

Bridge where GW8BKL was located. Later, after experimenting, I found a spot where contact was just possible, but generally the locals referred to Saundersfoot as a "hole", a radio hole, that is!

## TOUR OF DUTY

MY BRIEF, on this my first tour of duty, was to relieve GW0TSF at Wiseman's Bridge; then contact the Beachmaster to establish a firm communications liaison. Wiseman's Bridge was a hive of activity so contacting the Beachmaster was not going to be easy. I later realised he was responsible for three beaches and could be on any one of them.

At Wiseman's Bridge, the beach, shingle and cliff face were all dotted with men, machinery, hoses, and various unidentifiable (to me) pieces of equipment. Each group I approached knew he was somewhere; but not there! Evidence of the oil spill was everywhere. A long stretch of shingle, interspersed with large black globules, looked particularly unpleasant, as did the areas of soaked sand. But it was the cliff face that was proving particularly obstinate and defying the efforts of the men to power-wash off the oil residue.

Here I found him. His protective clothing was oil-stained and he looked strained and under pressure. He was undoubtedly pleased to see me. His mobile phone had been malfunctioning for two days and he had a list of requirements, one of which was, "Can you do anything about food? Some of the men have been here since early morning."

I waited for a break in the radio traffic and called GW3IGG with my list of requirements. When it came to the request for food, I was told that the WRVS were travelling along the coast road and providing sustenance, but at that stage communications were tenuous and there was no ETA. Then the Gods

stepped in: around the corner came the WRVS with ham rolls, tea, coffee and a choice of hot soups. From then on everyone looked at me with increased respect. There was magic in radio! Later this magic took the form of Barbara Shelley, GW7FFU, whose regular task was to travel with the WRVS van. This meant continuous communications with definite ETAs, thus avoiding confusion over work schedules.

During my 'tour of duty' I spent some time at most of the beaches and was pleased to rendezvous with GW0WBP at Tenby Harbour, GW0RNK at Lydstep Haven, GW7CDE at Manorbier and other stalwarts in 'semi-permanent' locations. There was a short spell as a relief controller for GW3IGG on the Ridgeway at Penally.

When GW4ZXL was controlling I was assigned to the South Pembrokeshire District Council Depot at the Salterns, from where labour and equipment were deployed. This was a demanding placement, requiring both tact and patience. Then, perhaps as a reward, I was asked to relieve GW7FFU on the WRVS 'bun run'. This ended at Freshwater East, from where I returned to Saundersfoot with a special pack of edible goodies for GW0RNK who was searching for the Beachmaster. He, too, had found a spot in the harbour

THE *SEA EMPRESS* oil spill on the beaches of south-west Wales back in February provided groups of radio amateurs with a chance to display their communications skills. They played a vital role in the clean-up operation, as Granville Bowen, GW0UMC, describes.

Dyfed County Council called out Raynet on Wednesday 28 February 1996. Operations began the following day and continued until stand-down on Thursday 21 March.

Three amateur radio organisations were involved: Pembrokeshire Raynet (group controller GW3IGG), North Dyfed Raynet (group controller GW1XOT), and CARSET (Carmarthen Amateur Radio Society Emergency Team, secretary GW4ZXL).

We are grateful to John Jones, GW3IGG, Pembrokeshire Raynet group controller, for providing the background information, diagram and photographs for this article.

Now turn to the poster in the centre of this issue of *D-i-Y Radio* for more on how radio amateurs come to the rescue in times of emergency.

car park from where he could contact the controller, but using 25 watts I think. I was on my way home when I last heard him calling control from a field at Monkstone Point - I wonder if he's still there?

In conclusion I'm sure that I am expressing the sentiments of all who participated with the communications organisations when I say I am pleased to have made a small, but important, contribution in assisting the authorities in their fight to minimise the effects of the *Sea Empress* oil disaster. On a personal level I feel that my knowledge and experience of radio has benefited.

Beach clean-up vehicles and men in action.

