Nashoba Valley Amateur Radio Club

NVARC Signal

VOL. XXXIII… No. 9 WWW.N1NC.ORG September 2025

In This Issue

Les N1SV selling donated gear at NEARFest

Next Meeting

September's meeting will be held 7:30 PM on September 18 2025 at the Pepperell Community Center at 4 Hollis Street in Pepperell Massachusetts.

Our guest speaker will be Adrian KO8SCA, remotely talking about the upcoming Bouvet Island Dxpedition.

Weekly 2-meter Net

The NVARC Information Net is held Monday nights at 7:30PM local time on the 2m N1MNX repeater – 147.345MHz+100pL. An informal net on 28.400(+/-) may follow the VHF net.

President's Corner
Les N1SV

Well, another summer has come and gone and with it our sunsets are starting to get earlier and earlier. I hope everyone had a great summer. One casualty of this summer for me was my 22-year-old above ground swimming pool with its original liner. Now the unenviable task of having to take it down!

I attended the HamXposition last month and saw many of our club members there as well as some old friends including Bob W1XP & Stan KD1LE. While most of my time was spent checking QSL cards on Saturday, I did manage to attend two presentations. One on the Worked All Bands award by my good friend WA1ZMS and the other on the new Aurora transceiver by K1KP. Thanks to Skip K1NKR who was the Program Committee Chairman completing his three-year tenure in that position. Skip has done a great job assembling such a large diverse lineup of speakers for the past three years.

It's time to think about finishing any planned antenna projects. By the time you read this I hope that all my antenna projects will have been completed as I have VC Towers scheduled for September 5th . For those unaware VC Towers is a small company in NH that specializes in tower work for hams (https://vctowers.net/). I have no connection to the company other than the fact they have done work for me on several occasions. I put this out there as another potential resource for those like me that don't climb towers anymore.

Just a reminder - if you need assistance with any antenna project whether in their planning or execution, the NVARC reflector and Saturday breakfasts at Tiny's are great resources. For those who don't know about our Saturday breakfasts, we meet in the back room of Tiny's restaurant in Ayer at around 7:30 for coffee and conversation then order promptly at 8:00. All are welcome!

President's Corner

We've had good participation on the weekly Monday night 2M NVARC Information net that's been meeting at 8:00 PM throughout the summer. Just a reminder that starting on Monday September 22nd we move the start time back to 7:30 PM. I encourage everyone to check in and participate. Following the net some of us move to 28.410 to continue the conversation.

I'm excited about our fall lineup of speakers for our NVARC club meetings. This month we will have Adrian KO8SCA and his remote presentation on his upcoming 3Y0K DXpedition to Bouvet Island in February of 2026. This is a major DXpedition to the #10 most wanted DXCC entity worldwide. Come and see what it takes to put together a major operation like this and ask him questions. For more information on this upcoming DXpedition visit https://3y0k.com/ . In October Bruce K1BG has agreed to speak about contesting for beginners. And in November one of my favorite meetings, Eric KV1J will return with our annual W1 QS Bureau card sort and pizza party. Just a reminder all meetings are the third Thursday of each month at the Pepperell Community Center at 7:30 PM. I hope to see you all there!

Editor's Note: Apparently (I've gotten nothing official) the Signal newsletter was awarded Second Place at the recent HamXposition in Marlboro. Some are saying that I've done a great job with the newsletter, but really, it's the content that matters. I just move words around on a page. We're allowed to (for the next year) display a graphic indicating the award (this is what I can find):

Made in New England
Leo K1LK

The radio craze was high in the 20's and 30's. It was said people would rather give up their washing machine than their radio. Some broadcast band radios also covered the short wave bands. This is where some got the ham radio bug. Stringing up a wire on the roof was out of the question for the less adventurous. Indoor braided wire was a safer alternative. Textile or tinsel makers were getting in on this craze. Here are 3 I've found so far made in New England. The Hope Webbing located in Providence RI was said to be the largest plant in the world making narrow woven fabric. They made over 50K different configurations since 1883. By 1914 it covered 7 acres with 12 acres of floor space. This antenna was probably made in 30's along with other electrical fabric. It ran into financial difficulties and closed in 1955.

HY-SIL started in Boston in 1903 making leather post cards which were popular at that time. They moved to Revere in 1912, manufacturing gift wrapping paper and ribbon infused with tinsel. They too got into making braided wire antennas. In time Hy-SIL developed a process for depositing metal under vacuum onto plastic film. It was finally sold in 1992 to the American Greeting Cards Co.

Tinsel manufacturers Lee Textile Co. Inc. at 205 Walker St in Lowell started in 1923. There isn't much information on this company. Searching U. Lowell's archives the only info was in the 1931 directory: Clifford L. Hayes Pres. William H. Lees GM and Lester A. Werner Treasurer.

(consolidated) Treasurer's Report
Ralph KD1SM

Income for July was $18.75 in membership fees. Expenses were $31.50 for the QSL Bureau, $122 for the PO Box renewal (6 months), and $195 for the Field Day porta-john leaving a net expense of $329.75 for the Month.

Income for August was $62.50 in membership fees. Expenses were $0.67 in PayPal fees and $58.32 for the August picnic leaving a net income of $3.51 for the month.

Dick W1LTN donated some gear, including some pieces from his brother in law's (Ralph Hensel KC2EQV) estate. Les N1SV set up a table at NEARFest and sold off some of that gear for $115, which according to club policy has been added to the Community Fund.

In addition to those items sold, the club retained a Yaesu FT-897, LDG AT-11MP Autotuner, and Astron RS-20A power supply, all of which are available to loan to club members who are new hams.

Current balances (from August):

General fund	$3,305.44
Community fund	$7,243.25

Welcome to new member Pilip Yaromenka KC1RFV of Groton. Pilip lists his special interests as radio, tech, video games, and retrocomputing.

Welcome to new member Edwin Vonderbeck KA6PNL of Brookline NH. Edwin lists his special interests as Raspberry PI computers, POTA, and shooting black powder.

As of 4 September we have 52 members who are current with their dues and 43 renewals outstanding.

Treasurer cont'd

To pay membership dues via PayPal see the instructions in https://n1nc.org/membership/

If you are joining ARRL or renewing your membership please note ARRL's instructions to enter your NVARC membership information. As a Special Service Club, the ARRL expects a majority of Club members to also be ARRL members and will send a portion of your new or renewal ARRL membership fee back to the Club. Contact Ralph for further information if you need it.

Board Meeting Report (August meeting)
John K1JEB

A general discussion over the uses between the General fund and the Community Funds - deferred to the December Board meeting.

Les N1SV has indicated administrative control has not yet been passed to the other Club Web page administrators.

Zack KC1VUY is continuously updating the club's social media program.

Zack KC1VUY is working on finding a guest speaker for October Club General Meeting.

September Meeting guest speaker will be Adrian KO8SCA who will be speaking about his most ambitious return to Bouvet Island.

On the 30 of August Zack KC1VUY will get together with Jim N8VIM to coordinate the audio/video setup for September club meeting.

The board had a discussion about whether the Club's Facebook should include a FB Group or a FB Page. The Group would be like a Forum.
Bruce K1BG is currently working on the Fall Tech Classes which may roll into the General class.
The board had a discussion if Hybrid monthly club meetings is an option.
Jim N8VIM has reported that the repeater is running well.

Board Meeting Report (September meeting)
John K1JEB

The NVARC Signal was awarded 2nd Place in the recent HamXposition awards ceremony. Yay us!

Les N1SV added to the NVARC Web Page the guidelines for reimbursement for Field Day expenses.

Jim N8VIM will not be attending the next club meeting as such Zack KC1VUY will do the video recording of the Club Meeting.

The 2-meter repeater is working great. Jim N8VIM informed the board that the 6-meter repeater is awaiting parts.

Bruce K1BG is Coordinating/Planing the Technician and General licenses classes that will be conducted at the Grady Building in Ayer, MA.

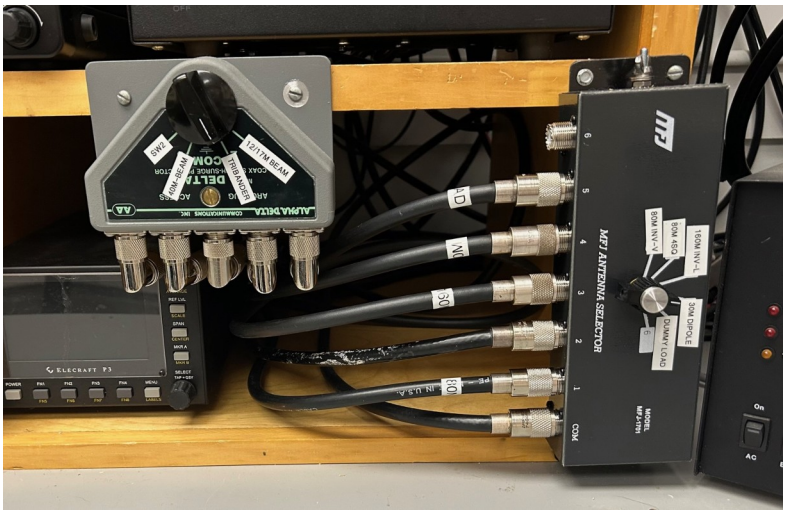
Bruce K1BG informed the board that the HamXposition in Marlborough was an enjoyable event and everyone seemed to have a good time.

Skip K1NKR wants to donate a screened in canopy to the club. However, there is a problem as to where to store it.

WA4MCM RAAS-8A Remote Control Antenna Switch
Les N1SV

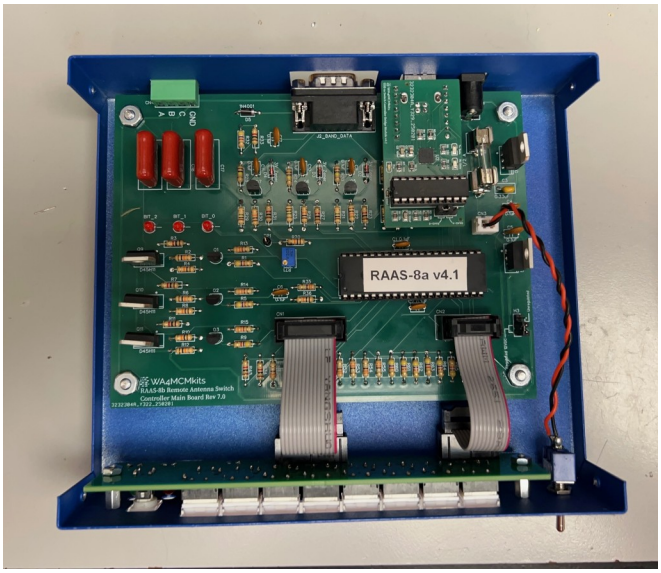
Les N1SV Photos

For many years I've had a combination of two antenna switches to connect all my HF antennas to my Elecraft K3S transceiver & KPA1500 amplifier. Two switches have been required since I couldn't find one with the capacity to handle all my different antennas. Having multiple switches with all the associated coaxial cables takes up significant space in my shack. And I could never seem to find the perfect location for it.



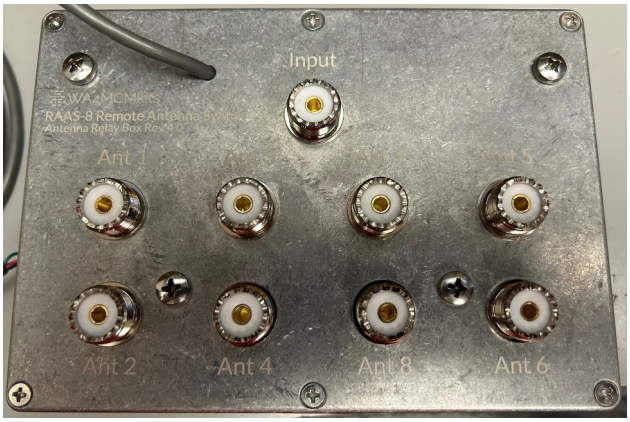
Recently I happened upon the website https://wa4mcmkits.com/ and found an 8-position remote antenna switch kit (they also produce a 4-position version). The product is similar to one that MFJ used to sell. The product appeared to meet my needs and was reasonably priced as it was in kit form. The cost of the Model RAAS-8A is $230 plus $40 for the optional USB interface (handy if you're considering doing any remote operating). After contacting Don, WA4MCM and asking a few questions, I decided to order one.

The kit arrived in a well-organized package with neat clearly market bags of parts. I was quite impressed by the quality of the PC boards and chassis work. You could see a lot of thought was put into the design. The PCB silk-screening included not just polarization markings for diodes and active components, but capacitor and resistor values as well. With this kind of annotation, I felt very comfortable assembling the kit. The assembly instructions where very detailed and included a lot of helpful tips to make the process go easier. I easily assembled everything in a weekend. Here is a picture of the completed main PCB. The optional USB board comes fully assembled and plugs into the top of the main board via two rows of headers.



The kit consists of three PC boards, the main board and display boards shown above connect together using two ribbon cables and the relay board shown below. The nice thing about the product is that you can hide the relay box away and place the control box right where you need it. The one challenge I had in assembling the relay board was aligning all the center pins of the SO-239 connectors with their associated holes in the PCB. While the instructions were helpful it took several attempts to tighten each connector so that they all lined up with the holes in the PCB. One thing not in the kit was a length of 4-conductor cable to connect the relay box to the controller (stated up front as being required by the buyer). I cut a 10-foot length of cable and installed the supplied connector on one end. While the instructions didn't specify it, I decided to knot the cable loosely on the relay board side after feeding the cable thru the hole in the box. In this way the knot is used as a strain relief.

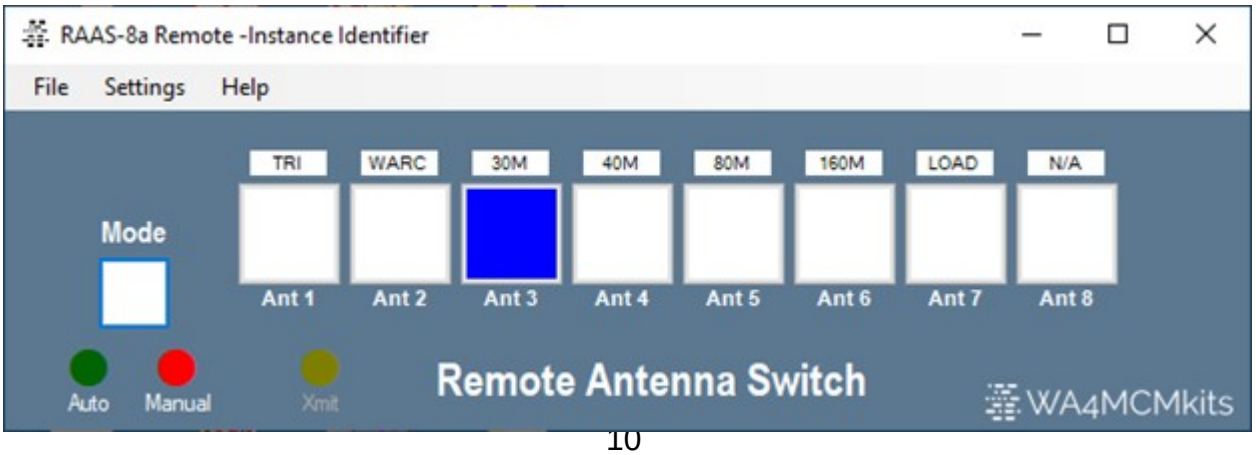
Initial check out of the antenna switch was done installing the AC adapter and using a DMM to check the continuity between the input port center pin and each of the antenna ports center pin as you switch thru the antennas. Following this was connecting a dummy load to each port and measuring the SWR at the input port on the highest frequency you expect to use the switch at. While the manufacturer specified a less than 1.2:1 SWR at 50 MHz, I measured less than 1.1:1 at 29.7 MHz using my NanoVNA (I was not intending to use it above 10m).



After preliminary testing was completed all that was left to do was to remove the old mechanical antenna switches and install the new remote one. The new relay box really organized the rat's nest of coaxial cables I had.

The final check out was to run full power on each band making a contact on each to ensure everything was working correctly. Finally, I added labels on the front of the controller. The new switch makes a nice addition to the shack.

The RAAS-8A with its optional USB interface and downloadable software application provides a soft front panel that you can use to select the desired antenna from your computer. The application also allows you to add text labels to each antenna above the switch.



Installing and configuring the RAAS-8A software was easy. However, the first time I tried to use the soft front panel when running 1500W, I found RFI getting into the controller via the USB cable. Wrapping the USB cable around a FT-290 toroid quickly resolved the problem.

The RAAS-8A remote antenna switch also has a band data input which when connected to a compatible transceiver can be used to automatically switch antennas when the transceivers band is changed. While my Elecraft K3S is compatible, that port unfortunately is already being used for interfacing to my Elecraft KPA-1500 amplifier. I ordered a 15-pin Y adapter from Winford Engineering website (https://www.winford.com/products/cdy15hd.php) along with a short 15-pin extension cable. I cut the female connector off the extension cable and wired the end to a DB9 female according to the operator's manual. The modified cable works great and programming the switch to automatically follow my transceivers band changes was easy.

The RAAS-8A is a well-designed remote antenna switch capable of switching up to eight different antennas. It handles full legal power and has a nice small controller that will easily fit at your operating position. The kit is straightforward to assemble and with the optional USB interface helps to add remote control capability to your shack. While the manufacturer also makes a 4-position version of this product, since it's the same price it seems to make more sense to just order the 8-position one. I highly recommend this product!

NVARC Summer Picnic

George KB1HFT Photo

John K1JEB hosted the Summer picnic at his lovely home in Littleton. Lots of good food, good friends to chat with, big antennas to gawk at. You know – a fun day!

A good time was had by all.

Working POTA
John KK1X

I was thinking I wouldn't have much of a column this month, but I looked back at my log, and I did 14 activation *attempts* in August. *Attempts* because for a couple of those, I failed to collect the requisite 10 QSOs at each park. On August 16th, after activating J A Skinner State Park in Hadley, nearby Mount Holyoke Range State Park beckoned. It was after making one contact there that my computer decided to flake out, leaving me with a non-activation.
I fixed and tested my computer, then went back out to Mount Holyoke Range SP (it's only about an hour and a half…) to discover that I hadn't *properly* tested my computer, leaving me dead in the water. Grrrr.

Finding a replacement computer was a trick. Mine is obsolete (well, it's over 6 months old!) but I was able to find a replacement from a Walmart vendor. Apparently it's the last unit left on Earth, but it finally came in and I was back in business. (This particular model runs on 12V, making it quite attractive).

For the bulk of August I was more concerned with testing antennas than anything else. I recently got an antenna analyzer (RigExpert AA-55 Zoom) from the estate of Bill Leger N1UZ(SK). Quite the eye-opener. I was quite accustomed to extending my vertical antennas to "the calculated length" and just pressing on. The meter ruined everything! The calculated length was usually close, but ~~crappy~~ far from optimal, though my KX3 really doesn't care. (Between you and me, I think it could tune a section of vinyl gutter). Because of this new ability to easily measure antenna characteristics, I'll be doing more tests, including revisiting the POTA Performer comparison. I think I did it a disservice in my prior tests.

I'm currently playing with 17 and 20 meter versions of a two-radial wire vertical hoisted up a 40 foot mast. I call them the Flying 17 and Flying 20, but others call them ground plane anntennas… Nothing new under the sun, I guess.

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Treasurer: Ralph Swick KD1SM

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John Griswold KK1X (2024-2026)
Jim Hein N8VIM (2024-2027)
Matt Fennell KC1TUV (2025-2028)

N1NC Trustee: Bruce Blain K1BG

Join NVARC! Annual dues are
$15 individual, $20 family

Contact us on the N1MNX repeater:
442.900(+) PL100
147.345(+) PL100
53.890(-) PL100

This newsletter is published monthly. Submissions, corrections, and inquiries should be sent to

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