radio Headquarters our group of 5 joined 2 SMHR members on the short walk to the housing of the transmitter. The not unsightly aerial that sends the signal to the most of the Hospital, there being some wards with thick concrete and metal walls which cannot receive signal of any kind either through cables or via the airwaves.

The transmitter housing was an ordinary garden shed, which I thought was probably a quite flimsy surround for all that expensive equipment, but it did have the benefit of not looking like it would contain anything of much value so potential thieves might just walk past it. A short walk back to the station and we went straight in to the studio (No: 2- apparently, although I didn't see it,

Studio 1 is not much to speak of and not up to running strength as most of the work and any addition in equipment etc has happened in Studio 2).

The first thing I thought about the Studio was that it was a no larger facility, than either of the superb Radio Heatherwood studios.

The DJ sat behind a desk which had a table at the other side for an interviewee to sit at complete with a large light bulb for benefit of the interviewee to let them know the microphone was live.

The computer hardware looked modern and ran the usual Microsoft type software plus the addition of the software package which handled the station's facility to broadcast without the need for a Presenter to cue records, do voice overs and jingles, all of which could be programmed and transmitted automatically.

The screen was equipped with a play list so long it was impossible to read what was coming up for more than about the next half an hour. However having said this, the screen display was very impressive and gave you visual icons and hi-lite sections to

tell you what was playing currently, what was next and if a record had been played previously which a Presenter may not have been aware of to stop him/her falling into that trap of replaying the latest favourite bop continually to patients until they were all tired of the station!.

As the Radio Heatherwood group were discussing things together one thing had apparently occurred to us all, that was our all being impressed by the 'patient information' bulletin we had heard as we drove towards the station. It seemed like such a good idea, one that could well benefit patients at Heatherwood also by telling them of in- Hospital details, whereabouts of WRVS shop etc and perhaps even of any delays in clinic running times, changes to patient services or when the trolley shop was coming round and any other relevant or orientation information which they could need.

My closing impression of the Stoke Manderville set-up was of a tightly run ship, with equal talent and Presenting quality that Radio Heatherwood has, but with the added advantage of what is obviously a 'working' new transmitter and aerial system with hard-wired components many of which are older parts like Heatherwood's, but nevertheless the service is much improved. The computer technology would free Radio Heatherwood to undertake more training and do 'off air' type repairs whilst not diminishing or ceasing service to patients who could still listen to the station when 'behind the scenes' activity was using all available hands.

What a good thing if this all came to Heatherwood!

Thoughts by Belinda Rolfe. Trainee.

✓ ***Record Donations***

Record Four record donations have been received w/e 28/3 Mrs Clarke from Bracknell, Mrs Lipscombe from Chalvey, Mrs Few from Slough, and a member of the Hawkes clan from South Ascot.

View:- On Stoke

Mandeville

The visit to Stoke Mandeville Hospital Radio by representatives from Radio Heatherwood took place on Saturday 13 March 1999. The two main objectives of the visit were to review their transmitting system and automated sustaining service system.

Introduction

Stoke Mandeville Hospital is famous for its National Spinal Injuries Centre and Plastic Surgery Unit, but it is also a District General Hospital with all the specialities required to support the local community. It has over 500 General and Specialist beds with Outpatients, Accident and Emergency and Day Surgery Facilities.

Stoke Mandeville Hospital Radio (SMHR) started in 1978 with a major enhancement to the service starting on 26 January 1998 when the station began broadcasting all round the hospital on 1575 kHz AM medium wave and the station started broadcasting 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This means that the hospital has a dedicated radio service round the clock and does not go to a service from another station when its live presenter broadcasts are complete. As well as the music based and request shows, SMHR also has speech based, informative programmes. Two such shows are The Media Show, looking at sports and entertainment news on a national scale and The Magazine Show, which brings local news, sport and entertainment. The service broadcasts for approximately 4 hours every weekday evening, 4 hours on Saturday and 10 hours on Sunday using an overall team of 50 volunteers. The service also provides an information service for the hospital and local community as part of it broadcast service (e.g. support for people leaving hospital) and broadcasts Independent Radio News bulletins during live shows i.e. news on the hour every hour which has to be timed exactly into the

shows.

The overall impression of the station was that it was well run (although the committee structure did suggest a certain level of bureaucracy with the inevitable high level of discussion and low level of decision-making!). There were a wide variety of shows from request to dedicated shows such as religious, charts and country. The style of the presenter on Saturday morning was upbeat and chatty with a good mix of chat, trivia and music with a keen eye on timing.

Transmission System

Stoke Mandeville Hospital Radio (SMHR) and Radio Tyneside at the Royal Victoria Infirmary in Newcastle were the two hospital radio stations invited to broadcast their radio services on medium wave by the Radio Authority. This entails the erection of a central transmitter to broadcast the signal across the whole area of the hospital.

The transmitter for SMHR is approximately 10 metres high and is situated approximately mile from the studio in an unobtrusive part of the hospital complex. The transmitter site consisted of the actual transmitter and a small shed to house the relevant boxes.

The installation of the transmitter involved laying a direct line from the studio to the transmitter area. The majority of this work was done by SMHR volunteers with a minimal amount of effort from external contractors to dig some trenches. The geography of the hospital meant that cables had to be run over buildings or along wards but this did not seem to create major problems. The SMHR engineer saw huge benefit from the system in terms of once this cable had been laid, there should be no major maintenance or alterations required if the hospital changed structural configuration or existing facilities changed purpose.

Automated Sustaining Service System

The second objective in the visit to SMHR was to consider their automated sustaining service system. This system

This system means that when the service is not doing live presenter broadcasts, the listener will hear a mix of music, radio jingles and show trailers and hospital information broadcasts. The computer stores music tracks and jingles on its hard disk, which can be accessed and scheduled using a software package. Thus a show can be compiled by selecting tracks of music interspersed with a number of jingles or information services. Tracks of music can be faded in and out automatically by the system (once the piece of music has been catalogued with timings for introductions and fade-outs) or jingles incorporated into introductions. This show can then be scheduled to broadcast at any specific time for a specific amount of time (e.g. exactly one hour).

The system can also be used during live broadcasts to incorporate information contained in the system such as music tracks or jingles into a show. This increases the level of flexibility available to the presenter.

The major advantages of 24 hr automated music and jingles are that the station name is kept alive when not broadcasting live/presenter shows and the station can become an information service for the hospital. This information service can be used with specific messages broadcast at a certain point during the day, which could be picked up anywhere in the hospital (assuming the transmitter system is used). SMHR had received comments from listeners (not just patients) that they liked the format of continuous music with information when live shows are not being broadcast.

One downside of the system, which must be considered, is the additional training that will be required for presenters especially those who may be unfamiliar with computer technology. Additionally, the system could make presenters lazy if they allowed the system to dominate their programmes rather than as an aid to

enhance their shows. The volunteers at SMHR commented that one problem they had was that they only had one copy of the system which was being used continuously so special shows had to be recorded onto another medium so that training could take place on the system. An obvious solution would be to have two copies of the system (which would also alleviate the problem of back-ups) but this obviously increases the cost.

Points to Consider for Radio Heatherwood

The following are points which Radio Heatherwood should consider if it considers similar systems to the transmitting system (TS) and automated sustaining service system (ASSS) viewed at Stoke Mandeville Hospital Radio (SMHR):

Additional training may frighten people off – this training would be for the ASSS and also to ensure that the shows were better timed

Who would decide on music for fillers? If the ASSS was being used for up to 24 hours a day (over the weekend), a wide variety of music would be required.

Close liaison would be needed with hospital if it were to become a true information service for the benefit of all users of the hospital i.e. not just patients

Is Heatherwood Hospital big enough to justify such a significant investment and is the long-term future of the hospital assured?

How do you maintain the personal touch with additional systems? Presenters may become lazy with a computer system rather than using as an additional feature to enhance their broadcasts.

Do we have enough staff or control mechanisms in place to sustain a service like this? If presenters were aware that a back up (computer) system could be used to replace their shows at short notice, would they have the same commitment to their broadcasts? Whilst SMHR did not have difficulties in this area (cover being

readily available), they do have a significantly larger volunteer base to call upon. A downside of the ASSS is that once it has finished its schedule it will give dead air whereas a sustaining service of (e.g.) BBC Radio 2 will continue if a presenter is unable to make his show at short notice.

SMHR was more personality based than Radio Heatherwood with presenters having their own specified shows (rather than a team basis) which gave much more flexibility regarding jingles and show trailers. ASSS requires a large number of jingles, trailers and information slots to ensure variety during the long periods of its operation.

PJs View:- On Stoke Manderville

My own criteria for visiting Stoke Manderville was slightly different than other members of the party. The main aim was to see the transmitter site obtain pictures and talk about engineering issues as well as get an idea of how things were going:-

TX Site

The aerial it seems was actually on the site where it wasn't totally satisfactory. A vindictive letter sent to the hospital trust by an alternative supplier had forced them to locate the aerial an excessive distance from the buildings. The letter purported to claim it would interfere with medical equipment. (Of course it doesn't) 1 watt of power only.

The location of the aerial has meant a building within line of sight cannot actually receive the service because of its construction.

The aerial is not unsightly and pictures obtained will help me show our own trust what the finished installation might look like.

Studio's

My own view of the studio complex shows a trip into the past for me as

talking to the engineer, it seems committee type decisions have made buying and equipping policies which have not best served the long term reliability of equipment. This has led to a mish mash of equipment in either studio. Unlike Radio Heatherwood, a tightly compact set-up. An on-suite bathroom facility prevents a 100-yard dash to the nearest toilet.

Holding Service

The automated computer program which delivers the holding service as well as providing live assist (live assist = allow presenters to inject any item from the computer direct into their program i.e. jingles records promos etc) is the future for hospital radio's who want to increase their broadcast hours. I had already obtained a sample CD of the program software, so was aware of its capabilities. This is no substitute to seeing the real thing. This was impressive but is grossly over priced and for facilities is limited compared with other software, which is available.

As I mentioned in our previous newsletter even if we don't move towards the low power am we will be pursuing the introduction of the computer software firstly for increased hours and secondly after training live assist for all presenters.

Station Funding

I asked Mike our guide how the station is funded, he says they have 50 members of which two teams of 4 people each weekend go out run discos or provide pa at fetes etc and this brings in the money. This means 42 people associated with the station don't actually provide any fundraising towards maintaining the service. ?

Management Style

A committee runs the station where each month a meeting is held to discuss the station. I detected an undercurrent of frustration from some of the members mainly to do with decisions and the lack of activity on items. Loads of members on the committee but very few actually doing anything?

Programming

The programming is certainly more comprehensive than Radio Heatherwood's but with 42 members you would expect more efforts being put into specialist shows. The music policy is suppose to be along the lines of Radio two but I believe they haven't listened to the type of requests many older patients make. I felt the music output was too much geared towards mainstream pop.

Signal Coverage Area

On our journey to Stoke Mandeville I was informed by them to tune my car radio to 1575 kHz. The signal was picked up approximately 9 miles from the hospital. As we got nearer it became very strong and clear. The signal strength decreases depending on the weather conditions and time of day.

On Sunday 21st of March I had to travel to Cranfield in Bedfordshire which is almost 18 miles from Stoke Mandeville I was still able to hear the service. However this was a bright sunny day. In the evening when we returned home past Stoke Mandeville the signal was not audible until we were 9 miles from Stoke Mandeville. At eight

miles the signal was strong and not drifting at all. This indicates we could probably draw a circle around the hospital of eighth miles in either direction: this would be the area able to receive the service.

Playing to the external Audience

One of the criteria for the new low power service is that you must not direct your service to listeners beyond the boundary of the hospital. The Radio Authority impose this, in addition the PRS/PPL will impose hefty fees upon the station if you do so. Having said that, with a signal area of 16 miles from one end of the boundary to the other it allows people to hear our service, adverts for staff, fundraising exercises etc. This could help our cause.

And finally Stoke Mandeville ?

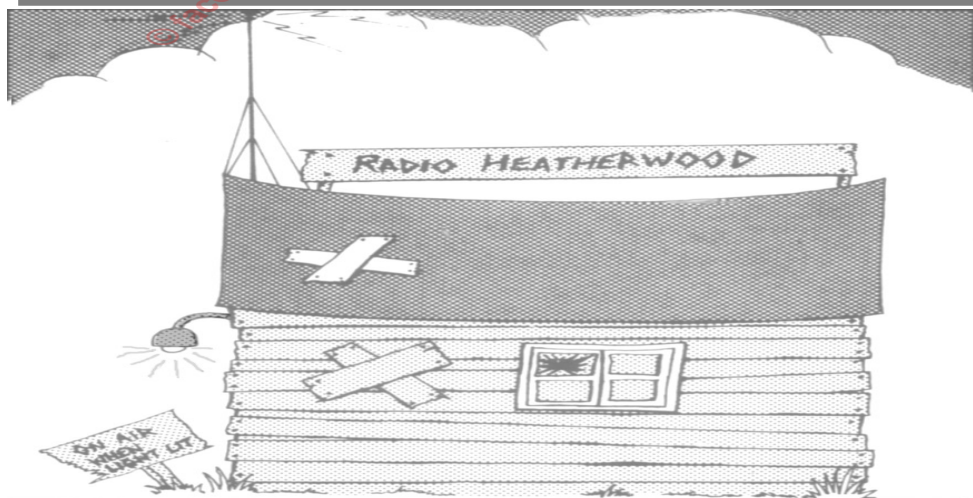
We can always visit these places and cast a critical eye over the way they are run trying to compare them with our own set-up. If it works for them then we wish them well.



Progress Report On Our Proposals

A letter has gone to the Radio Authority

Low Power Am Transmitter



to find out if there would be any obstacles to Radio Heatherwood. moving towards low power Am.

The local council has said if we erect an aerial; we will require planning permission.



Jim Trendell's View:-

A Visit to Stoke Mandeville Hospital Radio.

On Saturday the 13th march a group of us from Radio Heatherwood visited Stoke Mandeville Hospital Radio to view and learn as much as we could about their new a.m. broadcast and sustaining service, after a journey dogged by what seemed like endless roadwork's we eventually arrived in good shape, and were met in reception by Mark who would be our guide for the visit.

After a short walk we arrived at the studio's, and my initial thought's as we entered was that it was not as clean and tidy as our own studio's were (an observation not a criticism) but the general outlay was very similar to our own, the only difference of any note was that they had a separate room to accommodate their record library.

Our first task was to inspect the transmitter and aerial which were situated about 300 metre's from the studio on a small piece of wasteland near the perimeter fence of the hospital, the transmitter was suitably housed in a secure garden shed, with the aerial mast (height about 5 metre's) a short distance away, after taking some photographs and asking some intellectual (ha ha) questions we made our way back to the studio.

There were two studio's, the main broadcast studio and a second one of a lower standard and not suitable for broadcasting.

In the broadcast studio everything was as you would expect concerning the equipment, except for one thing, there was a computer as well, and this is what we really came to see, because the software running on this machine could, in the future, change the way Radio Heatherwood broadcasts.

At the moment our sustaining service is Radio 2, but what if we could supply our own sustaining service playing our choice of music, our promo's, and station jingles, well, with some very special software we can. This is what S.M.H.R have done and having seen it working I can tell you it is very impressive, the music, station promo's and jingles are loaded onto the computer hard drive and the software does the rest (after the initial set-up). The music would need to be categorised e.g. country, pop, rock etc so the computer would know where to take and play the music from, then its just a case of pressing a few buttons to set up the program and of it goes, automatically putting in jingles etc as we want them. The software is called Myriad, and its not cheap costing just under £1300 pounds, but it is the best.

Radio Heatherwood has been standing still for the last few years, unsure of which direction to follow, but I feel with this system it will take a mighty step forward, and benefit the patients and staff of Heatherwood hospital as they have the choice of listening to the radio service from any location within the hospital perimeter.

The total cost of changing to this system will probably be in the region of £20,000 when everything has been taken into consideration, and before everybody runs for the hills, most of this sum will come from sponsorship, so, nobody will be asked to do any more fund raising than they already do.

The next couple of years are going to be an exciting time for everybody involved with the radio station.

Jim T.



Donation

Betty Bull Writes:-

Just a note to thank you so much for the lovely chrysanthemums which I was lucky enough to win in this weeks show.

I enclose £10 as I would like to make a donation towards the upkeep of your radio station which is providing such a

worthwhile service.

Thank you again and I'm enjoying my flowers.

Betty Bull

Ward 10

Well done Team.

💣 *JD Pictures(Yakkety Yak)*

Late arrival of pics from Al comes with there's a bit missing and some perfect excuses.

When you're my age it takes awhile to pluck up the courage to have a mug shot done!.

The revolving seat wouldn't go any lower

The booth was for midgets only

I'm not reminded how grey I'm getting

I still think that I've got dark wavy locks.

Hope one of the pics is ok you can draw in the hair or a top hat

📖 *Victora Hall Fund*

At long last I have received a cheque for £225 from the Victora Hall Fund who will continue to sponsor the broadcast licence.

📖 *TURNING A 24 HOUR DREAM INTO A*

REALITY

(This next story comes from Radio Hillingdon who use the software we intend to move to. The one at Stoke Mandeville will not be suitable for our purposes.

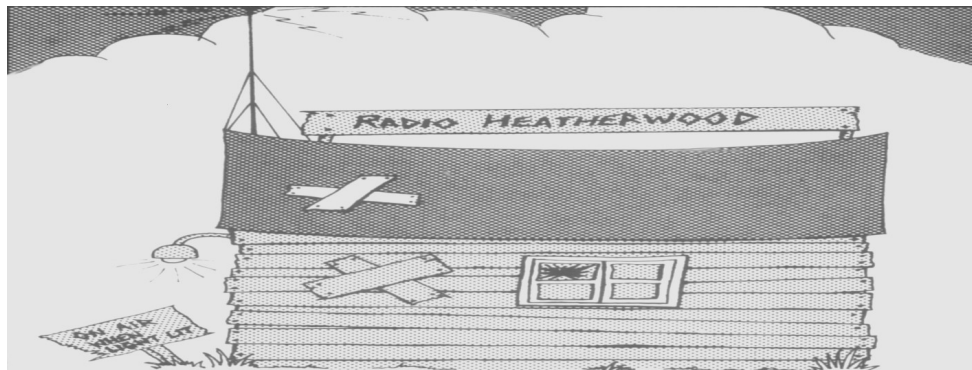
This story was carried recently in the national association magazine P.J.)

Radio Hillingdon writes:- One of the biggest problems that hospital radio stations suffer from is that of an old network of cables which are continually being cut, eaten through by rats and generally decaying through a lack of care and funds from the hospital authority.

At Radio Hillingdon, we decided that the alternative to the old delivery system, inductive loop, would be a far more inexpensive means of ensuring that our programmes were being heard. So, two years ago, after a lot of fund-raising, we found ourselves on 999am. Great, we thought, but what about our sustaining service? On the land lines. we continued to relay Radio 2 and 4, but Radio Authority regulations decree that any sustaining service on the IL frequency should not be one that can be received on a normal radio set within the area. So, in Hillingdon, Radio Scotland would be Ok, but not Radio 2 or 4.

To get round this we branded our 999am frequency "Classic Hit Radio", purchased a 24 Cd multiplay unit from Sanyo, stuffed it

Low Power Am Transmitter 1 Aerial instead of 32 ?



full of compilation albums from the 50s to the early 90s, set it to random play and we were off! After a couple of weeks we replaced some of the CDs with ones that I had recorded especially, featuring some of the patients' favourite tracks (culled from our request chart) and some of our new jingles.

Our next step was to replace our ageing carts with shiny new computers loaded with a cart playout system. When we first discussed the idea of a computerised playout system, the equipment was expensive and relied on all sorts of compression to actually get enough audio onto relatively small hard drives. As we raised funds, we saw prices of equipment falling until we realised that we could have an extremely cost effective 24-hour service for less than half of our original fund-raising target.

We ended up looking at two playout systems. One was designed by a friend of mine who was chief engineer for a large commercial group and the other had been designed by an American Company after much deliberation, we settled on the American system. This isn't to say that the other wasn't up to scratch, it's just that one was 100% what we were looking for, and the other was 99%! There really was that little in it. At about the same time that we started raising funds, we were approached by a local couple who had heard about us and who wanted to raise money towards one of our projects. We really owe a large debt of gratitude to Mr and Mrs Thompson for the £4000 that they raised for us... Yes, incredible, isn't it?

So, with cash in hand, we approached Gavin Lawrence at Broadcast Computers and told him exactly what we wanted. The result, we now have a computer in each of our studios, and it's sounding better than I would ever imagined.

As I sit here writing this one base unit is being upgraded both in ram and HD capacity. Our final configuration has 32mb ram in each machine and a total of 25gb of hard disc space. Using a 22.5khz sampling

rate in mono we'll have room for about 160 hours of audio.

Our aim is to broadcast 20 hours each weekday from 1 PM to 7pm, with our own live programmes between 7pm and 1 PM. Our music is play-listed using Selector and this interfaces with our playout system. We have around 2,000 tracks on selector and as well as individual tracks we'll also be scheduling complete programmes at various regular times of the night and day. So no one has to be in the studio to play out the specialist programmes. An example being the old "Nice 'n' Easy" programmes. Great radio, but someone had to be in the studio to play it. Now it could be scheduled for any time with no problems. We also record our own information breaks such as "What's the arrangement for post?", "The problems of mobile phones in the hospital" and the like.

We want to make Radio Hillingdon an indispensable part of life in the hospital.

Providing not just entertainment, but a full information service for our listeners.

The future for the organisation will include a new satellite receiver to replace the one which brings us our news bulletins via Sunrise Radio.

The new one will interface with the computer and will seamlessly broadcast news at the top of each hour when the studio isn't manned. Then what? Who knows? We haven't lost sight of the reason we're here. We want to provide the best service 24 hours a day, not just for the times that we're actually "live" on-air.

Jeff Brown - Radio Hillingdon

And Finally

This is the last newsletter before the Grand Draw season gets under way: please remember we need your support for the draw, it maintains our service and our own chance to broadcast; ***don't fail your colleagues.***

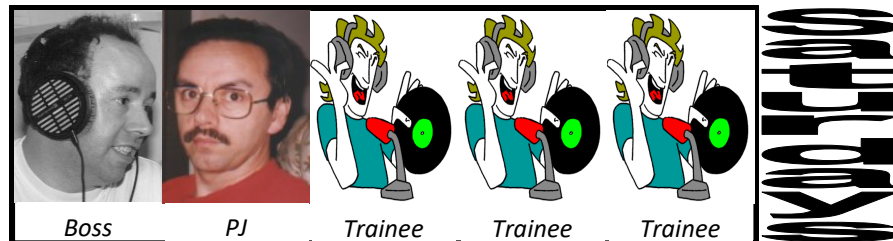
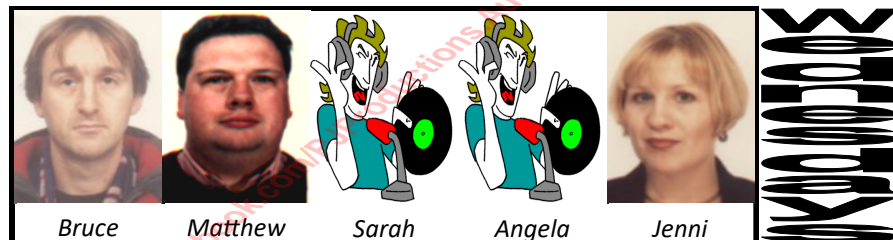
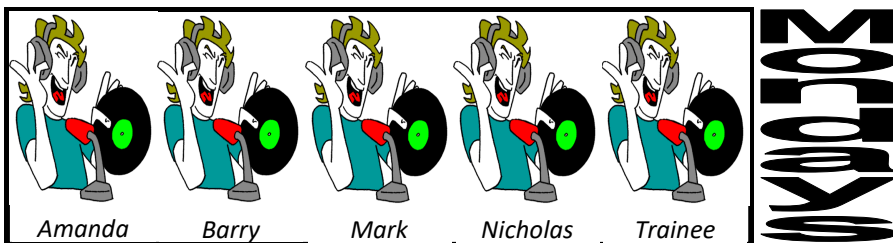
Remember the newsletter, read the noticeboards and above all, be a team player.

Together We Can Make Radio Heatherwood A Great Hospital Radio !.

ID Pictures

We are still waiting for Id pictures from the following:-

Barry Callan, Amanda Chivers, Mark Gibson, Angela Knight, Nicholas Gosling.



Team Players

Inc Years Service



Mondays

Amanda Chivers Teamleader
Barry Callan Presenter
Mark Gibson Broadcast Support
Nicholas Gosling Trainee

Service Thursdays

06
04
03
00

Jim Trendell Teamleader
Jim Adam Presenter
Laraine Bridges Trainee

Service

03
01
00
00

Tuesdays

Roger Hawkes Teamleader
Sylvia Dungate Presenter
Alan Holder Presenter
Ada Hawkes Broadcast Support

03
02
01
07

Fridays

Closed

-

Wednesdays

Bruce Crosland Teamleader
Mathew Robinson Presenter
Sarah Bishton Presenter
Angela Knight Trainee
Jenni Ferguson Trainee

-
04
02
01
00
00

Saturdays

David Smith Teamleader
Peter Davidson-Smith Presenter

-
19
18
00

Total Team Players

18

Some Useful Telephone Numbers

Manager

Dave at Home-Speed Dial 61

Dave Smith

Roger at Home-Speed Dial 62

Home Secretary

Now Available

P J Davidson-Smith

Hospital Security

Home Mobile

Speed Dial 13 Extn 7805

Staff Co-ordinator

Maternity Porters

Roger Hawkes

Home Work Mobile

Speed Dial 20 Extn 7088

Speed Dials in Emergency

General Porters

PJ at Home-Speed Dial 60

Speed Dial 19 Extn 7411