

The 53rd Dayton Hamvention

May 2004 Rally Report

By John Ray G8DZH

After a gap of several years, I felt a re-visit to the Dayton Hamvention was in order. In 2003, it was the turn of some of the European rallies in Italy, Germany and France. Planning started in January and traveling companion was Colin Smith G0LIN from the Colchester Club. Flights and motel room were booked via the Internet in February.

Wednesday 12th May.

It was time to get to Gatwick for the flight. I found the easiest way was to let the train take the strain – Victoria line underground from Blackhorse Road and The Gatwick Express from Victoria. From home in Loughton to Gatwick Airport in 90 minutes.

Security was strict – this started in the line waiting to check in, I was even asked which company I had ordered the tickets from. Once through to the boarding area, time for a cup of tea and Danish pastry, £3.60, and purchase a UK to USA mains adapter. The Delta Airlines Boeing 767 was fairly comfortable, our location being shown at regular intervals along with flight information. The route taken was over Wales, Dublin, across the Atlantic to top of Canada and then down over the Great Lakes. We landed at Cincinnati Airport, North Kentucky after an eight hour flight at 1pm local time (6pm UK) with temperatures at 29C.

Once again more queues – several of them – to clear Homeland Security, Customs (was I importing any mushrooms or other seeds) and immigration. People were hurriedly eating apples before they were confiscated. Everyone's shoes were X-rayed as well as luggage (again) and coat. After over 90 minutes we finally got to the car hire office and collected our Mitsubishi Lancer. The airport is actually in North Kentucky, but the Interstate road (I75) goes direct to Miamisburg (outskirts of Dayton) and the Holiday Inn adjacent to the Shopping Mall. About 65 miles in all. We arrive at 4.30pm just as the bar was opening, but elect to freshen up first.

After a few bottled beers and fish-n-chips in a basket retire for the night. The room had a 'standard' king size bed and the usual accessories. Conveniently the Cable TV channels included BBC News.

Thursday 13th May.

Next morning it was time to tackle the breakfast and I concentrated on the 'healthy' fruit and cereal options and skipped the bacon, sausage, scrambled eggs, potato hash, waffles and pancakes. Honest! After breakfast, Colin and I went to the Hara Arena to collect the tickets, cheaper if purchased prior to the event. It was my turn to drive but getting there wasn't straightforward. Our map really only covered Downtown Dayton. We kept passing over some very German-sounding roads (*Seibenthaler Avenue* is firmly etched into memory) without ever finding the Hara Arena. In desperation, a stop at a BP garage to purchase a map was the answer. Over a 12oz cup of Wild Bean coffee (\$1.09 or 60p) we realized how close it was.

Using the new map, and helpful instructions, we located the Arena. At 12.45pm tickets were purchased, \$20 for three days. We bumped into another English group doing the same thing. It was Ernie G4LUE and the South Yorkshire Repeater Group party. Naturally we went into the 'pub' by the ticket office and say hello and catch up since the last meeting in Germany (for HamRadio 2003 last June). After a few drinks (Sprite in my case as driving), we returned to Dayton Mall to do some shopping and later have a meal.



Friday 14th May – Dayton Hamvention Day One.

The 'healthy' breakfast of Thursday was augmented by a generous quantity of egg, bacon sausage and potato in order to build up energy reserves. All washed down with some cranberry juice and coffee. We left the hotel at 08:30 and parked up near the Arena 45 minutes later. This time we knew the route. Temperature was 76-78F, overcast and humid. The show had opened at 8am. Entering the Hara Arena from the East Entrance, the first trader seen was Timestep Electronics (Satellite Rx equipment and software) from the UK. It turned out that the proprietors, Jill G8FAW and Dave G4IUG, were staying at our hotel.

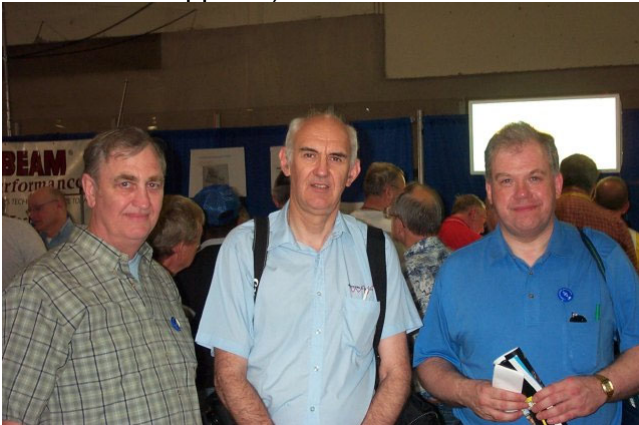
The Dayton Hamvention is huge. Held in an old sports stadium, it was host to 657 exhibit spaces inside according to the show guide. At any one time there were four forums taking place covering a wide range of interests, 45 in all. Outside, there were 4,268 pitches in the flea market where just about anything can be bought.

By 1100 we had said hello on the RSGB stand and picked up a 'pin' or badge. Also I signed the visitors book – have a look on page 5 of the July 2004 RadCom for confirmation!



The President and General Manager Peter Kirby (seen above talking to Colin G0LIN) were there together with a few other HQ staff. RSGB publications seemed popular, there was a plentiful supply of most titles.

Later Colin found Messrs Walters and Stanton near the RSGB stand (not trading - on business to talk to their suppliers).



Colin G0LIN, Jeff Stanton and John G8DZH

All the usual traders were there - corporate stands were busy and some had freebies e.g. a blue baseball hat from Yaesu. Logbook and maps etc from Icom. Icom were displaying their new IC7800 HF transceiver, yours for \$10,400. A massive video wall ensured the radio was not missed by anyone.



Icom IC7800 (supported by a crane)

No new radios from Kenwood were announced although the TS-840 portable bracket is now available in the US market. Also attracting attention were Australian Linear Amp manufacturer Emtron with their DX1-d and DX2 models, 1kW and 2kW output respectively. The arena itself was well lit. MFJ, their associate companies and the other big names were present as expected.

On the Yaesu stand, a prototype of the new FT DX9000, high-end HF and 6m transceiver was attracting attention. This is a large radio - at least 30% bigger than the FT1000 series and a choice of 200W Internal PSU or 400W external PSU versions. Available in early 2005 but not yet received CE approval for European sale (see links for further details).



Yaesu FT DX9000

At lunchtime, it was back to the 'pub' and we met up again with Ernie's party. By 13:45 it was time to tackle outside. This can take over two days to do thoroughly but we worked our way up and down the aisles and got to see just about everything by 18:45. Electric vehicles were a popular mode of travel. Photos cannot convey the sheer size of the flea market. Purchases included a \$1 power cord for camera battery charger and a \$10 laptop case. Most items were just too heavy to even consider bringing back. Plenty of bargains though in Test Equipment, Helix cable etc.



A small section of the flea market

We left the Arena at 18:45 and returned to the car park (field). Dry but rutted.

US President George Bush had visited the area a week before the show to gather support for the election in November. On the way back to the hotel, we stopped by at the Dayton Mall for more shopping (jeans and shirts this time).

Saturday 15th May – Dayton Hamvention Day Two.

The day started with a full American breakfast (except for the pancakes and waffles) and we left the hotel at 8.30am. Temperature was reported at 55F and there was light rain. Parking in the field was OK but a bit damp underfoot.

On entering, the immediate reaction was that there were less people on the second day and a lot less crowded. As for Friday, the Arena had opened at 8am. Due to the weather, we stayed indoors in the morning although ventured outside to take some pictures. All halls seen and some purchases made. Frank G0LWI had asked me to obtain a dust cover for his Yaesu FT1000MP. The official ones were not seen; when I asked at the stand, a gentleman from Head Office explained that they were not standard items although local/regional offices may arrange something with third-party products.

The arena seating was full of hams steaming gently as their water-soaked clothing and ponchos dried off. We watched the 'Icom show' where a simple quiz was underway; if you knew what the initials 'F.M' meant, you got a prize. No, it wasn't an IC7800 but a bag of goodies.



The Arena area

I went outside at 12:20. The rain had eased slightly. All of the displayed goods were covered in plastic sheeting. Also a lot of gaps where there were traders yesterday.

Lunch was in the pub. The barmaids were very friendly and dispensing drinks at a great rate. Chatted to a local (Dayton club) ham; 27000 tickets had been sold by Saturday lunchtime. Also to a Chicago ex-Policeman, James WA9VVB. Both were very interesting to talk to. We also met up with some of the Yorkshire party and admired the various bits of Hustler antenna accessories purchased. By 15:10 it was time to leave the bar for some fresh air, especially as it had stopped raining. Puddles of water everywhere outside, in one case a stream was going through a pitch.





Water, water, everywhere

There was lot's of good stuff on offer – but most things unable to take back. Andrews Heliac for example – large coils complete with the special N-type connectors. We left at 17:00 and the field was a quagmire. I used the grass for as long as possible – and selected 2nd gear – and got off OK. No need for the tow trucks but car very muddy, especially the wheels. In hindsight, it would have been better to buy the more expensive ticket to use the bus service to a nearby Mall with dry parking.



All-terrain vehicles had an advantage.

The evening meal at the hotel was an "All you can eat buffet" for \$19.95. I sampled just about everything on offer, never being one to resist a challenge. And helped down with a bottle of Guinness (\$5). The dessert was a 'Cherry Cob' - a sort of cherry crumble - with ice cream.

Sunday 16th May – Dayton Hamvention Day Three.

At breakfast, there were a lot of Hams tucking into the breakfast buffet. We decided to forsake the last day of the show and do something else. The show closed at 1pm anyway on the last day. The risk was that our (numbered) tickets could have won a prize – which has to be claimed at noon in the arena. After Saturday's visit, we felt we had seen enough.

Instead, the day was spent at the US Air Force Museum at the Wright-Paterson Air Force Base, not too far from the Arena. Admission is free. The site is huge – lot's to see. Using the instructions from the hotel, we arrived at 09:20. Temperature was a dry but overcast 71F. The car park was already half-full of cars with ham antennas attached, it seemed to be a popular choice. The area has a close affinity to powered flight, the base containing the original airfield and site of the Wright Brothers first factory.



We toured most of the exhibits, but not all. Including Early Years Gallery, Air Power Gallery. Modern Flight, Korea and Presidential Air Force One planes which was a bus ride off base – photo below.



The Museum closed at 5pm, a most interesting day. By now the temperature had risen to 80F with the sun making an appearance mid-afternoon.

Postscript: After the evening meal, we meet up with Jill & Dave of Timestep Electronics. They confirmed that the last day at the show was “very quiet” and the plots outside clearing by mid-morning. The main attraction was the re-raffling of prizes at noon in the Arena.

Monday 17th May – Going Home Day.

With an early evening flight back to London Gatwick, we had all day to get to the airport. A leisurely drive back into Kentucky gave us the opportunity also to clean the mud off the car and for Colin to buy a bottle of Jim Bean from a downtown Cincinnati liquor store. Handing the hire car back at lunchtime earned us a half-day rebate on the rental which was handy. The rest of the time was spent at the airport. My case now weighed 46lbs. After check-in, we again meet up with the Yorkshire group, most of which were enroute to California for the second leg of their holiday.

Cincinnati airport is modern, light and airy. But time seemed to go slowly with a four hour wait before boarding. Security was very light on the return trip – almost relaxed. No searches or shoe checks this time. Meet and chat with RSGB team on the same flight. Also Jill and Dave of Timestep.

The flight back took 7hrs 17 mins and uneventful. A crowded plane wasn't too comfortable though when trying to sleep. For those interested, it was 3956 miles back to Gatwick, typically 35,000ft cruising height and approx 550mph (0.7Mach).



Tuesday 18th May – Nearly There.

Breakfast was at 01:00 US time (06:00 UK) and we landed at 07:35. By 08:20 immigration had been cleared, no delay incoming for Brits and EU citizens. But huge queues for all others. No problems with customs. Straight through the 'nothing to declare zone'.

By 10am I was at Blackhorse Rd station awaiting a lift for the final leg of the journey. Somewhat tired but otherwise OK.

Summary

Although the holiday was short, I enjoyed the trip. Thanks to Colin G0LIN for the company and sharing the driving and carhire costs. It was interesting to have a look at Dayton Hamvention again. As to whether I would go again next year? The answer would be not for another 2-3 years at least. However, it is the largest Amateur Radio Show in the world ('only' 18,000 tickets were bought for Hamradio 2004 at Friedrichshafen, Germany in June) and I'm glad I was able to make the comparison between them both.

Fuel costs, although seemingly high to the Americans, worked out at 54c (31p) per litre. i.e. \$2 a US gallon on average.

In the Autumn newsletter, my report from HamRadio 2004 a bit closer to home.

73

John G8DZH

E-mail: g8dzh@lefars.org.uk

Links

Hamvention photos (a selection)

<http://www.smartgroups.com/pictures/openalbum.cfm?GID=2507874&AlbumID=4522441>

Info on Hamvention 2005

<http://www.hamvention.org>

USAF Museum, Wright-Paterson AFB, Dayton, OH

<http://www.wpafb.af.mil/museum>

Icom IC-7800 rig details

<http://www.rigpix.com/icom/ic7800.htm>

<http://www.qsl.net/ab4oj/icom/ic7800/7800links.html>

Yaesu FT DX9000 links

<http://www.rigpix.com/yaesu/ftdx9000.htm>

<http://www.yaesu.co.uk/amateur/hf/index.htm>

TimeStep Wx Satellite Systems

<http://www.time-step.com>

