

The Paul Godley 2ZE Centenary Celebrations at Ardrossan



PHOTO 1: 2021 KLARC site looking towards the harbour (courtesy Dan, 2M0RGU).



PHOTO 2: 1921 Paul Godley, 2ZE site looking towards the harbour (courtesy Bruce Godley Littlefield).

Kilmarnock and Loudoun Amateur Radio Club ran a special event station to commemorate the centenary of when Paul Godley, 2ZE received the first transatlantic short wave amateur radio message at Ardrossan, Scotland on 12 December 1921.

There has been significant coverage in *RadCom* and elsewhere recently about the centenary of the important achievement of Paul Godley, 2ZE when he received the first transatlantic short wave amateur radio message. This article tells the story of how Kilmarnock & Loudoun ARC (KLARC) contributed to the Godley centenary celebrations. KLARC is based close to Ardrossan and we have members who live in, and close to, the town. We are a small club with a stable membership of just over 30 and we have been in existence for 41 years. When we initially considered the possibility of running a special event station during the centenary weekend, we had to consider and overcome some potential challenges. First of all there was the safety aspect with respect to Covid controls in particular. The weather on the Ayrshire coast in December can be severe, so our normal 'under canvas' club outdoor event accommodation would not be suitable. Enough volunteers would be required to set up and operate the station. In the end, all of the potential obstacles were cleared away thanks to a significant number of KLARC members and others getting behind the venture.

On the air

The site used by Godley in 1921 is now built over by a residential development, so North Ayrshire Council kindly granted us permission to use an area of open ground owned by them. **Photo 1** shows our site looking towards the harbour and **Photo 2** shows Godley's site also looking towards the harbour. Our plan was to run the special event station for 24 hours over the weekend of 11 and 12 December 2021. We were on the air ahead of schedule and had our first QSO with DL1DCT on 30m FT8 at 1137UTC on the Saturday. The first SSB QSO was with LY3YY on 20m. Band conditions

on HF turned out to be very poor overall and the highest band we made QSOs on was 17m. We made 401 contacts in 60 different DXCC countries using three call signs – GS2ZE (licence holder, Jason, GM7VSB), GB2ZE and GB1002ZE (licence holder for both, Bob, GM0DEQ). The final QSO was at 1121UTC on the Sunday with RM9W on 20m SSB. The call sign used for the majority of the activation was GS2ZE.

Thank goodness we had an FT8 station on air. That mode came to the rescue under the challenging HF propagation conditions we experienced and got some very good DX into the log.

We made 139 contacts on a network assisted FreeSTAR station using GS2ZE. The first contact was with 2E1HWE. The most distant call we had on FreeSTAR was from ZL1BOB.

On 2m FM we made contacts with a number of local stations.

1921 message re-enactment

One major target we set ourselves for the weekend was to try and hear and decode a re-enactment transmission of the original message that Paul Godley, 2ZE received at Ardrossan, 100 years earlier. At 0252UTC on 12 December – exactly the same time and date that Godley copied his message in 1921 – we listened for, and copied, a transmission from The Radio Club of America using W2RCA on 1825kHz re-sending the original Godley message...SUCCESS! **Photo 3** shows the decoded re-enactment message that we received in 2021 and **Photo 4** shows the message that Godley received in 1921. In addition to KLARC members and some others on site, the historic successful centenary reception was witnessed by Stewart Bryant, G3YSX, President of the RSGB. A video recording of this momentous event can be accessed from the KLARC website [1].

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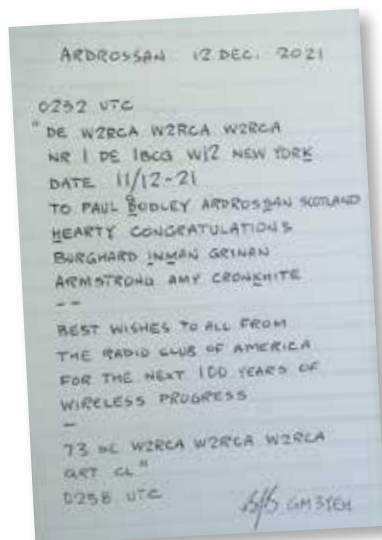


PHOTO 3: 2021 re-enactment message as copied by KLARC at Ardrossan.



PHOTO 4: 1921 message as copied by Paul Godley, 2ZE at Ardrossan (courtesy Bruce Godley Littlefield).

The 160m Transatlantic QSO Party

At the start of the 160m Transatlantic QSO Party (0200UTC on 12 December 2021) we used the callsign GB2ZE from Ardrossan. Ahead of the event, arrangements had been made to attempt a QSO between GB2ZE at Ardrossan and the ARRL station W1AW a few minutes prior to the start of the QSO Party. The plan was for the W1AW operator, NA2AA, to call the Ardrossan GB2ZE operator, GM3YEH, using personal callsigns initially and then change to W1AW and GB2ZE if contact was established. NA2AA was heard on 1814kHz at the Ardrossan station and GM3YEH responded. Unfortunately, contact was not established. A video of our attempt can be accessed from the KLARC website [1]. Just after 0200UTC we started using GB2ZE in the QSO Party on 1814kHz. We continued until 0222UTC and worked 26 North American and European stations on CW. The first US station to be logged was K7GM and the first UK station logged was MDOCCE. A video of GB2ZE at Ardrossan operating in the QSO Party can be accessed from the KLARC website [1].

After our spell using GB2ZE and the recording of the W2RCA re-enactment transmission, we reverted back to the callsign GS2ZE for the remainder of the time we were in the QSO Party. During that period, we listened for transmissions being made by the Antique Wireless Association in the USA using a replica of the 1921 transmitter. They planned to use W2AN/1BCG on 1820kHz but, unfortunately, we heard nothing from that station at Ardrossan. Propagation conditions had deteriorated significantly on 160m by around 0400UTC and we moved back to mainly

HF operation. **Photo 5** shows the location of the north American CW stations heard on 160m at Ardrossan during the QSO Party and **Photo 6** is a map showing the stations that 2ZE heard in 1921.

Equipment

To make the activation as inclusive to our members and those who would contact us as possible, we decided at an early stage to use as many bands and modes as we could. For HF SSB and CW we had wire dipoles at 10m AGL. For HF FT8 we used quarter wave verticals. On 2m we had a collinear at 11m AGL. The transceivers were two TS-590s, an IC-706, a Flex 6500 and an FT-1802. We also had FreeSTAR network radio equipment. The three logging laptops ran N1MM+ and WSJT-X. Two separate 2kVA generators were on site to give us sufficient power and also backup redundancy in case of failure.

Conclusions

From the perspective of a small local amateur radio club, this special event activation was an incredible opportunity to play a major part in a very important celebration of a key step in the development of wireless communications. One particularly pleasing aspect was that most of the operators, and those who came along to help, included Foundation and Intermediate licensees and also members who have joined KLARC fairly recently. In spite of the weather being typical for the Ayrshire coast in December (ie just above freezing, very windy at times and long spells of horizontal driving rain), there were a lot of visitors to the site including local people and radio amateurs from other clubs, some of whom had travelled a distance to get to us. Every single individual and organisation who contributed in any way to this Godley centenary celebration can be very proud of what we achieved together.

Acknowledgements

The following are thanked for their help in making the special event activation such a huge success:

All KLARC members and supporters throughout the club who provided equipment loan and their time

North Ayrshire Council for permission to use the station site

McGivney Construction Ltd., Kilmarnock for use of their welfare unit vehicle

Jason, GM7VSB for permission to use GS2ZE; Bob, GMODEQ and Robbie, GMOSEI of Crocodile Rock Amateur Group for permission to use GB2ZE and GB1002ZE

RSGB for provision of display banners and publicity

Charles M00X0 for handling QSL cards

Don, G3BJ for IQ data recordings of the 160m Transatlantic QSO Party

Websearch

[1] Kilmarnock and Loudoun ARC website <https://www.klarc.org>



PHOTO 5: Map of 160m north American CW signals received by KLARC at Ardrossan in 2021.

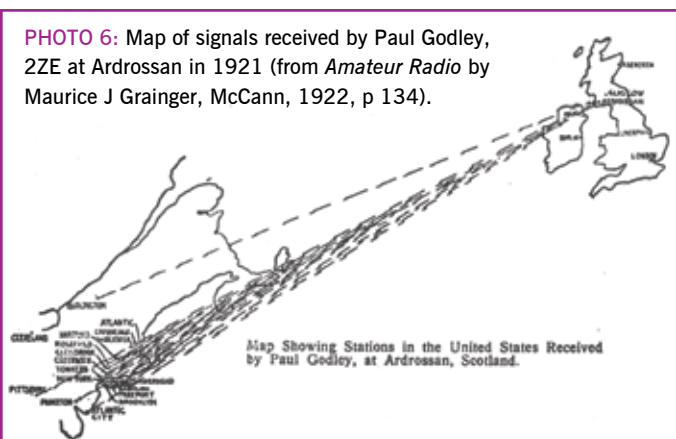


PHOTO 6: Map of signals received by Paul Godley, 2ZE at Ardrossan in 1921 (from *Amateur Radio* by Maurice J Grainger, McCann, 1922, p 134).