

Service to the Islanders had been replaced in the mid-eighties. However ET4336 BBC serial numbers 125 and 126 were not finished just yet.

Sunshine 855

At about this time a local group in Ludlow who for many years had been campaigning for a MF local commercial radio service had applied for the just-advertised Independent Local Radio licence for South Shropshire. By now, I was rather attached to these *particular* ETs and didn't really want to see them scrapped. Fortunately I was asked, "Could the group buy them from the scrapman? They might come in useful." (Now, where have I heard that before?) I checked and the answer was yes. This time there was no mention of any impending visit of either Pat Priestman or any other hammer-wielding official!

The ETs were (carefully) removed from Gloucester along with the valves, spare parts and that rather nice oak table. All was transported to my garage! I well recall the prospective managing director coming round and upon seeing all the cabling and just about everything else stripped out of

one of the units asking whether I thought I could ever get this lot working again!

I took the opportunity to purchase new, modern HT transformers and use two 15 watt solid state pre-amps instead of the Leak Point One amplifiers, after all KT66s were getting hard to source by then! Other modifications included an SWR detector on the output of the combiner, to suppress the HT in the event of an antenna or feeder fault and automatic start-up from just the closure of an external pair of relay contacts. This used a 555 timer to delay the application of HT for 30 seconds until the 807 heaters had time to warm up.

The group, the rewiring and the modifications were successful and the station *Sunshine 855* took to the air on October 2nd 1992 from the new site at Villa Farm, Greete, near Ludlow after the Radio Authority engineers had checked for spectral occupancy, the received field strength at 1km and (the lack of) harmonics in accordance with their Engineering Code. Nearly 100,000 hours later the ETs are still in service. They have proved to be incredibly reliable – but then it's fair to say they are of a time-served design!

For me it has been a considerable personal labour-of-love and I still get a thrill from seeing and hearing the old girls on the air. I think Sir Francis McLean would have been pleased to see that his prescient War Surplus purchase has been used wisely over some 50 years – and continues to be.

Footnotes

The Gloucester site was re-engineered by the BBC in 1993 for Independent National Radio with an Eddystone B6038 1kW transmitter. It is part of the 'Virgin 1215' network on the filler frequency of 1197kHz. The Coubro poles and the two-wire 'T' antenna are still in use at the time of writing. A sign for Crown Castle, the current site owner and maintenance provider is now on the front of the Gloucester site.

Radio Gloucestershire returned to MF in the late 1990s from two new sites, Bourton-on-the-Water and Berkeley Heath, both synchronised on 1413kHz again maintained by Crown Castle. The 603kHz ILR service, CD603 that followed Radio Gloucestershire ceased on MF and transferred operations to VHF/FM after a few years. **RB**



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