



The SPARC

Amateur Radio - Communicating Worldwide for A Century
Newsletter of the Boston Amateur Radio Club

Serving Hams in the Greater Boston Area

January 2026 - VOLUME 38, NUMBER 1

www.barc.org - w1bos@arrl.net



Message From the President – Brendan Baldonado, NW1S



A Happy New Year to all Hams! Hopefully everyone had an enjoyable time with family friends and loved ones. Here at our house, we rang in the new year with many family members sick. It was a good reminder to slow down and practice a little self-care. The new year starts strong with Winter Field Day for us as a club. Winter Field Day is a contest-like event occurring across the last full weekend of January and all Hams and interested parties receiving this newsletter are invited and welcome to come!

In this Issue of The SPARC

- Product Review: Omnifixo Makers Third Hand
- Renew Your BARC Membership for 2026!



BARC General Meeting, Thursday, January 15, 7:30 pm

This month's club meeting will be dedicated to Winter Field Day planning. BARC will be returning to the AMC cabins at Ponkapoag in Canton again this year. Come to the club meeting on Thursday, January 15th at 7:30 pm at the Artisans Asylum and on Zoom! We'll be sorting out the final details for what should be a great time.

Repeaters: 145.230 (-) CTCSS 88.5 in/100.0 out

Simplex: 147.420

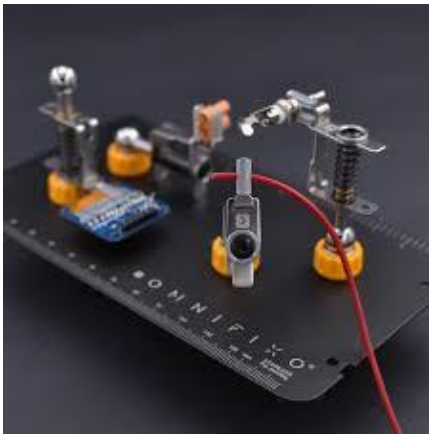
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Product Review: Omnifixo Makers Third Hand – Joe Chapman, NV1W

Here are two tasks in bulding things that I find annoying: stripping the insulation from non-heat-strippable magnet wire, and holding unwieldy things in place while soldering them. You probably know the drill for the second: tape an IC down to the circuit board, turn it over, and tack solder one of the pins. Then you turn it over, discover that the tape shifted, so you have to reheat the pin while pushing down on the IC with your finger to re-seat it. Language prohibited by FCC rule §97.113 is employed.

Up until now my tools for holding things have been a PanaVise Jr (<https://www.adafruit.com/product/151>) and a Kotto Helping Hands device (<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B07MDKXNPC>) with a Dr Octopus sticker on the base. No complaints about the PanaVise, which is a solid piece of equipment.

The Kotto can be annoying if you want to adjust the arms with some degree of precision, but the main problem is that alligator clips are used to hold the work. The ends of a gator clip come together at an angle, which is too small in some cases and too large in others. It's perfect for a slice of Wasa Crispbread, but I rarely solder sardines. Also, serrated jaws don't mesh well enough to hold smaller diameter wires, though the Kotto includes plastic covers that ameliorate the problem somewhat.



Enter the Omnifixo. This is a black metal plate about $6\frac{1}{2} \times 3\frac{1}{2}$ inches with rubber feet underneath. It comes with four metal clamps with jaws that open parallel to a width of about half an inch. They have a metal ball on the bottom that fits into a magnetic ring that then sticks to the metal plate. You can place the ring anywhere you want and then rotate the clamps through an entire half sphere of motion. It's easy to adjust and I've found that even very thin wire can be held in the jaws of the clamp. One neat feature is there's a hole in the back of the jaw that can accommodate component leads.

The clamps are all metal, and they have a convenient place to attach an alligator clip, so you can run power through them. There are two pads of bare metal, so you can have the metal plate be at ground (or the negative lead of a voltmeter) as well as one of the clamps. There are both US and metric scales on the top of

the plate and the clamps and their ring mounts fit into a half inch plastic base with the metal plate on top. It then fits in your pocket.

There are some user-contributed designs for 3D printed bases that can hold more stuff, even a small soldering pencil so you have a complete portable soldering station. It looks like there are some more options in the works like a magnifying device.

It's a little expensive, but in my opinion pretty close to perfect. The company is Swedish and the device itself is made in Taiwan, but there's a US stock and I got it fairly quickly. *Omnifixo Makers Third Hand*, <https://omnifixo.com/en-us>, \$65.00.

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Renew Your BARC Membership for 2026! – Joe Harris, N1QD

It's membership renewal time again! All BARC memberships run the calendar year. Our secretary NV1W has mailed out renewal forms to all club members. Please take advantage of the return envelope to mail your check in, or renew at <https://www.barc.org/join/>. Renewals sent in by January 31 may take the discounted rate detailed in the mailer.

BARC's New Discord Server! – Patrick Mannion, W1PAC

Hello All! 🙌

🧐 Guess what! 🧐

🗨️ BARC has its own Discord server!

🗨️ What is Discord you might ask? It's a chat program that allows instant messaging, voice and video calls. The server is broken up in various chat rooms and we have a lot, however, the general chatroom is called #general and after that it branches off into various other chat rooms for more specialized content such as ones for POTA, ARES and various digital modes.

If you want to join, you can use it right in your favorite browser or use the Discord software, it's available for desktop on all 3 major operating systems such as Windows, Mac and various Linux distributions. It's also available for iOS and Android phones.

Just go to <https://discord.com/download> and download it.

To get to our server you'll need an invite link which is: <https://discord.gg/F6hqmgFMjW>

We've set it to never expire, but if it accidentally does, just let us know in the groups.io and we'll generate a new one.

Hope to see you on there!

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BARC's Online Discussion Group – Joe Harris, N1QD

BARC has an online forum at Groups.io. The group serves as a sounding board for members to post their suggestions and comments, and is intended to foster discussion. The group can also be used to share photographs from club events! Come visit us at: <https://groups.io/g/BostonARC>. You can join, if you're not already there, by sending an email to BostonARC+subscribe@groups.io.

New Course from HamRadioPrep – Joe Chapman, NV1W

Our friends at HamRadioPrep have just announced a new course: *HF Masterclass*. Unlike their licensing courses, this one aims to lead someone with a General or an Amateur Extra license from the first steps of buying a radio and assembling a station through becoming a competent operator on the HF bands. You can read more about it at <https://hamradioprep.com/hf-masterclass/>.

As with all of HamRadioPrep's courses, you can use the coupon code **bostonarc** to receive a 20% discount. BARC also receives a commission for every sale that uses our coupon code, so you help the club as well.

Member News – Joe Harris, N1QD

This space is reserved for your news! Send it to N1QD at n1qd@n1qd.org.

BARC Net Preamble

The control operator for the BARC Net is Joe, W1JJF. He rarely misses a net, but when he does any ham can take up the position and run the net. To assist you in opening and closing the net the BARC Net Preamble is printed below. Do not be afraid to step up and take the challenge.

Is there any further business for the repeater before we begin the Boston Amateur Radio Club Net? This is «YOUR CALL». Calling the Boston Amateur Radio Club Net. This is «YOUR CALL», my name is «YOUR NAME» and I am located in «YOUR TOWN». This net meets each Monday evening at 9 pm Eastern Time on the 145.230 Boston repeater; PL 88.5. This net is an informal round table discussion concerning matters of interest to the members of the Boston Amateur Radio Club and the Boston Amateur Radio community in general. When checking into the net, please say, "this is" and drop your carrier to check on doubling. Then give your call sign, name and location. All amateurs are welcome to join the net. Any check-in's for the Boston Amateur Radio Club Net please call now.

[Compile the list of the check-ins and proceed with the net.]

Is there any further business for the net before I close? Hearing nothing, this is «YOUR CALL» closing tonight's session of the Boston Amateur Radio Club Net. I would like to thank everyone who participated in the net and those who stood by while I ran the net. The Boston Amateur Radio Club Net will return next Monday evening at 9 pm Eastern Time. This is «YOUR CALL» returning the repeater to general amateur use. 73.

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I See the Future

15 January	BARC General Meeting, Artisans Asylum, Allston, and Zoom, 7:30 pm
17 January	Whitman ARC Winterfest, Whitman K of C
17 – 18 January	NAQP, SSB
24 – 26 January	Winter Field Day, AMC Ponkapoag Camp
14 February	Algonquin ARC Flea Market, Marlborough
19 February	BARC General Meeting, Artisans Asylum, Allston, and Zoom, 7:30 pm
21 – 22 February	ARRL International DX Contest, CW
28 Feb – 1 March	NAQP, RTTY
7 – 8 March	ARRL International DX Contest, SSB

▲ *Note change from usual date and/or location*
(Rp) = BARC Repeaters will be used for these events

As you might expect, there are many more events (public service, hamfests, flea markets, etc.) taking place—some only peripheral to ham radio. For information on these, covering much of the Northeast, the “Ham - Electronic Flea Market” and the “PSLIST” lists tell the story. Of course, if you know of an event that would be of interest to the readers, please let the Editor know. For an up-to-date calendar of events, including web links, visit <http://www.barc.org/calendar>.

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Businesses Can Advertise Here

The SPARC accepts commercial advertisements. BARC encourages monthly promotion of your products and services which would be of interest to hundreds of our members and others interested in the Amateur Radio Service.

The rates for display advertising are:

1 col × 2 in. (business card)	\$15 per issue
1 col × 2 in. (business card)	\$75 per 6 consecutive months
1 col × 2 in. (business card)	\$125 per 12 consecutive months
1 col × 4 in. (½ column)	\$30 per issue
1 col × 9.5 in. (full column)	\$60 per issue

Originals of ads must be presented to the Editor in MS Word or .jpg format to print 1:1. Other composition will be at extra cost. We will be glad to quote other ad sizes and durations. Members are urged to seek prospective advertisers who are appropriate to our readers. For additional information, contact Joe Chapman, NV1W, at 617.267.6349 or nv1w@arrl.net.

Two Ways to See Yourself in Print! (well, PDF) – Joe Harris, N1QD

We are always looking for articles for the newsletter. I have reserved this space for your articles, reviews, tips, how-tos, hints ‘n’ kinks, photos, schematics, or other ham related information. Photos of you operating or your shack are especially welcome. Send your submissions to the Editor, Joe, N1QD, at n1qd@n1qd.org. Articles for the February issue must be received by February 7.

Are you a depressed BARC member because you have a treasure you must turn to cash? Cheer up, Bunky! The SPARC will run your (non-business) ad for free. Of course, a 10% donation if you sell it will be cheerfully accepted. Just send your ad to Joe, N1QD, at n1qd@n1qd.org.

BARC Volunteer Exam Sessions

The Boston Amateur Radio Club offers license exams quarterly. The next session will be held on Monday, October 13, at 7:30 pm. Test sessions are held at Artisans Asylum, 96 Holton St., Boston, MA 02135.

We give all exams (Technician, General, and Extra). *Testing is by reservation only*. Please bring the following with you:

- Your current license and a photocopy for the ARRL, if you are upgrading
- Any CSCEs you are claiming, and a photocopy of them
- Valid picture ID or two valid non-picture IDs
- A pen and a calculator (if you want to)
- **\$15.00** (good for all the tests you take at that session, except for retests)

Note: Written tests can be taken sequentially at the same session for the same \$15 fee. The needed FCC forms will be provided.

To reserve a seat or for further information, contact: Jim Clogher, N1ICN, n1icn@arrl.net, or Joe Chapman, NV1W, nv1w@arrl.net.

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NEW ENGLAND SCI-TECH

New England Sci-Tech Inc is a new 501(c)(3) STEM education center, amateur radio training center, and maker space located at 16 Tech Circle, Natick. It is home to New England Amateur Radio Inc (NE1AR) and the youth radio club Sci-Tech Amateur Radio Society (STARS). NE Sci-Tech welcomes memberships and donations via www.NESciTech.org or www.NE1AR.org.

BARC Officers and Staff

President: Brendan Baldonado, NW1S
brendan.baldonado@gmail.com

Vice President: Joe Harris, N1QD
n1qd@n1qd.org

Secretary: Joe Chapman, NV1W
nv1w@arrl.net

Treasurer: Mark Duff, KB1EKN,
emgmgt@comcast.net

Newsletter Editor *locum tenens*: Joe Harris, N1QD
n1qd@n1qd.org

Volunteer Exams:
Jim Clogher, N1ICN, n1icn@arrl.net
Joe Chapman, NV1W, nv1w@arrl.net

Public Service Coordinator: Ethan Hansen, KC1OIP
ethan.kc1oip@gmail.com

Public Information Officer: Geri Duff, KB1ISG
geriduff52@juno.com

The Boston Amateur Radio Club is a non-commercial association of persons interested in the Amateur Radio Service. The Club is organized for the promotion of interest in Amateur Radio communication and education, for the establishment of emergency communications in the event of disasters or other emergencies, for the advancement of the radio art and the public welfare, for the representation of the radio amateur in legislative and regulatory matters, and for the maintenance of collegiality and a high standard of conduct.

The Club is open to all persons interested in Amateur Radio without regard to race, color, religion, creed, national origin, gender, disability, or sexual preference. Our General and Business meeting locations are handicap accessible. Other meeting and activity locations may be handicap accessible by arrangement.

The Club is an ARRL-affiliated club, and is a member of the New England Spectrum Management Council (NESMC). The Club is also an associate member of the Courage HandiHams system.

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Greater Boston Net Directory

Daily 7 pm	MARI (Mass/Rhode Island CW Net) (NTS)	3.565
Daily 8 pm	Eastern Mass 2M Traffic Net (NTS)	145.230 (PL 88.5 in/100.0 out)
Daily 8 pm	Slow Speed CW Net	28.160
Sun–Fri 9:45 pm, Sat 10 pm	Heavy Hitters Traffic Net (NTS)	MMRA-linked repeaters: 146.610, 146.670, 146.715, 146.820, and all 222 and 440 repeaters
First Mon 8:30 pm	EMA Section ARES Net	146.610 and all MMRA links
Mon 7 pm	Two Meter SSB Net	144.244 USB
Mon 8 pm	New England DMR Net	DMR New England Talk Group (TG 3181)
Mon 9 pm	BARC Club Net	145.230 (PL 88.5 in/100.0 out)
Tue Thu Sat 5 pm	MA RI Phone Net (NTS)	3.978
Tue 8 pm	Sci-Tech Amateur Radio Society (STARS) Net	446.325 (PL 146.2)
Tue 8 pm	MMRA Club Net	146.610 and all MMRA links
Wed 8 pm	Wellesley Amateur Radio Society Net	147.030; 444.600 (PL 88.5)
Wed 9 pm	Waltham Wranglers Swap Net	146.640 (PL 136.5)
Sat 9 am	Northeast SATERN Net	7.265
Sun 9:30 am	Yankee SSB Net	50.272
Sun 8 pm	Algonquin Amateur Radio Club Net	446.675 (PL 88.5)
Sun 8:30 pm	NSRA Net (with Newslines)	145.470 (PL 136.5)
Sun 9 pm	CAARAnet	145.130 (PL 107.2)



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1



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2



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