

Contents

Club News and Views

Editorial	3
Chairman's Chat	4
President's Patter	6
Secretary's Update	8
DX an' all that, Don Field <i>G3XTT</i>	9
The Kenwood Challenge	11
Project Star Reach (3B9C) - Bulletin No. 2	12
Odds and Ends	13

Out and About

Madagascar 2003, Phil Whitchurch <i>G3SWH</i>	15
Adventure Annobón, Franz Langner <i>DJ9ZB</i>	21
One-man DX-peditioner - an interview with Bert van den Berg, PA3GIO	26
SCDXC expedition to the US Virgin Islands, Randy Johnson <i>W6SJ</i>	33
QRP DX-ing, Stan Rudcenko <i>GØKBL</i>	35
Member Profile, Riley Williams <i>G7GOD/KB8PPG</i>	36
Big Bulls and No Balls – IOTA 2003 from the Summer Isles, Jim Martin <i>MMØBQI</i>	37

Regular Features

IOTA News, Roger Balister <i>G3KMA</i>	39
The RTTY Column, Phil Cooper <i>GUØSOP</i>	43
Contesting, Tim Kirby <i>G4VXE</i>	46
<i>Not</i> the GB2RS News	52
Digest Prize Crossword	53
DX and Events Calendar	54

CDXC Committee 2003-2004

President	Neville Cheadle G3NUG Further Felden, Longcroft Lane, Felden, Hemel Hempstead, Herts HP3 0BN	(01442) 262929 president@cdxc.org.uk
Chairman	John Butcher G3LAS Westlands, Westland Green, Little Hadham, Herts SG11 2AJ	(01279) 842515 chairman@cdxc.org.uk
Secretary	Shaun Jarvis MØBJL 11 Charnwood Way, Langley, Southampton, Hants SO45 1ZL	(0238) 089 3391 secretary@cdxc.org.uk
Treasurer	Nigel Cawthorne G3TXF Falcons, St.George's Avenue, Weybridge, Surrey KT13 0BS	(01932) 851414 treasurer@cdxc.org.uk
Digest Editor	Martyn Phillips G3RFX 17 Richmond Hill, Clifton, Bristol BS8 1BA	(0117) 973 6419 editor@cdxc.org.uk
Other members	Jim Kellaway G3RTE 55 Ladbrooke Drive, Potters Bar, Herts EN6 1QW	(01707) 657309 awards@cdxc.org.uk
	Mark Haynes MØDXR 34 Pear Tree Mead, Harlow, Essex CM18 7BY	(01279) 430609 mark@haynes6.fsworld.co.uk

Contest Manager	Tim Kirby G4VXE 11a Vansittart Rd, Windsor, Berks SL4 5BZ	(01753) 857816 contests@cdxc.org.uk
Awards Manager	Jim Kellaway G3RTE (see above)	
Webmaster	John Butcher G3LAS (see above)	webmaster@cdxc.org.uk

Club News and Views

Editorial

Martyn Phillips, G3RFX

Yet another bumper issue of the *Digest* from your editorial team high up in the CDXC Tower, Bristol's award-winning new landmark overlooking Brunel's famous Clifton Suspension Bridge. Well, something like that anyway.

I'm actually on the ground floor of a vintage Georgian house (1821) just down the road, looking out at the lower reaches of a venerable, 200-year-old copper beech tree. Needless to say, the leaves have long since fallen off that - and we'll have to wait a while before we can stick 'em all back on again.

But I digress. Another bumper issue, jam-packed with the very latest news, views and exploits from the DX scene. For starters, turn to page 12 if you want to find out how the preparations are going for the Project Star Reach DX-pedition to Rodrigues Island, 3B9C.

As for this month's feature articles - well, to name but three: our very own Phil Whitchurch, G3SWH, is once again out and about amongst the red-bellied lemurs of 5R8. His travelogue kicks off on page 15. After that we have a report by Franz Langner, DJ9ZB, on Annobón and 3CØV - and an interview with that well-known Dutch one-man DX-peditioner Bert van den Berg, PA3GIO. He gets around a bit, does Bert. But don't they all.

All the regular features are in there too, including our Member Profile, on page 36. And doing the honours this month it's Riley

Williams, alias G7GOD. A truly divine call-sign, if ever there was one. And like Riley Himself, I have yet to work JE5US, if indeed that one exists.

Of the genuine ones I have bumped into over the years, MØNEY springs to mind. As does F5BOY (although actually she's a girl, name of Isabelle...). And on a rather different tack: F6COW, IK2PIG and M3RAT. Not to mention JA8DIM, UA3LID and RW3QRM. Thank GOD there's not much you can do with RFX, at least in English.

Anyway, a bumper issue ['Problem with part of car for an unusually large number? (6,5)']. Which takes us on nicely to this month's *Digest* Prize Crossword. Turn to page 53 again for that. On the previous page you'll find the solution to November's puzzle, described by one successful solver as 'fiendish and harder than trying to work the DX in recent, quite good conditions'. Mind you, judging by the number of correct entries received, it would certainly seem that he's not the only CDXC member who has a pretty good antenna for this sort of thing!

Meanwhile I look forward to working one or two of you in the Commonwealth/BERU Contest in March from ZB2FX in Gibraltar. Quite a bit of activity from more exotic parts is also promised for this one, eg J8 and V85.

73 Martyn, G3RFX

www.btinternet.com/~g3rfx

Chairman's Chat

John Butcher, G3LAS

I'm writing this just as the TO4E Europa Island expedition is coming to a close. Activities like this are fun and certainly help one's scores along, but nevertheless they always leave me feeling a little sad. Here is an island which, while not exactly at the end of the earth geographically, has always seemed a little remote and certainly 'rare' in DX terms. A few weeks ago, I, like many other people, had never heard a signal from there, nor yet from its 'other half', Juan de Nova. Today I have eleven QSOs in the log on seven bands and three modes without having to stay up half the night or disrupt my normal life in any way.

Is DX-ing becoming too easy perhaps? When one can work nearly 300 DXCC countries in a year and many people quickly reach the point where they have to wait for someone to organise an expensive expedition to give them the next new one, the challenge certainly seems different from what it used to be when it needed several years investment of time and no little skill to reach even the magic 100 countries, most of which had resident operators.

The dependence on expeditions is now such that it seems strange that so many operators are quick to criticise the travellers who expend large sums of money and often put themselves in considerable danger to satisfy our craving for that five-second 'contact' - not that there is much 'contact' involved in many expedition QSO's.

A rather perverse feeling I often experience after an expedition closes is akin to relief that I might not have worked them on 160m, 80m

SSB or RTTY. At least something is left to look forward to when the next activation takes place. It must be awful to have worked everything. What do you do then with all those 100' towers and acres of four-squares? I suppose it might be contests, but that's another story.

Dragging myself out of the mire of nostalgia and philosophy, let's look forward to 2004. Not to the expeditions in store, although there are a few of those, but to other things. Are you all ready for the Penallt Trophy LF Challenge competition? Check those feeders and bury a few more square metres of chicken wire and get working those countries on 40, 80 and 160m. It only lasts to the end of January, so you'll need to get started in the New Year hangover period. Don't forget that a good score on 40m can be achieved without huge aerials and that would get you well up the results list.

For the marathon runners who may not fancy the Penallt sprint, we have two year-long targets in 2004. This is the 40th anniversary year of the IOTA programme. There will be several celebration events, but CDXC is organising the IOTA 2004 Award programme. This is very similar to the successful Millennium challenge of a couple of years ago. You need to work IOTA groups over the year, but with premium points available for certain groups in each month. Full details from the club web site at www.cdxc.org.uk.

Elsewhere in this Digest you will find details of the very generous donation by Kenwood UK of one of their new TS-480 transceivers as a prize to be competed for by CDXC members. The objective is to work DXCC countries on the HF and 6m bands between 1

February and 31 December 2004. Kenwood have asked that eligibility should be restricted to club members in the UK, the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man. This is a really great prize, so off you go. Don't assume that all the 'big boys' will be after it. They may be well enough equipped already or too proud to work all the 'easy' ones all over again. While going for the IOTAs, just keep an ear open for the DXCC entities as well. You have eleven months to prove that skill and perseverance count as much as big aerals and high power.

Our esteemed President mentioned in his PP column in November that we have been re-designing and updating our webpages. This process is now complete, thanks largely to the efforts of Dominic, MØBLF. At the time of writing, we expect the upload to take place any day, so the new site should go live early in the New Year. For technical reasons we have had to move the site to a new host, but we expect the URL to remain the same.

Our webmaster, Alan, G3PMR, is in the process of moving to 5B4 – which seems not a bad idea on a very cold December day – so I would like to record our thanks to him for the work he has put in. Keeping a site up to date and gremlin-free is no small task and thanks to Alan's expertise we have had very little trouble in that department. It seems that I might find out soon just how capable he is, since it looks as if I might have volunteered to

take over the job. Please be gentle with me as I learn 'on the job'.

Another event on the horizon is the Club Annual Dinner. It seems quite a while to 24 April, but time flies and I don't want to give you any excuse for not coming, so get it in the diaries if it's not already there. As you know, the ever-increasing numbers attending have put a strain on the capacity at the Boxmoor Lodge, so this year we are planning to move to the Pendley Manor Hotel at Tring. It's only a few miles from Boxmoor and has all the facilities to make the Dinner a really special and enjoyable occasion. No doubt I'll mention it again in the March issue of the Digest.

Finally, I'm sure Neville would be very upset if I didn't mention the forthcoming Five Star DX-ers expedition to Rodrigues Island. No doubt many of you have worked CDXC member Robert, 3B9FR, on various occasions, but the FSDXA trip will be something different. How many of you have worked 3B9 on FM, 160m, PSK, SSTV or satellite? The guys will be looking to set yet another world record or two, so look out for them in March. They aim to make D68C look like a minor rehearsal.

73 es gud DX John, G3LAS

John Boylett, G3OLY, Silent Key

We have received the following message from Mrs Ena Boylett:

I am writing to let you know that sadly John, G3OLY, died suddenly on 1st November from a massive heart attack. He was walking in the beautiful Surrey countryside with the Ramblers and died instantly. My only comfort is that he did not suffer but it has been a dreadful shock. John enjoyed belonging to the Chiltern DX Club and had been a ham operator since 1954. Radio was his second love after the family. I and my son Jonathan wish you and the club continuing success in the future.

President's Patter

Neville Cheadle, G3NUG

A sincere welcome to all the new members who have joined in the past two months. Our recent marketing drives seem to be producing good results; we mailed over 400 potential members in November and December and the application forms are still flowing in. We thought at one stage that it would be really tough to reach the 500 level but we sailed through that number and now have well over 600 members. With all the new M3s and the former VHF-only licencees now on HF we have plenty more to target.

This month sees the announcement of the Kenwood Challenge with the new Kenwood TS-480 transceiver going to the winner. The challenge rules can be found elsewhere in the Digest (page 11) and they are very straightforward. I'd like to encourage all members to have a shot at this challenge and to submit their scores regularly to Jim G3RTE, our Awards Manager. I don't believe that a member with a big station will necessarily win this challenge, many of these types may not want to work all the 'easy' countries yet again. Activity is key and a good signal on 6m will be helpful. Our thanks to Kenwood for their generous donation of the TS-480. The Kenwood Challenge runs for 11 months from 1 February.

A reminder that the CDXC LF Challenge (see page 8) runs for the whole of the month of January. It's not too late to start.

The IOTA 2004 Programme will be well underway by the time this Digest is received. The IOTA 2004 database has been formulated to reflect the many changes in the IOTA Programme over the past three years. Chairman John, G3LAS, has done a great job in sorting everything out. An Excel file with

all the data and application forms can be downloaded from our web site. Our thanks to Don, G3XTT, who is managing the IOTA 2004 Programme.

In the November Digest I mentioned that we were trying to find a new location for our 2004 Annual Dinner, since we had outgrown the Boxmoor Lodge. We have been fortunate to find that the Pendley Manor near Tring had their main dining room available, so we have booked this. It is a very spacious room, so it's great that we have been able to book it entirely for ourselves. There is room for up to 75 guests, so let's have a good turnout on Saturday 24th April. There is a spacious bar and a separate lounge very close to the dining room, so this should work out well. The Pendley Manor is about 10 minutes drive from Hemel Hempstead and is very easy to find. A booking form and map is enclosed with this Digest.

There will be a presentation on the 3B9C DX-pedition at the Annual Dinner. The team arrive home the previous weekend, so this will be a trial run for the many presentations that we expect to make in 2004. We hope to have an interesting story to tell. All members should have received the first 3B9C press release with the November Digest and the second press release is published in this Digest.

Everything is going to plan for this massive operation. We have a team of 30 assembled. A 20-foot container, this time full to the brim, started its journey in mid-December and should arrive in Rodrigues in mid-February in good time for the arrival of the team in mid-March. We will have the capability of running 16 stations, although it will be a real challenge

to get them all on the air at the same time. We even plan some QRP to QRP contacts with the Yaesu FT-817 - this will be a completely new experience for 'NUG'!

The RSGB HF and IOTA Convention which was held in Manchester is now well behind us and I was reflecting on the weekend. The hotel seemed to work out well, the conference rooms were fine, the programme was excellent and the CDXC stand created a lot of interest. The journey on the Friday afternoon from the South took quite a time, but I really can't complain as Windsor has been so convenient for many years. Many of the regulars were there, but the number of day visitors was very disappointing. These are important to the success of the Convention because of the income they potentially generate to our sponsors, raffle ticket sales, RSGB book sales etc. And of course, they are all potential members for CDXC.

Next year will be IOTA's 40th Anniversary, so there is a great opportunity to capitalise on this. In 1994 we had a great convention at Windsor to celebrate IOTA's 30th Anniversary. We had 255 at the DX Dinner. I remember it well - and 300 day visitors! We also announced the Yaesu sponsorship of

IOTA. These numbers are so much greater than has been achieved in recent years. I think the secret of our success then was that the programme was ready by June and we sent out around 1200 personalised letters to potential participants. These potential participants were easy to identify as being active DX-ers and/or active in IOTA. There was a lot of follow up through the DX newsletters, magazines, reflectors and the PacketCluster. Surely we can achieve the numbers of 1994; in fact with the growth of IOTA it should be possible to double the numbers!

Now there's a challenge for the Convention Organising Committee! The other challenge of course is to find a location in the UK with good access for all of Europe where most of the IOTA enthusiasts are based. I guess that means the London area, or does it?

May I wish all our members a very happy and prosperous 2004 with lots of good DX.



73 Neville, G3NUG

Chiltern DX Club - Aims and Objectives

To promote HF operating, to encourage excellence, particularly in DX-ing and contest operating, through mutual assistance and by encouraging support of DX-peditions, the issue of achievement awards, or by whatever other means is deemed to be appropriate

- Membership** Full details are available from the Secretary.
- Subscription** £15.00 for UK members, £20.00 for overseas members (US\$30 or 30 Euros). New members joining between 1 January and 30 June pay 50% of the annual subscription. Subscriptions are due on 1 July of each year, and should be sent to the Treasurer.
- Digest** Published six times per year. Articles for publication should be sent to the Editor by the published deadline. Please note that views expressed in the Digest are not necessarily those of the Editor or of the Committee.
- Website** <http://www.cdxc.org.uk>

Secretary's Update

Shaun Jarvis, MØBJL

CDXC offers a warm welcome to the following new members:

<i>Call</i>	<i>Worked</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Location</i>
EI4BZ	234	Dave Moore	Co. Cork
G3PQD	100+	Derek St John	Kent
G3SVW	100+	Ron Smith	Cheshire
G4EAG	129	Simon Ruffle	Cambridge
G4FKA	150+	Geoff Plucknett	Bristol
G7GOD	100+	Riley Williams	Lancs
GM3PPE	326	Mike Eccles	Borders
GW5NF	339	Roger Ward	Gwent
NK7C	100+	Pat Hess	Nevada
W2RS	355	Ray Soifer	New Jersey
W6SJ	169	Randy Johnson	California

The CDXC LF Challenge 2004

Aim: The aim of the competition is to work as many DXCC Entities as possible during the month of January 2004. Each DXCC Entity is counted once only.

When: 0000 UTC, 1st Jan 2004, to 2400 UTC, 31st Jan 2004.

Bands: Only the 1.8, 3.5 and 7 MHz bands may be used.

Modes: No restrictions.

Logs: Send a list either by e-mail or post, but the list must contain the following headings in this order please: DXCC Entity, Callsign, Date, Time, Band and Mode. Entries which are not submitted in this format may be disqualified from the Challenge. QSL cards are not required, but in the event of a dispute the CDXC Committee may request a photocopy or print-out of applicants' logs. Logs to be sent to awards@cdxc.org.uk or by post to Jim Kellaway, G3RTE, 55 Ladbrooke Drive, Potters Bar, Herts, EN6 1QW, UK, to be received no later than the 29th of February 2004.

Awards: 1st Place - The winner will receive the Penallt Trophy (returnable) plus a small engraved plaque which is retained. 2nd Place - The runner-up will receive the Tindle Cup (returnable) plus a small engraved plaque which is retained. 3rd Place - A small engraved plaque which is retained. All entrants who work more than half the winner's total entities will receive a certificate.

DX an' all that

Don Field, G3XTT *g3xtt@lineone.net*

The HF bands have been extremely variable in recent months. At times 10m has been buzzing (in both legs of CQ WW, for example), while at other times (including the ARRL 10m contest, I gather) it has been pretty dire. At the same time we are definitely seeing a return to the good old days of decent LF propagation, again not consistently yet, but with some encouraging signs.

TO4E

As I write this, TO4E has just closed down from Europa Island. This has been an exercise in frustration, although for reasons largely outside the control of the TO4E team. I am sure most of you know the story: that the generator was available only for limited hours of the day. The team did manage some low power battery operation at other times, but could only have the full complement of stations on the air when the generator was up and running.

The good news was that their original stay on the island was extended for a further week or so, but they then closed down slightly ahead of the revised finish time due to the effects of cyclone Cela, which caused substantial damage on the island, including bringing down the V80E vertical. TO4E took three years of negotiations to bring about, not unusual nowadays for certain DX locations which have environmental and/or military connotations.

The end result was 32,000 QSOs in the log, hopefully helping to fill in some of those missing slots (UK stations certainly worked them on 10 through 80m – did any Gs make it on 160m?).

Peter 1 and Eritrea

Sadly, both January's Peter 1 (3YØ) expedition and the February expedition to Eritrea (E3) have been called off, the first because of transportation issues and the second because of difficulties in getting the necessary licence. Peter 1 should, we are told, happen in January 2005. Fingers crossed.

3B9 and T33

Fortunately, March/April is looking good, with both 3B9C (I am sure this will be mentioned elsewhere, but all is going well and the container is now on its way) and T33 (Banaba). The Banaba team have obviously been taking a leaf out of the D68C/3B9C book, as they too have gone the route of using a 20' shipping container to transport a significant amount of hardware halfway round the world. Not surprisingly, this is proving very expensive, so do bear this in mind when enclosing a contribution with your QSL cards.

My charts tell me that G sunrise will be about 0540 when T33 starts in early April, progressively getting earlier, while T33 sunset is about 0645, so 80m may be a tough one (pity they weren't there a month earlier!). However, we should have an almost perfect greyline at our sunset (1845 or thereabouts when T33 starts), with the small problem that we will then have to work T33 through the rest of Europe. 3B9 should, of course, be easily workable from the UK on all HF bands.

Logkeeping

There has been some discussion on the Contests reflector recently about whether it is necessary (specifically, whether it's a licence

requirement) to log both the start and finish times of a QSO. Actually, the question simply doesn't apply if you read BR68 (the UK licence booklet) carefully. Log keeping requirements have changed significantly over the years, and the key requirement nowadays is to note the start and finish times of an operating session, with a note of band, power and transmissions made (not only callsigns of stations worked, but any CQ calls or test transmissions).

However, as I read BR68, the specific times of these various transmissions do not need to be noted. This data needs to be kept in secure fashion (bound logbook, or electronic storage with suitable back-up) for at least six months. In practice, of course, most DX-ers will want to keep much more detailed records, and will do so for posterity. Are you really going to delete that P5 QSO after 6 months? Personally, despite the effort involved, I regard the time it took me to get all my historic QSOs on to the PC as time well spent. It's so much easier to locate an old QSO from an electronic log than to do so by scanning through a pile of old logbooks. And so much more helpful too, when you can upload all, rather than just part, of your log to Logbook of the World.

Mind you, just going back a moment to what I said about logkeeping requirements: does your logbook actually recall all those hours spent radiating RF towards Europa Island, without success? Because, while you may not have found your way into TO4E's log, you may well have found your way into the neighbour's HiFi system! And, from the RA's point of view, this is probably the main reason for logkeeping.

2004 Beckons

For many of us, the turn of the year is an opportunity to start afresh with collecting band countries, IOTAs or whatever. Some

would argue that this is antisocial, potentially encouraging the 'big guns' to chase stuff they have worked many times before, and keeping the 'little pistols' (oops, didn't I get into trouble once before for using those terms!) out of contention.

At the same time, if DX-ing is what you enjoy and you've already filled most of the slots, why should you have to restrain your competitive instincts. The fact is that many DX stations (especially, for example, holiday operations to the Caribbean or whatever) welcome all the callers they can get, to make their trip fun. I suspect it is only really an issue with the really rare ones, when it probably does behove those who already have it in the log to exercise an element of restraint. Your comments would, of course, be welcome!

IOTA 2004

In the meantime, do take part in IOTA 2004, when the clock really does start again on 1st January. Details appeared with the last Digest (p.40-43) and application forms, a list of islands qualifying for premium points and, if you want it, a full-blooded tracking program (thanks to G3PMR and G3LAS) are all downloadable from the CDXC Web page (follow the IOTA 2004 links).

CDXC
CHILTERN DX CLUB
The UK DX Foundation

The Kenwood Challenge

Objective

To contact as many DXCC entities as possible on the HF bands and on 6m during the period 1 February to 31 December 2004.

The Prize

The winner of the Kenwood Challenge will receive the new Kenwood TS-480 transceiver courtesy of Kenwood UK. The winner will have the choice of the 100W (with ATU) version or the 200W version.

Eligibility

Open to CDXC members operating from the UK, Isle of Man or the Channel Islands.

Scoring

One point for each DXCC entity worked on any of the nine HF bands (160m to 10m) and one additional point for each DXCC entity worked on 6m. The station scoring the highest number of points is the winner.

Example: The maximum number of points for working France is TWO. One point for any contact on 160m to 10m and one point for a contact on 6m.

Modes

Mixed modes may be used, ie CW, data or phone.

Dates

The competition opens at 0001z on 1 February 2004 and closes at 2359z on 31 December 2004. Applications must be sent to the CDXC

Awards Manager and postmarked 31 January 2005 or earlier.

Log

A log extract is required, certified by two amateurs. CDXC reserves the right to verify contacts. QSL cards are not required.

Decisions

Decisions of the CDXC Committee are final.

Updates

Regular updates of scores will be published in the CDXC Digest and on the web pages. These should be sent to: awards@cdxc.org.uk

Note: CDXC Committee members are eligible to participate.

G3NUG

from VK6LC

Today is a milestone for the Wireless Institute of Australia and the Federal Awards 2003. Our 'new' WIA Federal Awards website is now up and running. Two years of design and development is now placed in service for our Australian members and overseas persons. If you have any comments or corrections, please send them to me at awards@wia.org.au. Our website in Perth is linked to the WIA Federal Website at <http://www.wia.org.au>.

Vy 73 Mal Johnson, VK6LC

Project Star Reach (3B9C) – Bulletin No.2



This is the second bulletin concerning Project Star Reach, a project focused around a major expedition to Rodrigues Island, with the callsign 3B9C

Since the first bulletin, additional team members have come on board, and several additional sponsors. The shipping container has now been packed (see photos on the 3B9C Website) and has begun its journey to Rodrigues. This container holds considerably more equipment and antennas than we took to the Comoros (D68C), including capability for 70cm (satellite and moonbounce). We really *do* intend to cover as many bands and modes as possible, not only to satisfy the demands of the many specialist groups within the ranks of amateur radio, but also to encourage those of you who do tend to specialise (whether in HF, LF, RTTY or whatever) to try something new.

Sponsors

Firstly a comment about sponsorship, as some correspondents have asked why this is necessary, when there has been quite a lot of emphasis in recent years on small-scale 'lite' expeditions, often self-funded by the expedition participants. Quite clearly, expeditions of that type have their place in keeping the bands buzzing; major expeditions are, of necessity, few and far between, given the costs and logistics involved. But for many would-be DX chasers, with modest home stations, their chances of working a 'lite' expedition on, say, 160 or 80m, are low to non-existent. Hence the need for occasional major expeditions, using high power, phased arrays, specialist receiving antennas, etc. Of necessity, though, the costs of procuring and shipping so much hardware are high – in the case of 3B9C we estimate shipping costs alone

to be of the order of \$20K. We believe it appropriate that the wider community have the opportunity to help make this happen, rather than the burden falling wholly on the team members (who, of course, will make some contribution to the logistics costs, in addition to finding all their own travel and accommodation expenses).

As well as Yaesu, who we announced in the first bulletin as Principal Sponsors, we are happy to welcome the following:

Commercial Sponsors

Air Mauritius, Array Solutions, Carl Zeiss UK, Cotton Bay Hotel (Rodrigues), Daily DX, Hertfordshire Display plc., Heil Sound, Linear Amp UK, Martin Lynch & Sons, Nevada, Trident Antennas

Clubs

North Ohio DX Association

Individuals

GØWAT, G3HBR, G4PIQ, K7VI, KB3IFH, N7MQ.

Details of how to become a sponsor were included in the first bulletin and are on the Website. More information about sponsorship and about Project Star Reach as a whole will also be mailed shortly to major DX clubs worldwide.

New Team Members

Since the first bulletin, we are pleased to welcome Robert, F5VHN, and Eric, K3NA, to the team.

Magazine Articles & Talks

It is very much our intention to use Project Star Reach as an opportunity for educating non-DXers into the 'how, where and when' of working DX. We are delighted that several major amateur radio publications recognise the importance of this in revitalising our hobby from within, and have agreed to run articles ahead of the 3B9C operation, giving suitable hints and tips (which will, of course, be equally applicable to other expeditions as time goes by). Within the constraints of time and geography, we are also happy to entertain requests for club presentations along similar lines. Drop me an e-mail, and let's see what we can do. While bulletins such as Daily DX, 425 DX News and OPDX number their subscribers in the thousands, there are literally tens of thousands of amateurs with the capability to work DX, but who are largely inactive on the bands, though they may still belong to their national society or local clubs. One way we hope to encourage participation

in Project Star Reach is by way of the Nevada Rodrigues Trophies.

The Nevada Comoros Trophies offered as part of the D68C DX-pedition for working band-slots were extremely popular with DX-ers, with the winners working D68C on 23 band-slots. Trophies were also available to clubs, to encourage their members to be active and work D68C either from home or perhaps from the club station. During the 3B9C DX-pedition we will be running the Nevada Rodrigues Trophies. The rules will be broader than those used for the Comoros and there will be continental awards as well as awards for clubs outside the UK. There will also be special awards for newcomers to HF. Details will be available soon.

Between now and March further bulletins will be issued, but you can already find out much more by visiting the Website, which is up and running at www.fsdxa.com/3b9c.

Don Field, G3XTT, NK1G
3B9C Publicity Officer

(g3xtt@lineone.net)

21 December 2003

Odds and Ends

from Dave Cree, G3TBK

During my recent stay in J8 I made another 8,000 QSOs, bringing my all-time total from St Vincent to just over 50,000. During the CQ WW CW weekend I managed 3,200 contacts.

I finally seemed to have reduced the size of CW pile-ups; in fact for the last couple of days I had to switch to SSB to get a sizeable pile. I

did note a good number of Foundation and Intermediate UK stations, and also a lot of newly liberated Class B licensees. Of course there were a lot of CDXC members' calls in the log, especially on 80m.

Regrettably I again failed miserably on Top Band. The QTH is surrounded by overhead power, telephone and cable TV lines and with the poor antenna (extra loading on my already

shortened 80m dipole) all I could hear was S9 noise. Apologies to those who I know were looking for me on 160m. Hopefully some of those seeking Top Band QSOs were able to work the two visitors from the USA who I know operated as J8DX on that band, but seemed to concentrate on QSOs with the States.

The same noise gave problems on 80m until about 2200 local time (0200z) each night. I found the best way to work Europe was to go to bed early and get up at about 3am, when I could easily work EU stations during their sunrise. Also by then most of the N American stations were QRT.

I noted a huge change in propagation since my last stay (in March) and hence my intended periods of listening for the UK on 20m in the evening were totally unworkable. However, thanks to the DX Clusters, I think most people soon found me at other times.

My next activity from J88DR is likely to be in March, to once again include BERU.

Floyd Gerald, N5FG, named Worked All Zones Award Manager

CQ Publisher Richard Ross, K2MGA, has announced the appointment of Floyd Gerald, N5FG, as CQ Worked All Zones (WAZ) Awards Manager, effective January 1, 2004. Floyd succeeds Paul Blumhardt, K5RT, who is stepping down after four years in the position due to increased work and family commitments. "We will miss Paul's dedication to WAZ and the CQ awards program in general," said Ross, "and we thank him for his many contributions. He sets an excellent example for his successor, and we welcome Floyd to the CQ 'family'".

Floyd Gerald, N5FG, has been an amateur

since 1972, and is an accomplished DX-er. He holds many amateur radio operating awards, including 5BWAZ (200 Zones), #1 DXCC Mixed and SSB, CQ DX Honor Roll SSB and CW, 9 Band DXCC, and 6BWAS. He is also a founding member of the Magnolia DX Association.

CQ would like to ask WAZ applicants to delay sending applications (and cards) to Floyd until 1 February 2004, in order to allow for an orderly transition and transfer of records. We apologize for this delay, but feel that it will reduce confusion and possible loss of anyone's application during the transition. Applications and cards sent to K5RT will be forwarded to N5FG each month. After February 1, WAZ applications and cards should be sent to Floyd Gerald, N5FG, 17 Green Hollow Rd., Wiggins, MS 39577-8318.

[thanks to G3LZQ]

YVØ

In 2004 the RCV (YV5AJ) will be celebrating their 70th anniversary and have announced plans to operate from Aves Island in late January or some time in February. YVØ, Aves Island, ranks # 10 on The DX Magazine's Most Wanted List. Plans are for activity on all bands and modes. A dedicated station will be set up for operations on 6m, SAT, digital modes (RTTY, PSK, SSTV) and possibly EME. For YL DXCC chasers they are planning to take at least one YL operator. The Comision Nacional de Telecomunicaciones (CONATEL) issued the license in late October. The call sign will be announced at a later time. Sponsors and donations are being requested. A Website is being planned and should be up and running soon.

For more information contact the RCV by email to yv5aj-rcv@cantv.net. More details are expected.

[Thanks to G3LAS]

Out and About

Madagascar 2003

Phil Whitchurch, G3SWH

Phil@g3swh.demon.co.uk

After two visits, you would think we had seen enough of the Big Red Island, but Jan and I decided that there was still a lot of the country to be seen. This year we decided to take things a bit easier, although we would still follow our established formula of a week's sightseeing and a few days' relaxation on a beach, preferably on an island.

Preparations

After the usual flurry of e-mails to our travel agents, Cortez Expeditions in Antananarivo (Tana), we agreed a workable itinerary that would see us taking eight days to cover the 500 kms of the RN7 between Fianarantsoa (Fianar) in the central highlands, south of Tana and Toliara (Tulear) on the southwestern coast of the main island (AF-013). This was to be followed by five nights on Ile Sainte Marie (AF-090). Solofo, 5R8ET arranged for my 5R8HA licence to be re-issued and paid the FMG 50,000 (£50) fee in exchange for me bringing the equivalent value of computer spares with me for his son, Fabrizio.

Off to 5R8

Flights were, as usual, between Bristol and Paris CDG with Air France and between Paris CDG and Tana with Air Madagascar [Air Mad] in order to obtain the substantial discounts on our internal flights with Air Mad, although Air France have now resumed a daily service. The outgoing flights were uneventful, and we arrived at Itavo International Airport in Tana on time at 0800 on Saturday, 13 September.

Albert, 5R8GZ, had arranged for one of his uniformed friends in the Gendarmerie to meet us airside and hand over the original licence and temporary import documents for the radio equipment. The customs officer barely gave them a glance and waved us through, where we were met by Albert, Patrick, 5R8EW, and Andreas, 5R8FL - as well as Pierrot, our contact from Cortez, who drove us to the Royal Palissandre Hotel in central Tana. Albert, Patrick and Andreas joined us and reintroduced us to Three Horses Beer (THB), whilst I was able to deliver the 5 kg of QSL cards that I had brought with me, mostly for Albert. Andreas very kindly invited us to a party at his house on the night of our stopover in Tana en route from Tulear to Ile Sainte Marie. Solofo, 5R8ET, and Eddy, 5R8FT, were attending a colleague's wedding and arranged to see us at the hotel during the evening.

Round Tana

After lunch, Pierrot collected us and took us to the Antshow Cultural Arts Centre. The complex was designed and built during the 2002 crisis by Hanitrarivo Rosoanaivo, the well-known Malagasy musical artist whose group Tarika is based in London and who have toured world-wide, promoting both traditional and contemporary Malagasy music. Following a recent BBC4 TV programme about her we had asked Pierrot if he could arrange a visit to the complex and were greatly surprised when he told us that he knew Hanitrarivo personally, having learned English at university with her - and more importantly, that she would be in Tana at the

same time as ourselves and he had already prepared the way for a meeting. Thus we became middle-aged groupies and spent two very enjoyable hours looking round the complex, although Hanitrarivo herself had to rush off for a meeting with the President shortly after we arrived.

Solofo, his wife Irinée and daughter Priscilla, Eddy and his wife Nancy arrived at the Palissandre just as we were finishing our first zebu steak dinner of the trip. The various computer parts were duly handed over and arrangements made for us to be driven to the party at Andreas' house later in the week.

This year, we had decided to sample the nightlife of Tana, having been unable to do so in previous years by time and broken ankle constraints. After Solofo had left, we hopped into a taxi and went to the notorious Bar Glacier on the Avenue de l'Indépendance where we drank more THB whilst being entertained for a couple of hours by a gaggle of the local ladies-of-the-night dancing to a live Malagasy band.

Fianar

Next morning was the start of our journey proper, and we were at the airport at 0830 for our flight by Twin Otter to Fianar. Our checked baggage was 6 kg overweight and we were charged the equivalent of £7.26 excess baggage. There were only three other passengers on the flight, indicating a considerable improvement in the road between Tana and Fianar, so I suppose Air Mad have to make the route economical to operate. Arriving at Fianar, we were amused to see large numbers of spectators clustered around the runway to watch the arrival of the twice-weekly flight. Here we met our driver, Naly, in his Mitsubishi Pajero 4WD and were whisked off on the 65 km journey to the Ranomafana National Park, most of which was on unpaved and very rough roads.

Arriving at the Hotel Domaine Nature, we checked in and I looked round at the possibilities for antennas. In short, it would be difficult, seeing as the hotel is built on the side of the densely vegetated river gorge. Furthermore, there were no power outlets in our room and included in the usual hotel information was a note saying that management did not recommend guests to use their 'valuable electrical appliances as the pressure of the current is not stable'. We went for lunch to the alternative hotel, the Centrest, which had no vacancies, but where there was more scope for antennas but presumably the same problems with the electricity supply. We shall never know!

The Rain Forest

Late in the afternoon we went for our first hike in the rain forest and were delighted to see some red-bellied lemurs as well as brown mouse lemurs - and a striped civet cat known locally as a *fanaloka*. Next day the rain set in and we took another morning hike into the park and saw a number of golden bamboo lemurs, a species first discovered in 1986 and the catalyst for the creation of this particular park. It was surprisingly cold and we passed up the opportunity for a swim in the open-air thermal baths, after which the town is named. The rain continued overnight and the condition of the road back to Fianar deteriorated seriously as a result, becoming a quagmire and almost unpassable in places, but our 4WD got us through without mishap. We later heard that the next day a group of Australians' bus had got stuck and that they all had to get out and push.

Camp Catta

After a short stop in Fianar for coffee and to mail the obligatory postcards, we pressed on south on the RN7 to Ambalavao for lunch before striking off on another rutted track to Camp Catta in the Tsaranoro valley, close to the mountainous Andringitra National Park

and the island's second highest peak, Pic Boby (2,658m). The 21 km journey took two hours, including stops for Naly to confirm directions. We arrived in mid-afternoon and were quickly settled in to our comfortable, traditionally built bungalow.

On the air

Again, there was no power outlet and a generator provided electricity only after dark. Jan could see that I was getting severe withdrawal symptoms! However, there was a very obvious inverted-V dipole type radio antenna, the feeder of which led to a storeroom housing a programmable, fixed-frequency Kenwood HF SSB transceiver and a very large battery. After a few words of explanation to *le patron*, I had lots of help in rigging my antenna between the roofs of two single storey huts with a good take-off to the north and a very large mountain to the west. He even started the generator early for me and the first QSO was with JL8AQH on 18.1 MHz at 1354 UTC on 16 September, although I see that the first spot on the DX Summit was not until 1520 UTC, after I had moved to 30m.

Judging from the resulting pile-up I was obviously getting out well, but using the store was less than ideal, as Jan was unable to relax alongside me as she normally does. To make matters worse, her digital camera had developed a very frustrating intermittent fault, which meant that she was not only lonely but bored too, resulting in restricted operating time.

Le patron explained that he used the Kenwood radio to communicate with his wife and family in Fianar and to order stores for delivery to the camp. He had wanted to use the radio to access a South African HF gateway to the Internet, but that the mountain to the west blocked all signals from that direction. He also admitted that, due to the high cost of commercial radio licenses in Madagascar (about £200 per month), he was

operating illegally on frequencies chosen at random for the circuit path involved. He even asked me to test his antenna to make sure that it was working properly – and it compared very favourably with my own.

Valley trek

The next day we took a guided 10 km trek around the valley to see the wildlife and visit a local village. We saw a couple of the endemic ring-tailed lemurs (*Lemur Catta* is the scientific name for these animals) and many different birds, including a Madagascar harrier hawk and a malachite kingfisher. I don't normally like visiting native villages as it is often regarded as false, intrusive and 'touristy', but the villagers made us genuinely welcome and showed us their houses built of mud and zebu dung, which sets like concrete, and thatched with grasses. Jan's camera behaved itself and we were instantly able to show our photographs to the villagers, which always promotes intense interest. Another late afternoon session on the radio produced a very satisfying total of 316 QSOs, but I was careful not to use up too much of Jan's goodwill.

Isalo

It only took me a few minutes to take down the antenna and pack the gear the following morning before we set off back towards the RN7 and our next stop at the famous, and allegedly Madagascar's best, Hotel Relais de la Reine close to the Isalo National Park, stopping at the small town of Ihosy (pronounced Ee-oosh) for lunch. Again, we arrived in the late afternoon and I quickly set about rigging the antenna facing north between two outcrops of the spectacularly eroded karst sandstone massifs, which are unique to this area. Although the take-off was not as good as at camp Catta, I was surprised at how poor the incoming signals were, and I was unable to make any QSOs whatsoever that evening. The following morning, I even

took down the antenna to check that nothing had broken, but all was sound. We spent the morning exploring the Canyon des Singes that cuts into the Isalo Massif and were rewarded with good sightings of ring-tailed lemurs and Verreaux's sifaka as well as Benson's rock thrushes, Madagascar coucals and Madagascar wagtails. After lunch, we climbed the face of the massif and hiked across the top to the *Piscine Naturelle* for a well-earned and wonderfully cool swim. Back at the hotel, I tried the radio again, but could only manage to make a disappointing 16 QSOs.

Tulear

We were on the road again early the next morning for the last day of our journey towards Tulear, where we said goodbye to Naly, who had then to drive back along the RN7 to Tana and his home. We stayed the night at the Mangily Hotel in a beautiful beach location on top of a sand dune at Ifaty, some 22 kms north of Tulear, itself on an appallingly bad road.

Once again, there was no power outlet in the room and the lighting was powered from a generator. There was a short piece of cable terminated in connector blocks poking out of a junction box on the wall and a quick test established that this was 'live', so I connected my extension lead into this and set off down the beach to rig the antenna. Supports for the antenna were a stunted tree at one end and the roof of our bungalow at the other, resulting in it facing north, but sloping down the side of the sand dune at about four metres high.

By the time I had all the equipment assembled, the hotel had suffered some sort of power failure and we were without electricity for a frustratingly long time until the local electrician could be summoned from the village.

After the poor results at Isalo I was concerned that I had an equipment problem of some sort,

but the ridiculously low antenna worked well and I was able to make 83 QSOs in exactly an hour's activity whilst watching a truly spectacular sunset over the Mozambique Channel.

As usual, the bands were dead the next morning when we had several hours to kill before our flight back to Tana, which left Tulear airport at 1535, so we spent a lazy few hours beachcombing and relaxing.

Back to Tana

Solofo and Irinée met us at Ivato, together with Pierrot, who drove us back to the Palissandre, stopping only to buy a bottle of the local white rum as a gift to Andreas at the party. Price: £2.00! After a quick shower and change of clothes there was just time for a drink in the bar before Solofo collected us to take us to the party. Andreas lives in a beautiful house in one of the suburbs of Tana and had invited all the local amateurs and their wives.

We were especially honoured that Charles, 5R8FS, with his wife and daughters had even travelled the 70 km from Antsirabe to meet us. Andreas showed me his shack and invited me to operate, so I put out a tentative CQ on 15m and was immediately deluged with a pile-up that was impossible to work as I had no headphones, an unfamiliar SSB transceiver, a straight key and no IRT. All this in the middle of a social function!

I did make a handful of QSOs before giving up, including one with Fred, G4BWP, who later told me that he had Rupert, G4XRV, in the shack with him, but I could not hear Rupert calling me afterwards. We had an early start the next day, as our flight to Ile Sainte Marie was at 0715, so we left the party early, but not after I was cajoled into making a short, impromptu speech – in French – thanking everybody for making our visit so memorable.

5R8HA Mainland Madagascar 2003

IOTA AF-013

QSOs by band

30m	37%
20m	32%
17m	28%
15m	3%

QSOs by continent

Europe	265
Asia	159
Africa	4
Oceania	1

Ile Ste Marie

On arrival at Ste Marie we were met by Christian, the hotel manager, and driven the short distance to the Princesse Bora Lodge, which was Jan's preference over the Soanambo Hotel, where we had stayed two years before. I had very mixed feelings about changing, as the Soanambo is a superb place as far as radio is concerned, but Jan said it had no atmosphere. The Princesse Bora was largely unknown, except that we had visited it before and liked it enormously. As usual Jan proved right in her choice because the hotel is superb, overlooking the channel between the island and the mainland and with a good take-off to the northwest.

I had asked for a bungalow as close to the beach as possible, but was told that those were fully booked with honeymooners. The bungalows are not numbered in the conventional manner, but called after different species of endemic reef fish, and we were allocated one called *Perroquet*, some 30

metres away from the beach, but which had a clear area behind it with some strategically placed trees. While Jan unpacked, I wasted no time in rigging the antenna with the help of one of the gardeners, who could throw my lead fishing weight-loaded support string higher, further and more accurately than I could propel it with my catapult. I actually gave him my catapult for his trouble. The hotel organised an extra table and chair and I was in business very quickly, although, as usual, the bands were dead until the late afternoon, when I made the first QSO as 5R8HA/P with DL7RAG on 18.1 MHz at 1310 UTC on 22 September.

After the first spot on the DX Summit at 1327 UTC a nice pile-up developed and I was able to operate for a couple of hours before breaking for dinner. I did manage to get back on the air for another hour after dinner, but Jan was not happy about it and as I did not want to upset her, I didn't do so again, much to the disappointment of Clive, GM3POI, who was desperate for a 40m QSO. In fact I made no QSOs at all on 40m during this trip, primarily due to the times when I could get on the air.

Radio activities fell nicely into the usual pattern of a session in the early mornings, when 30m was open to North America, and the late afternoons, when the higher bands were open to the Far East and Europe. We spent our days either walking round the island, whale watching or just simply relaxing in what has to be one of the most wonderful spots on the planet.

Back to CDG

All too soon it was time to leave. Our route back to Tana for our connecting flight to Paris took us through Tamatave, where we had several hours between aircraft. We took a trip to the Ivoloina Zoological Park, some 13 km north of the town, where there is a selection of the flora and fauna of eastern Madagascar,

including several species of caged and wild lemurs. In association with other organizations, the Jersey Wildlife Protection Trust in the UK has set up an education centre, captive breeding programmes for endangered species and a halfway house for animals being reintroduced into the wild. Solofo had made tentative arrangements for Michel, 5R8EE, to meet us at the airport but, regrettably, he failed to show up. The menu in the restaurant stated very clearly that all the food was 'garantie sans porc', but they produced an excellent ham sandwich!

Solofo and Irinée again met us at Ivato and waited in the long queue with us to check in for the overnight flight to Paris, which was uneventful. Neither were there any problems with the connecting flight to Bristol and we arrived home safely after yet another wonderful experience.

I made 429 QSOs with 47 DXCC entities from the mainland (AF-013) and 1,476 QSOs with 66 DXCC entities from Ile Sainte Marie (AF-090). Special QSLs have been printed and are available either direct or through the bureau.

The necessary documentation has been submitted to (and accepted by) Roger, G3KMA, for both IOTA activities and to Bill Moore, NC1L, at ARRL for DXCC purposes.

My particular thanks go to my XYL, Jan; Solofo, 5R8ET, for his help in renewing the licence; Pierrot at Cortez Expeditions in Tana for the travel arrangements and to the management and staff of Camp Catta; Andringitra (www.campcatta.com), Hotel Relais de la Reine, Isalo; Hotel Mangily, Ifaty; Hotel Princesse Bora Lodge, Ile Ste Marie (www.princesse-bora.com) and also Andreas, 5R8FL, for the use of his station in Tana, without whom this operation would not have been possible.

5R8HA/P Ile Sainte Marie AF-090

QSOs by band

30m	20%
20m	10%
17m	56%
15m	14%

QSOs by continent

Europe	1136
Asia	83
Africa	6
Oceania	5
N America	242
S America	4

From Alan Jubb, G3PMR, 5B4AHJ

I would like to advise all CDXC members that my XYL and I will be QSY-ing to 5B on January 7th. I shall be QRV as 5B4AHJ, initially running 400W to a Force 12 Sigma 5 vertical. I plan to have a better station than this around January 2005, following a further house move. I shall be very happy to QSO CDXC members. QSL via the 5B bureau, or direct to PO Box 61430, 8134 Kato Pafos, Cyprus. Please do not QSL via G3PMR via the RSGB Bureau, although direct QSLs to my UK address will be OK for a while.

Please note that I shall be continuing to sell and support SHACKLOG as before. This will not be affected by the move.

73 and a Happy New Year to all members.

Adventure Annobón

A report by Franz Langner, DJ9ZB

Reports of DX-peditions fascinate again and again in a special way the sizeable group of hams interested in DX. Sometimes these stories lend wings to our thoughts, awake dormant interests and desires, and expand our horizon with descriptions of foreign lands and exotic islands.

What actually draws us into the distance? What is the appeal to travel again and again to new DXCC countries? Don't we sometimes accept unnecessary risks when we activate for instance rare DXCC areas and islands far away from civilization? The selected target this time was the small island of Annobón in the Atlantic Ocean, known to hams better with the rare prefix '3CØ'. Every time when I looked at this small dot on my Amateur World Map I realized that the planning for and the execution of a DX-pedition to Annobón would not be an easy undertaking.

A small, square mainland area near the Equator, 100 miles of coastline with sandy beaches and mangrove swamps, further inland rain forests - and in addition a number of larger and smaller coastal islands. This is the Republic of Equatorial Guinea or República de Guinea Ecuatorial. For decades this country was seldom mentioned in the media, not because it is not interesting, but because it was too difficult for foreigners to visit. Meanwhile visitors can move about relatively freely and get to know the people and the country.

With a size of 28,061 square kms (10,800 square miles) and roughly 475,000 inhabitants, this republic is one of the smallest countries on the African continent. Here one can detect the remnants of the colonial era

more clearly than in many other countries in Africa. The country consists of the mainland portion and the two volcanic islands of Bioko and Annobon. Geopolitically the 780 square-mile island of Bioko (old name Fernando Poo) is closer to Cameroun (only 21 miles away) than to the mainland area of Mbini, which used to be called Rio Muni and is 155 miles away.

The distance to the third part of the country, the island of Annobón, is more than 400 miles. Annobón was officially called Pagalu from 1973 to 1981.

Between these two islands is not only the Atlantic but also the island state of São Tome and Principe. Equatorial Guinea's existence is more a factor of colonial history, as the three parts of the country were once Spanish possessions, which were given independence on October 12, 1968. The capital, Malabo, with roughly 50,000 inhabitants, is a small, reasonably maintained town and is situated picturesquely above the sea on the rim of a long, dormant volcanic crater.

After a six-hour flight in a Spanair Airbus A320, we landed on Friday, Sep 26, just past 0800 local time at the international airport in Malabo. We being Elmo, EA5BYP, Vicente, EA5YN, Victor, EA5FO, all from Alicante in Spain - and myself, Franz, DJ9ZB. We had 770 lbs of luggage and needed to get to the 200 km-distant island of Annobón just south of the Equator. Following a very long preparation time, numerous phone calls and many hurdles, the Ministry of Communications finally granted our ham radio licenses and permission to enter Annobón. We had agreed to a departure date in late September 2003 and sought the necessary entry visas

from the Embassy of Equatorial Guinea in Madrid. Getting the airline tickets was just routine for the travel agency.

The departure day started very early in the morning as my XYL had to drive me from our home in SW Germany to the airport in Strasbourg, France – and that with 185 lbs of luggage. After I had spent lots of Euros on excess luggage fees I was able to depart around noon on an Iberia airbus for Madrid-Barajas airport. My Spanish friends arrived a little later from Alicante on another Iberia flight. Next followed 5 hours of waiting for our check-in for the flight to Malabo. There we had a date with Ramon G. Salazar, 3C1GS, who, as a UN employee, was on his way to Baghdad, Iraq, but would have loved to have joined us in Annobón. This time we were not hindered by more excess luggage fees and took off at 0200 for Malabo. After arrival at the old airport building in Malabo our entry visas and vaccination documents were examined and, of course, an open hand was ready for ‘contributions’.

With the many documents we carried for this trip from many different authorities we were guided into a separate air-conditioned waiting room, where we again spent several hours. Meanwhile we could see through the window how the military examined the contents of our luggage and finally cleared everything to be loaded onto an old Russian Antonov-24 plane for Annobón. I tried to capture this with my camera, but was instantly stopped from doing so with the words: “Tienes Permisso?”.

Luckily my camera was not taken away. Meanwhile the outside temperature had climbed to 30°C (86°F) and high humidity was prevalent. After four hours of waiting we were allowed to board our plane.

Finally we took off and the pilot pointed the aircraft in a south westerly direction towards Annobón (Exact location 1 degree 26 minutes South and 5 degrees 38 minutes East). Apart

from us there were only a few other passengers on the aircraft, a few men and the 3-person crew from Byelorussia. After a 90-minute flight we overflew the island state of São Tome and Principe, which is located directly on the Equator. After another 30 minutes we started our descent onto the volcanic island of Annobón. Finally we saw the island ourselves: Annobón, 3 Charlie Zero, surrounded by thick rain clouds. The crew landed the plane and we landed in the main town of San Antonio de Pale.

There are 2,000 inhabitants in three settlement areas, 1,500 in Pale and the rest in two smaller villages, San Pedro and Santa Cruz, only reachable by foot. More and more people, especially children, approached us on the newly built road, despite the rain that had just started. We look into the friendly, bright eyes of the children - and the adults also expressed their hospitality with greetings.

Due to the location near the Equator, Annobón has a tropical humid and hot climate.

The time came for the customs officers to introduce themselves; they wanted to examine our expedition items again. As there is no customs hall, everything happened outside in the rain. Finally all our stuff was released and ready for transportation onto a tractor to our radio location 2 miles away.

A large group of children and adults accompanied us to our quarters, roughly $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile from the airport. Elmo, EA5BYP, and Vincente, EA5YN, were greeted warmly; they had not been back since their last visit in September 1999. The newly built road leads from the airport downhill to the main settlement of Antonio de Pale. Coffee-brown children ran and played in the street and examined us quietly and seriously with their big eyes. On the way to their huts women balanced on their heads large baskets of goods that had arrived on the plane. In the distance we could see a white sandy beach and the

azure blue water of the Atlantic. On the other side we saw oil and coco palm trees and recognized the island's highest point - the 2,000'-high Monte de Santamina. Besides the huts along the way a number of newly built stone houses came into view, as well as a church on a small hill.

We had rented living and sleeping quarters from Señor Damian for our 14-day stay. His house includes a large terrace and is located above the street, reachable via a dirt path. We unloaded all our material, suitcases and antennas and carried everything to the building. Needless to say, it was now more than 30 hours since we'd departed and without sleep we were feeling tired. But there was no time to rest as our equipment needed to be unpacked and prepared for installation.

However, first things first, and so we accompanied Señor Damian for our visit to the acting island governor. After that we reported with all our passports and travel documents to the military commandant's office. After greeting us, he carefully examined our documents and retained our passports until our departure. He was given a description of amateur radio and told how long we planned to operate from the island. He seemed interested and let us know that we were the only visitors and, in contrast to Malabo, allowed us to take some photographs.

On our way home 30 minutes later we saw the new president's palace being finished and a number of newly erected buildings for the military garrison. Finally work could begin.

Elmo and I started with the assembly of the 3-element Cushcraft A3WS WARC beam which we mounted on top of an 18' pipe with the help of the team and secured with guy wires. With our location on the northern end of the island we had a clear shot towards Europe, the US and Japan. Meanwhile the generator was humming and providing us with light, as it was now dark outside. Soon our Yaesu FT-

897 and the Toshiba Notebook PC were connected and at 1849 UTC we made our first contact as 3CØV with Gaby, OD5NJ, in Beirut on 18 MHz. Elmo reported to his brother Gaby, who was one of our pilot stations, that everything was OK and that for the next hour 3CØV would be active with one station only on 18 MHz.

It was then time to get something to eat and drink. Luckily water was available in imported plastic bottles. Outdoors it was pitch dark and only occasionally could we see a light from a flashlight, a luxury few Annobónians can afford. We were told that in the near future a central power plant is going to be built – the street lights are already there, although not yet connected.

At 1945 UTC 3CØV put out a call on 18.145 MHz, listening 150-155, and this resulted in a giant pile-up from Europe. PAØWRS was the first PA, DK2CK the first DL station in the log and then US stations kept calling, starting with AB2RF and W9RPM. The signals were very strong, with many stations hunting for a new DXCC country or IOTA island. At around 0100 UTC we secured the FT-897, since generator noise penetrates the huts of the locals and disturbs their night's rest. During this first operation of the rig the station table was taken over by insects and mosquitoes, leaving an interesting pattern of squashed colours on the table. During this first night of much-needed rest the mosquitoes kept hounding me – I was obviously a prime target for them!

The next morning we continued our WARC band activity, starting with Europe and Africa and followed by North America. At around 2100 GMT we logged our first Japanese station, JA7BVH, after having changed the beam direction with the boom rope. During the morning we interrupted our operation a few times to assemble more antennas. We began with the Mosley Mini 33 beam for 10–20m, two Hy-Gain dipoles for the same bands

and a 5-element Cushcraft 6m beam. Victor, EA5FO, a DX-pedition newcomer, started RTTY on 20m and I6NO was his first EU contact, DL2AYL the first DL and W3UR the first US station in the RTTY Log. Vicente, EA5YN, started up late afternoon at around 1700 UTC on 15m CW and W2OO was his first log entry. Our plan was to concentrate in the first week mainly on the higher bands and in the second week on the low bands. Meanwhile our Icom IC-706 was ready on 50.120 MHz, with the beam pointing north. We enjoyed excellent conditions on the WARC bands into all parts of the world and Sunday brought many stations looking for a QSO with 3CØV.

During the Spanish colonial era roughly 80% of the population became Catholic and on the Sunday morning we saw many children and adults going to church. During the morning and in the evening the temperatures are fairly pleasant but around noon the sun radiates from the blue sky and brings unbearable heat. Elmo accompanied me in the late afternoon on a first walk around the town - and as it turned out later, our only opportunity to take a few photos. The Annobónians live in simple huts and live modest lives. The women sow, plant and harvest vegetables, while the men go to sea daily. Fish is the main staple on the island. From the huts we heard the cheerful voices of children. We brought some gifts for the kids: mainly school items, like notebooks, pencils, colour pens etc. and they were happy to receive them. The eyes that look at you are so real that you feel the gratitude when you observe their happy smiles. On the beach a recently stranded ship rusts away, but serves as a playground for the children. We also saw at some distance a larger transport vessel at anchor. Later we had a number of male visitors on our terrace enquiring what we were doing. Some introduced themselves as Customs and Telecom employees. This, however, interrupted our ham communications, as we were obliged to answer the many

questions they had. After all, we were guests on their island!

The next day we had problems with the mini-beam. High SWR was evident and found to be due to an interruption in the radiating element and not locally repairable. So we decided to unpack our Windom antenna and install it to get back on 20–10m. Then we spent a few hours installing the Titanex V80E to be able to use 160–40m. However, our first attempt did not bring useable SWR readings on 40 and 160m. We measured and cut 20 radials and laid them out in a circle – at these temperatures truly ‘sweaty’ work. We recognized later that follow-up was needed and meanwhile continued our operation on other bands and in other modes.

We started operations with the windom in the evening hours on 40 and 80m and installed a dipole for 10 MHz. On the Friday morning Damian and Elmo were called to the military commandant in town and returned with the news that we had to stop our radio operation. They were also told we had to leave all our equipment and antennas in place. When we heard this we were shocked, as there was no explanation for this. Maybe the military had been asked to cut all uncontrolled communication from the island to the outside world? We agreed to another visit and discussion for Saturday morning, October 4th, but Elmo and Damian did not have a good feeling after the visit the day before.

It was good that we had already made over 500 QSOs on 80 and 40m and were able to do a few test QSOs on 160 with the V80E antenna. What would this new day bring for us? The wind started up, dark clouds hung in the sky and the day started with rain showers. However, we were operating while wondering what was going to happen. When our two team members came back we could read from their faces that it was not good news. We had no time to broadcast the news on the bands, as we had to shut down immediately. We were

ordered to appear at the airport with our luggage in 2 hours' time and fly back to Malabo in an Antonov-24. This shocking news and the little remaining time to disassemble and pack everything kicked us into high gear – at least we wanted to bring back our equipment. While we were packing we saw the Antonov plane landing. Soon we were at the airport with our luggage and received our passports and tickets (which we had to pay for in addition).

Now they all returned for the farewell – the children and the adults. Raymundo, who lives on the island with his wife and two small children and who had become a good friend, asked me whether I would come back again? I answered right away: 'Yes!'. After take-off the pilot circled the island one more time, an impressive view from above, and a jewel of nature. One can only hope that this natural beauty remains largely untouched.

The flight back to Malabo took 2½ hours. With two fully-loaded taxis we left the airport for the town. Initially we stored the expedition equipment with some acquaintances of Elmo before we started to look for a hotel. Unfortunately the Bahia Hotel, well known to DX-ers, was fully booked, but we got rooms for two nights at the Ureca Hotel. From there we phoned Gaby, OD5NJ, and let him know the reason for the termination of 3CØV operation. In the evening we were all dining together and drinking Spanish beer and spent our last CFA-Francs. The return flight for Victor and me was re-booked for Monday, but Elmo and Vincente had to appear at the Spanish Embassy and at the military commandant's office in Malabo and were scheduled to fly back on October 10th.

As it happened, our departure day was the day the new airport terminal was being dedicated. So check-in and luggage checks took a fair amount of time. We finally boarded the Airbus, which took off in the morning for the Spanish capital of Madrid. Late in the

afternoon I arrived in Strasbourg, where my XYL picked me up. The next 3 days I spent in bed with a high temperature – but luckily it wasn't malaria. Piles of QSL cards to reply to had already arrived. We worked over 20,000 QSOs in this week of operation from Annobon, 14,000 of those in SSB, 6,500 in CW and 800 in RTTY/PSK.

Our heartfelt thanks go to the Chiltern DX Club (CDXC), Clipperton DX Club (CDXC), DELTA DX Association, DX Lovers Foundation (DXF), German DX Foundation (GDXF), GM DX Group (GMDXG), Lynx DX Group (LYNX), Northern California DX Foundation (NCDXF), Northern Ohio DX Association Inc., Oklahoma DX Association (OKDX), Six Italia, Swiss DX Foundation (SDXF), The Caroline DX Association. Also ZICO, Titanex and ACOM for their financial and technical support.

I would also like to thank AC6HT, AA7UC, BV2RS, DC8TS, DE1LSL, DF3CB, DJ2BW, DJ2TI, DJ5IO, DJ8CR, DJ8NK, DK2IO, DK5WG, DK6FI, DL6GV, DL6UAA, DL7UPN, DL8JS, DL8KAS, DL9IE, DL9RCF, DL-L14/2381499, EA5BRE, EA5IK, EA5KY, EA8AG, G3NUG, HE9DWW, HB9IIO, HB9AAA, HB9AAQ, IØJX, I4MKN, IK8CNT, JA1ELY, JA1LZR, JA1SIN, JA1WSX, JA3CWL, JA3EJG, J5JGY, JA5RCH, JA6BCI, JA7AGO, JE1IBI, JG1IGX, JH3SIF, JP1NWZ, JR2KDN, K4FJ, K4HGX, K4MQG, K5UZ, K6ANP, K7ZD, NØWCP, N1DL, N4XM, N5PHT, N5XD, N6ST, N7NG, N8JX, NN1N, NP2BT, NT1N, ON4UN, OE8RT, PAØJSE, PAØWRS, PA3ARM, PA8ZZ, PB1TT, WØDRT, WØLSD, W1DU, W1NG, W3ODJ, W3UR, W4GMY, W4RBO, W5UZW, W5ZPA, W6EUF, W6OAT, W6OSP, W8GC, WB2ZHB, WM7R, und XE1CI for their help.

Also the many thousands of DX-ers who accompanied us on the bands to the bitter end and for whom we were able to provide a new country, island or new band.

One-man DX-peditioner

An interview with Bert van den Berg, PA3GIO

It's not easy to get a interview with Bert van den Berg, PA3GIO. He's either on a DX-pedition - or at home, busy with the QSLs. No wonder, for someone who received the 2002 IOTA Merit Award.

Bert, how long have you been on the DX and IOTA tour?

It started with me working /P and /M from Dartmoor in SW England in the summer of 1993. By the way, there is a nice story about Marconi while he was on Dartmoor - and what he told a friend after his experiments there. "After the first signals came in, the calm in my life ended."

Then in May 1994 I was with my jeep on the beaches of the island of Rhodes, where I also got to know the local amateur radio club. 'Bill', SV5AZP, was my guide. I also visited Vasilis, SV5TS, at his home - and while I was in his garden I asked if he had any garden plans. "Growing orange trees and antennas!" was his reply. And Nikos, SV5TH, at his work QTH told me that "working pile-ups is like top-class sport"!

In Lardos we met SV5BOP. I also worked a few other locals from the beaches, but didn't meet up with them in person. After going QRT on the beach, I disconnected the power cable from the car battery. This was followed by a brief moment of panic when the jeep refused to start, but this simply turned out to be a dirty contact on the starter connector! My last visit was to the home of SV5BYP.

All in all I can look back at a wonderful time with some very friendly people. It seems that I'm still not forgotten there.

When did you get your licence and what is your profession?

I've been interested in radio since I was 8 years old. It was also obvious that it would be my profession.

I started building equipment when I was about ten years old: a very simple Morse key with battery and lamp connected with wires to the next room so I could have a few QSOs with a friend! Then it was a one-valve radio, on which I heard 13 broadcast stations. Maybe I would hear a few more with increased sensitivity - and yes, eventually these 'improvements' resulted in a 'transmitter'. My dear neighbour, who owned an AR88D, discovered that I was the one with the 'transmitter', but he didn't have a problem with it!

After moving to a different city a new neighbour was PAØCV. He let me do my first SWL session on his BC312. Very nice! My old neighbour then visited us and gave me a beautiful present: a short-wave receiver he had made for me, which also had 80m on it. Soon after that, in 1962, I joined VERON [the Dutch national society] and became an SWL. In the years that followed I enjoyed constantly improving the receiver and rebuilding it with the latest ideas published in Electron. Around this time SSB technology was becoming increasingly popular. Later I also inherited my old neighbour's AR88D, which was used for communication between Indonesia and the Netherlands - and which I still own.

It was nice to hear all the DX - also on 80m late at night and in the early hours of the morning - and sending and receiving QSL cards via the Bureau. At this time I was

studying electronics. I got my VHF licence in 1968, but I was only interested in shortwave amateur radio, so I didn't apply for a VHF call. By this time I had become an electronics engineer. For the first few years my job was research in a (US-owned) laboratory for VHF/UHF TV tuners, where they had a lot of beautiful measuring equipment. Then, after another move, came a period without amateur radio.

Then a very sad event in my family changed my philosophy of life and so some years later I decided to retire from my job. After some very busy years I decided that it was finally time to get my HF licence. I bought a computer to practise CW using Morse Academy, which worked very well indeed. Six months later, in 1993, I got my full HF licence. I will never forget that day.

How many islands or DXCC entities have you activated so far?

I'd have to count them all up, but it must be 62 DX-peditions – that's 28 DXCC-type ones and 37 IOTAs.

What's so fascinating for you about going on a DX-pedition?

Firstly, I always loved being able to operate outside in the fresh air. Operating outside, especially in beautiful locations, is so much better than staring at the walls of a hotel room.

In the 1960s I went along to the local field days in Rotterdam. I was also inspired by a VERON evening in Rotterdam with Jan, PAØSSB, demonstrating how easily he could make QSOs with his home-made transceiver and helically wound vertical, called a 'Joystick'.

In 1993 I decided that the ideal style for me was to operate from a car from different locations. By chance Kenwood then came on the market with the TS-50S - an excellent,

small 100W transceiver. In 1993-94 the propagation was good enough to work the USA from my car from southern England. In fact they thought I was a county chaser!

While I was in Jersey in 1995 someone told me to go to 20m, 14.260 MHz. I thought it wouldn't be worth it from Jersey, but after QSY-ing I realised he was right; it was indeed interesting to get some more callers. The conditions weren't too good and I had propagation to Japan on one day only, but this was just the beginning. The propagation got better and better - and then slowly you realise, when the propagation is very good, what you can do with a simple set-up: a small 100W radio. And don't underestimate the simple multiband doublet antenna for its efficiency, DX capability and wide coverage. Even a helically wound mobile antenna (like the 'Joystick') can do the job.

In 1999 I decided to go to the Caribbean and Central America for a more interesting DXCC and IOTA experience. I got lots of callers, which was really amazing! I operated /M from Sint Maarten, PJ8/FS – also /P from Tintamarre, NA-199, with a car battery dropped by a small boat. Then back via Miami to Belize and Glovers Reef, NA-180, with many a pile-up there too. Jokingly Horst, DK3GG, asked me, "Which countries are you not visiting?". I laughed and said, "We shall see!".

It helps a lot to choose an island, or a QTH close to the sea. You get more gain. In fact it's almost as if you're running 400W or using a beam. I love islands anyway. It's fascinating to listen to the band opening up, just like sunrise. The best thing for me was to be able to make contact with PAØ, such as with my friend Hans, PA3DGH. And all this with a simple antenna - a wire or a vertical - and 100W. Also fascinating are all the different voices and accents. Sometimes I recognise only the voice at first, but then the callsign springs to mind and I can reply with that.

That's fun, of course. You also get to know lots of amateurs and after a while they get know you too. Indeed with some of them I've had tens or even hundreds of QSOs. That's really great. They know that I'll be there for hours and hours – and won't give up until I've worked them all. Often I'll keep going until the band closes, with little or no time to have something to eat or drink. It really is important to keep the rhythm going all the time. The only time I do stop is for an hour or so for dinner. It's only a pity that this is normally a time when the propagation is good, but I need that break so I can relax a bit. I sleep very well after the band has closed, or there are simply no more callers. It's a great feeling to know that you've given everything you could.

What's the most exciting place you've been to?

That's difficult to say. I have special memories of so many of them. To name but a few, Rhodes, as I said before, and the beautiful Luttrell's Tower in southern England, a QTH which was used by Marconi. Fort Clonque, Alderney, which is surrounded by the sea at high tide; uninhabited Islands like Longstone (Farne), sitting on a rock in a small dry area, with the tide coming in next to a historic lighthouse (Grace Darling). That was very exciting, but trips like this are very dependent on the weather.

There again, in 1999, my first time in Belize, Central America. It was very hot, but it's amazing how a warm and very strong (even gale-force) wind can make it very pleasant. Every year these low-lying islands are especially vulnerable during the hurricane season. It was exciting to be one of the first visitors to go to Glovers Reef after Hurricane Mitch, which hit the area the previous year. This entailed a three-hour speedboat trip at full throttle, navigating between all the sandbanks just below the surface and arriving at around sunset. It was marvellous to see this

small paradise island with its white sands and waving palms coming into view in the twilight hours. It was just like a dream.

On introducing myself to the manager, he said that I must be the radio amateur - and assured me that they would help me with my antenna the next morning. "We have good tree climbers!" he added. They were all busy rebuilding their restaurant next to the lagoon, which had completely vanished in the hurricane. The next day his young 'tree climber' had no problems climbing up to a height of 40' or so. At which point the manager asked me how much higher he needed to go. "That'll do," I said. It was really frightening to see the young lad up there!

Then came Blackbird Caye in the Turneffe Islands, NA-123, where the rather aggressive local insects (they call them 'doctor flies') hit me really hard!

We then moved on to Placencia, in southern Belize, and Little Water Caye, NA-180, 18 miles SE of Punta Placencia. A lot of sand flies here. This island was even smaller and very charming, with the sound of the waves beneath the wooden Santa Maria cabin – and the pelicans in front. This island is even more remote. In fact only on one occasion did I see a boat pass by. Then on 1 July 2001 the German owner closed down the island accommodation and moved to San Ignacio on the Belize mainland, having put the island on the market. Then in October 2001 came Hurricane Iris, which reportedly destroyed a lot of the Placencia area. The Glovers Reef Resort sustained significant damage too, with Little Water Caye losing all of its buildings.

Later in 1999 we went to another very remote island: Desroches in the Indian Ocean, 250 kms south of Mahé in the Amirante group (Seychelles). Here, a man climbed our tree so easily. In fact they told me he'd been born in a tree! It was also amazing that you could eat so

very well in such a remote place (please don't remind me of the cost, though!).

Then in 2000 the Galapagos Islands, with sea iguanas literally on the doorstep of the bungalow, where it was very hot. The worst thing here was that I had to put up with 12 days of local power line noise; on 21 MHz it was up to S7 in my headphones!

And later that year the islands of Mafia & Pemba, Tanzania. Exciting flights here. Indeed when we left Dar Es Salaam after the heavy rain, they weren't even sure whether the plane would be able to land in Mafia. There are no telephones and they only have an HF link, a TS-50 at Dar Es Salaam airport. And before we took off the pilot announced he would have to inspect the island 'runway' from the air; if it was not safe, we would have to fly all the way back to Dar Es Salaam. In Mafia I then had to tell the manager what the best time would be to contact the airport in Dar Es Salaam on the mainland. Then the small Cessna, from Mafia to Pemba, just the two of us and the pilot, crammed together with our luggage. I was squashed against the dashboard, with the fuel gauges getting lower and lower. At Pemba they read 'empty'. The pilot did not refuel the plane at Pemba, but confirmed that he was going on to Dar Es Salaam. I asked him about the fuel gauges. He laughed and said, "Never mind those, they're unreliable. I simply work it out on the basis my flying hours!". OK, I thought, at least we'd survived.

After that came an even more exciting and very fast two-hour taxi ride. It would seem that in Pemba a motorist 'owns' the road; any pedestrians or cyclists have to make sure they get out of the way in time – or, in other words, jump for their lives! Another interesting experience was at night, when a group of chanting bushbabies suddenly ran through our room. This was because the front wall of this room was completely missing, although

during the day it did have the advantage of opening out onto views of the lagoon.

Bushbabies are primitive primates related to the lemurs of Madagascar. They announce their presence by a loud, croaking wail, repeated at frequent intervals during the night. Its resemblance to the cry of a child is said to be the basis for the name 'bushbaby'. In a restaurant this cute little fuzzy creature goes from table to table looking for fruit. Bushbabies are otherwise known as 'galagos, or in Pemba 'Garnett's Greater Bush Baby', *Otolemur Garnettii*. They are active at night and sleep during the day in tree hollows, nests high up in the trees. They say earplugs protect you quite well against bushbaby chanting! I made some sound recordings of them.

The (diving) resort was in a very remote location, with no other developments within 50 kms. On arrival we found a fridge in our room, but when we tried turning on the light switch it soon became obvious that there was no electricity. The local people are very poor and have to walk for hours every day to collect drinking water. They had a generator running for just a few hours a day. They turn it off when they go to bed, and that is early. So as to extend my operation time I made arrangements for a car battery - and to collect extra fuel from the nearest village, on a motorcycle along a very poor 'road'.

In 2001 I experienced an exciting flight to the island of Saba, in the Caribbean, with a runway which is only 1,200' long, one of the shortest in the world. Landing at St-Barthélemy in 2002 was even more exciting.

There again, our arrival in Madagascar in 2001, warmly welcomed by a group of local amateurs. Solofo, 5R8ET, and Fidy, 5R8FV, were especially helpful. Also an interesting visit there to Radio Nederland, with all the open wire! Also, the direct charter flight and stay on Ile Sainte Marie, where they had a problem with the generator at night. I had to

operate with a car battery - and oil lamp or torch for logging the QSOs on 80m! Then the very long journey by road to the airfield, in the south of Ile Sainte Marie, which was interrupted by a fallen tree - and the driver had to walk a long way for assistance!

Finally, our narrow escape from a cyclone in Niue on the day we left.

You prefer SSB. Can you tell us why?

It's not that I prefer SBB, but having just got my full licence I felt I didn't have much choice. For a DX-pedition you need a lot of experience. You also have to be very good at operating CW in practice, which is very different to doing the same thing at home!

What kind of equipment do you take with you and how much does it weigh? Do you ship anything in advance?

I don't ship anything in advance. Travelling by air brings with it a few problems which you have to try and avoid, especially damage to equipment and lost luggage. This means carrying as much as possible in your hand luggage. To avoid any disasters due to faulty equipment, you also have to take back-up equipment with you.

Travelling to small islands often means small planes, which means weight and size restrictions. This in turn means small-size equipment, which my XYL and I can carry in fairly compact backpacks. The weight here is 14 kg and 11 kg respectively – and in most cases they don't check the weight of the hand luggage. As for the equipment itself: a Kenwood TS-50; PS-40 switch-mode power supply; an Annecke balanced tuner for 80 – 10m; 2 x 20m lengths of wire for a doublet; 2 x 25m lengths of open wire feeder; Kenwood HS-5 headphones; some small, custom-made logbooks; a mini cassette recorder etc. As I really need to work with a mobile antenna, I take an Outbacker PerthPlus as a spare as

well. The equipment I can't take as hand luggage I check in as normal luggage: 3 to 7 meter-long lightweight fishing rods, which are supports for the wire antenna, and the Outbacker Perth mobile antenna.

Please note that I don't take a laptop. If I did that, I'd have to take another laptop with me as a back-up. I have to avoid problems with planes - and I prefer to take HF spares!

QSOs per year

1993	1352
1994	3000
1995	6690
1996	6534
1997	6197
1998	9810
1999	30675
2000	47089
2001	39825
2002	42108
2003	6500

Is there any place where you tried to get a licence and it didn't work out?

Planning a DX-pedition and getting a licence means having sleepless nights! When I look back, many are easy to get, but waiting for them can be frustrating. In some places you really need the help of the local amateurs. In 1999 a case in point was Sint Maarten, in the Netherlands Antilles. They just had joined CEPT, but with the wrong prefix numbers. I had to make hurried arrangements with the very helpful local amateur club in Curaçao and they arranged a PJ8 licence just in time. Shortly after my visit Curaçao then corrected the callsign prefix numbers, so CEPT was then OK for other amateurs.

There again, Galapagos, HC8. I was waiting for my licence there when there was suddenly a local coup d'état. I had to arrange my flights at the very last moment.

Far more frustrating was Mauritius, 3B8. I applied in very good time. I phoned the licencing office down there a week before I was due to leave - and every day after that - but still nothing. In Mauritius I had to wait for another 3 days until the licence was ready. Having said that, I must count myself lucky, seeing as others had to wait on the island for one whole week. Even worse, groups from Germany and Belgium returned home without getting any licence at all.

How many QSL requests do you have to reply to per month or per year?

In recent years I have confirmed 33,000 to 44,000 QSOs per year.

Is there anything you'd like to tell the folks about QSL-ing?

I prefer to QSL via the Bureau, seeing as it's much less work for me than direct QSLs.

Please design your QSL in such a way that all the information is on one side. Make sure the 'via Manager' line is large and very clear - and put that in the upper corner of the QSL. I've just received a 2 kg batch from Australia; all these cards were sent by mistake to one of my VK calls, and since the Bureau in Australia - as in the USA - does not send outgoing cards for free, this batch was sent to me direct at my request. Germany is the best QSL country. QSL work for me is very, very time consuming.

Although I like to see the QSL cards with their nice comments, it's faster and cheaper to send the QSO data via e-mail to QSL@pa3gio.nl. If you like, you can put your comments in my guestbook on my website at

<http://www.pa3gio.nl/>. This would be very much appreciated.

What percentage of your expeditions is sponsored - or do you have to pay for everything?

All my DX-peditions have been funded solely by myself and my XYL.

Where would you like to go to in the future?

The next trip is to Bermuda, VP9. This was planned for September [2003], but then Hurricane Fabian struck. I did, though, manage to postpone it until November. It was another busy time with sleepless nights! [Update on PA3GIO/VP9, 9-18 November 2003: 5,800 QSOs in 10 days. Good propagation only on the last day, with S6 local noise, but nice on 80 and 40m with EU!]

Who helps you in preparing for and carrying out your DX-peditions?

I do most of the planning myself. Of course I get plenty of inspiration from other DX-peditions. My friend PA3EKX also gave me a list of destinations which he thought I ought to aim for. Planning a DX-pedition requires a lot of research. It's also important to get in touch with an amateur who has done the same sort of thing. However, times change, so there's no guarantee that things will work out the same way. The QTH is extremely important. It's very difficult to choose a QTH without actually seeing it. Sometimes I have to ask non-amateurs about such things - and, they're not always able to give me the answers I need. My XYL is a great supporter. My friend Hans, PA3DGH, is unbelievable (604 QSOs...) and almost as busy as I am when he's monitoring my activities.

Would you like to join a team - or do you always prefer 'One-man DX-peditioning'?

In my opinion a team has the considerable advantage of being able to go to rare and uninhabited islands and put up bigger antennas. So far I very much like the way I've done things: a single-operator DX-pedition has its charm, the advantage of simplicity, fewer problems; you can also get on the air straight away and save conference time! Sometimes it amazes me what can be achieved.

What else do you like about amateur radio?

Lots of things, such as making friends all over the world. Their spontaneous reactions mean a lot to me. For example, Klaus, DK5WG, sent me a super present: a home-made plaque for my shack with a list of my DX-peditions on it. Juan, EA9IE, sent me a copy of his book, 'DX y DX-istas'. After all my building of receivers in the past, I love the fascinating and never-ending subject of antennas.

What hobbies do you have besides amateur radio?

Well, amateur radio is a way of life, as they say, and currently I have very little time to spare. But besides amateur radio there are a lot of things I am interested in. In the past I've studied energy, history – also done plenty of gardening, walking, making 8mm movies, music, interior design etc.

When you think back, are there any interesting stories or anecdotes you can think of in connection with your expeditions?

There are so many. Perhaps I should write a book. Oh, there is this one: once I couldn't copy a Japanese callsign, so after a while the Japanese station said, "I give up". "No, no," I replied, "a radio amateur never gives up." And after that we made it!

Do you prefer any particular operating techniques? For example running a pile-up by numbers, asking for the last letter in the suffix,

the full callsign – or a particular type of split-frequency operation?

This really is one of the top items.

Operating technique is extremely important and there's always a lot of discussion about the best way of doing it. I recommend the VKØIR Radio Operator's Manual by Peter Cassier, ON6TT, on the Cordell Expeditions website - or the planning documents for the Heard Island DX-pedition 1997 at <http://www.cordell.org/htdocs/index.html>. I'm not saying I agree with everything in it, but it's still interesting to read. It's the sole responsibility of the DX-peditioner to get things right - and a pile-up is only as good as the DX station's operating technique. It's a job, maybe even a game, but if you like the game then it's fun for everyone. If you don't like it, or lose your temper, it will be less fun. It's that simple. I don't see it as a holiday - forget it! It's really hard work, like top sport. I really love it, and I'm sure that helps to keep the audience happy.

With operating technique there's no such thing as good or bad. Take the controversial issue of the full callsign as opposed to the last two letters in the suffix. Full callsigns are fine if the DX station can copy them straight away – and of course this speeds things up. At the same time, though, it's obvious that in a huge pile-up the DX station can only copy the full callsigns of the stations with the strongest signals. More often than not the DX station will only be able to copy part of a callsign. Here it's more important for the audience and the DX station to listen with more intervals. Shorter transmissions can provide this.

As the years go by I learn these things - or I hope I learn them, of course. Callers must find out for themselves what the best method is. Every technique has its pros and cons. Simplex operation has the advantage of enabling you to constantly monitor the TX frequency and a lot of stations from various

parts of the world, so you get less QRM creeping in from other QSOs. It's obvious that an audience which is waiting for a QSO will listen better, but eventually the DX station will have to find a way of splitting up the pile-up. Working by numbers can only be done up to a certain number of callers, but the best thing is that weaker stations get more of a chance to be heard. If the DX station is a fast operator, then every number gets a chance within a fairly short time. The stronger stations, of course, don't like this technique because what they want to do is simply 'beat the pile-up' and not have to hang around waiting.

Split-frequency operation is needed if the DX station is weak and there's a huge number of stations in the pile-up. The stronger stations like this technique, of course, but I like to try and copy the very weak stations in between them as well – in fact I hold my breath until the QSO works out. Working Europe is like having a party. I really love it. Of course it's very important to have a clear listening

frequency, but first and foremost it's extremely important to leave the DX frequencies and their 'split windows' clear at all times for the sole use of DX-peditions. And should the '5 up' listening window be occupied, I solve the problem by choosing any clear frequency in the band. This seems to work well - except in the case of amateurs whose transceivers cannot handle this. Indeed, a few times I've worked stations who've said "Wait..." because they've had to re-tune their dials!

I have made lots of tape recordings and find them very useful to listen to. And when I get older I can play them again, close my eyes and think, "Yes, what fun that was!".

Thank you, Bert.

PA3GIO DXpeditions: <http://www.pa3gio.nl/>

[Original interview for CQ-DL magazine, December 2003, by DL2VFR]

SCDXC expedition to the US Virgin Islands

Randy Johnson, W6SJ

The call came in July. A friend said that a home belonging to Paul Jordan, NP2JF, on St. John, US Virgin Islands, had been offered for 10 days in October. A quick check of the calendar showed that this period would cover the CA QSO party and the PA QSO party that his group normally works from their PA QTH. It sounded like a wonderful opportunity, so we set it in motion. We arrived on Thursday night, joining Larry, K3VX, Bill, W3WH, Ted, WF4E, and wives.

On Friday morning we started setting up antennas and trying to get our three rigs set up

and the computers networked. By 4 o'clock NP2SH was one the air. The next morning, after a lovely breakfast with a dozen other local hams, we managed to get it all working and started the CA QSO party. We had fun in the afternoon and early evening, but the dreams of someone working the contest all night evaporated at about 10pm when everyone decided sleep was more important. The perils of taking old guys on a trip! The results of the party were acceptable, but not great. The USVI are not a multiplier in this contest so we were 'interesting', but not sought after.

During the following week we had an opportunity to work some DX, mostly Europe, although I got VK9XW on the first call on 20m. As a West Coast ham with a vertical antenna, my experience of working Europe was pretty limited and even though I had been warned, I was astonished at the wall of sound that occurs when 25 stations all call you at once! No one ever lines up to talk with a W6, and I've never had the opportunity to 'run' in a contest, so this was an unusual opportunity for me, and one I thoroughly enjoyed.

When I finally sat down for some DX operating time on 15 and then 30m, I had opportunities for nice 'chats' with a few guys: 84-year-old Jim, GM2CIX, from Glasgow, who says he's too old to start using e-mail, and Sergio, IK4JPR, from Italy. Then when we finished, there were two guys waiting and then five, then ten, then 20, and I switched to 'TU 5NN BK TU QRZ'.

A few familiar names showed up, Rade, VA7OO, and Phil, G3SWH, but there were a bunch of Europeans who hadn't ever QSO'd the USVI on 30m - or maybe everyone from an unusual location is popular with that mob. Certainly I never thought of the USVI as a special location. We had breakfast with the KP2 club, but most are not HF operators so maybe KP2 was unusual from Europe's point of view.

When the 'deluge' started I was able to get going at a pace of 50 per hour, a total of 100 QSOs with 25 countries in two hours. That's twice as many EU stations as I have contacted in the last year from home! It was fun, but I must say that it is also hard work trying to pick out calls from the mob, and I have a new-found admiration for the people who go on DX-peditions and how much work it is to do that for 16 hours per day for a week!

For the week between the contests, our group made almost 3,000 QSOs with 85 entities, many of the contacts being on the WARC

bands. I'm sure that had anyone tried hard, a DXCC could easily have been accomplished.

As an observation, I must say that the Europeans are, as a rule, more courteous or sensible than their US counterparts in a pile-up. When all you get are fragments of a call and send '4PQ?', typically the only guy who answers back has 4PQ in his call. In my experience, when a DX station asks that of US hams, I am always astonished to hear how many who are not '4PQ' keep calling. What's the point? I especially tried to work the stations with weaker signals, being naturally sympathetic to their plight. Anyway, I was proud that I was able to stay 'in control' of the situation, and hope that the stations waiting thought so too.

It also has given me an opportunity to think what it must be like to live in a rare location. I can understand that there are people who don't speak English who are not going to engage you in a conversation, so it's understandable that with them it's 'RST, Name, QTH, and thanks for the QSO'. But there are people who CAN speak English and you'd think that they'd like to have a chat, instead of just racking up 50 QSOs.

So what happens next? Well, I'd like to get a small rig and antenna that I could take on a trip to the Bahamas or Belize when I go bone fishing there. But I don't think that I'd be ready to retire to some bizarre location. I have too much fun talking to people to be buried every time I got on! I think that I would also like to participate in a DX-pedition some day. It'd be fun and I just hope that I could keep up the pace.

For the ham interested in a VERY civilized DX-pedition, this may be it, and for those who are not constrained by budget, you can take your wife along and ensconce her in Caneel Bay, one of the world's top destination resorts, while you are fiddling with your rigs. Glad I went and can't wait to do it again.

QRP DX-ing - or how to recapture the magic of radio

Stan Rudcenko, GØKBL *Rudcenko@aol.com*

It has worked for me, at least. I was first licensed in 1961 at the age of 16 as a 'registered operator' at the OK1KBW club station, allowed 10W input on 80m CW under supervision. I discovered radio nearly ten years earlier, with a big pile of pre-war radio magazines in the loft, kept there by my father who as so many people in the Thirties, was in love with technology - any technology from airplanes to engines to radio. I built my first crystal radio with his help using 'fool's gold' cats whiskers instead of a diode and a toilet roll for a coil former. It worked first time, as we were in sight of the transmitter. Most of us can pinpoint our infatuation with our hobby to a specific moment of wonder and magic and this was it for me.

Interest in ham radio came via Morse, which I managed to learn at pioneer (scout) meetings before meeting any radio hams. My Elmer was OK1VK, a well know DX-er, now a Silent Key. He gave me my first taste of catching DX, paradoxically on SSB. He just built his first SSB rig, but spoke next to no English then and my English was quite reasonable, so we bent the rules a little. My love affair with Morse continued. I even managed to get among the first ten in the OK speed Morse championship in 1961 or 1962. I could never do any better because of those boy scout mnemotechnics - if you learned to rememeber 'c' as tsii-no-vaa-no (which means 'soldered' in Czech), it flashes through your mind every time and slows you down at high speed.

I came to the UK in 1968 after the Soviet invasion of my country, became an economist and had little time for radio. I just used to

linger at the shop windows of the Heathkit shop in Tottenham Court Road in central London and occasionally went in to play with the rigs on show. What brought me back to the hobby was the BFO, which became fashionable on decent portable radios in the early to mid-1980. I bought one, tuned in to 40m and heard the music of Morse. I got my GØKBL licence in 1987.

Chasing DX has been fun over the past 15 years . I now catch most of what I hear with my Carolina Windom (and Radio Works Delta loop) at 50' and legal power. I do not collect QSLs, but love the chase. I bought my first QRP rig (Mizuho) for 20m about 10 years ago and could work Europe with relative ease with it, but no DX. The first taste of DX (and a return to that sense of magic and wonder) came when I tried my brand new FT-817, now sadly minus final (a common ailment it seems), from out in the garden and hooked up with A61JS on 15m. It then took six months, mostly from the garden at weekends, to get the first 100 countries. In the shack I use my IC-756 PRO with the power turned down to zero; my power meter tells me it's 1W. I have worked all continents on QRP, with a KHØ (on 17m) and ZL6QH (on 40m) probably the best DX. I tried CQ WW in November and got a D4 (on 40m), 5U5, VK4 (20m), as well as HC8 and assorted Caribbeans. But the biggest joy was cracking the pile-up on GJ2A on 40m thanks to a first class operator there.

For me, QRP DX-ing is not a question of competing, or the thrill of the chase . Nor is it a question of a crusade against high power, seeing as life is too short and we simply need the power to get on. It is just a return of the sense of magic which brought me to radio some 50 years ago.

Member Profile

Riley Williams, G7GOD/KB8PPG

Riley@Williams.Name

I was born in Melbourn, Cambridgeshire, the first-born son of an officer in the United States Army Air Force and his English bride. My early education was at whatever school was local to where my father was stationed. Following the break-up of my parents' marriage, I returned to England with my mother, brother and sister, and attended a residential school in northern Cheshire.

I moved to Edgbaston in August 1986, after running up a telephone bill of some £650 in a single month at my grandmother's, her usual monthly bill being around £35 at the time. While in Edgbaston, I basically said to myself, "there must be a cheaper way of talking to other computers". I then soon discovered Packet Radio and, through it, Amateur Radio in general.

With the help of John Badger, G4YZO, I sat the May RAE and received my results on 1 September, promptly applying for my licence. With my application, I enclosed a letter to the Radio Amateur Licensing Unit in which I asked, "Can I have GxFOX or, failing that, any callsign where the last three letters make a word?".

In reply, the RALU advised me, "We are unable to allocate G7FOX as we are currently allocating G7FSx callsigns. However, we have reserved for you...". I just didn't feel like turning it down. I had to wait until February the following year for my callsign to be issued, but eventually it arrived.

Literally days prior to receipt of the reply from the RALU, I was operating John's home station under his supervision and with his

callsign, and made contact with a Japanese amateur with the callsign JE5US. When the letter arrived, I wished I had been aware of the facts therein as I would have loved to have said, "Hello JE5US, this is GOD calling...", but that unfortunately didn't happen.

My employment background is in the computer industry, where I have spent 25 years dealing with just about every aspect thereof - writing and using software, designing and putting together hardware, networking computers together, designing network layouts.

Yes, you name it - I've probably done it. Unfortunately, a few years back I suffered burn-out, and have essentially retired from the computer industry as a result. Nowadays, I earn my living as a driver, currently working for a temping agency and driving whatever comes up. I am working towards obtaining my LGV and PCV licences, but have not yet done so.

As far as amateur radio is concerned, I have been an active member of various Raynet groups from even before I received my callsign, and enjoy taking part in both exercises and callouts. I have recently become active in the Summits on the Air programme and run a search engine to enable those interested in SOTA to identify summits near to their location, or any other location they may wish to specify (such as a holiday venue). I can often be heard active /M from my car, or /P from whichever SOTA summit I have climbed at the time, and occasionally from my home as well.

Big Bulls and No Balls – IOTA 2003 from the Summer Isles

Jim Martin, MMØBQI

JimMMØBQI@aol.com

I spent the week before the IOTA contest on the Summer Isles as part of our family holiday. Plenty of time to test the gear, set up antennas and prepare for the contest. Sadly this year the only available QTH for the contest was a wooden shed at the foot of a large hill, which is not a great radio location, but with lots of flat land leading to the sea there was plenty of space for the antenna farm.

During the week the MP and the 706 were working fine configured for SO2R, with a vertical connected to each one and with little interference between the stations. On Friday morning I dismantled all the gear in our holiday cottage and moved everything to the wooden shed before setting off for a last sail round the islands. A few hours in the evening would have everything set up and ready to go. But, what a difference a day makes!

After a tea of freshly picked mussels (20 minutes between sea and mouth) my little contesting world went pear-shaped. Right in front of the shed, on *my* antenna farm, was a huge area bounded by an electric fence containing two of the biggest bulls I have ever seen. Each time I moved to the fence, the bulls moved as well. There was no way in and fortunately no way out as the electric fence was buzzing away like mad.

A drastic re-think resulted in the verticals being set up within a few metres of each other and the 80m dipole draped over the shed roof. Not ideal, but surprisingly the rigs coped with the fence noise quite well and things seemed to be looking up.

Having the antennas so close together and close to the shack created severe interference and RFI problems, making SO2R operation impossible. It took all my ferrites and coax

baluns to keep things under control! However whenever I tried to send CW from the PC it locked up and had to be switched off (I have since discovered that keying from the parallel port on the laptop is very much more sensitive to RFI problems than the serial port.). So no CW from the PC - and it will all have to be hand-sent from the paddle. Worrying for those on the receiving end, but not too bad for me, or so I thought. However, unknown to me on the way to the shed my wonderful little Hi-Mound paddle lost its balls!

With no ball bearings round the central pivot and no control of the paddles it was useless. I tried Blu-tack and bits of wire with no joy, then when soldering pieces together and attempting to make a straight key a few drops of solder fell on the table. Eureka! They fell into perfect ball bearing sizes! The manufacturing of solder ball bearings then began in earnest. This was the best solution so far, and as long as I was very gentle with the paddles, the balls retained their shape and worked after a fashion. In the end a combination of the paddle and the up/down buttons on the fist mike resulted in 25 CW multipliers.

The contest itself was challenging from the point of view of conditions. The first four hours were fantastic on HF, with great runs on 20 and 15m, but propagation dropped very badly towards evening and never picked up again. LF was noisy (especially with the wet electric fence). 40m picked up in the morning, but an excellent run was brought to an abrupt end by a high power station camping right next to me and calling CQ. It was very strange how they could not hear me when I could hear them at 20 over S9! Even with the power difference (90W versus 400W?) they should have at least heard me. Anyway, who

did they think all these continental stations were exchanging contest information with - less than half a kilocycle away?

After the contest I thought about removing them from my log. They would have lost six multipliers and, seing as they were not a unique IOTA for me, all I would have lost was 90 points. They remained in the log, as I was not sure if their removal was within the spirit of the contest. As a contester who enters for the satisfaction of taking part, it saddens me when muscle is used instead of skill, but '*C'est la guerre*' - and contesting! The final contest score was 608 QSOs and 155 multipliers and a huge amount of fun and satisfaction.

I am completing this article during our October holiday on the Summer Isles. The WX has been superb, with cloudless skies and very warm days (16°C). The two bulls are still here and we are now the best of friends. The reason they rush towards the fence is they want to be fed and scratched behind their ears!

They are the most child-friendly wild beasts in the world! As for the electric fence: it is hardly ever switched on and was left on by mistake after the bulls were moved. I hide behind my parents advice of 'it's always better to be safe than sorry'! If only I had known...

Huge auroral displays have filled the sky for the last three nights. It is the first time I have seen an aurora and it is absolutely breathtaking.

During this visit I have finalised trophy sponsorship for the 'SO Island DX-pedition' section in the IOTA Contest. The 'Summer Isles Trophy', a set of unique Summer Isles stamps encapsulated in acrylic, will be jointly sponsored by Bill and Jean, who own Tanera Mor, and MMØBQI for the next four years. So maybe that's another wee incentive for you to get out and participate in the 2004 IOTA contest. See you then from Tanera Mor in the Summer Isles during 2004!

Jim Martin MMØBQI

DX-pedition to Brunei, OC-088

Jim, G3RTE, Phil, G3SWH, and Ray, HSØZDZ (aka G3NOM), who are all members of FOC and CDXC, will be mounting a multi-band, multi-mode DX-pedition to Negara Brunei Darussalam (Brunei) between the 8th and 15th March 2004, including a single operator entry in the RSGB's Commonwealth Contest.

Brunei is #82 in the 2003 Most Wanted survey by the 425 DX News. The January 2003 ARRL listing shows Brunei at #129. In addition, Brunei counts as OC-088 for IOTA.

Activity is planned for all bands from 160 to 10m and will include CW, SSB and digital modes. Propagation permitting, we plan to have three stations on the air for as many hours every day as is possible. Our main objective is to work as many European, North American and ROTW stations on as many bands as possible. We have set an expedition target of 12,000 QSOs, with an approximately equal split between CW, SSB and digital modes.

We are in negotiations with the Brunei authorities for special callsigns, which will be announced closer to the dates of the operation. QSL manager(s) will also be announced later.

IOTA News

Roger Balister, G3KMA

Annual Update

IOTA enthusiasts are reminded that the last date for mailing applications or updates to checkpoints for inclusion in the 2004 Honour Roll and other performance tables is 1 February 2004. If postmarked after that date, they will be processed in the normal way, but the scores will be held over to the following year's listing. Listing in the 2004 tables will be restricted to those members who have updated their scores since February 1999.

Important Developments

New Year 2004 is the occasion of IOTA's 40th Anniversary! And Great News to start the year off: the Society has agreed to the IOTA island group listings, complete with full titles, geographical coordinates and qualifying islands, being made available on Internet. To see them, go to the IOTA Manager's or the RSGB IOTA website. Posting on the Internet brings key programme information to a much wider audience. It has the added advantage of enabling the listings to be kept up to date as new group reference numbers and qualifying islands are added. The RSGB maintains the copyright to this data and states that no part of

it may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted, in any form or by any means electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording or otherwise, except for personal non-commercial home use, unless prior written permission has been obtained from the RSGB.

Following this policy change the IOTA Committee has amended the requirement in the rules that applicants must purchase their own copy of the paper IOTA Directory in order to enter the programme. The emphasis has now shifted to ensuring applicants use, as far as possible, current information in preparing their submissions. So, the new wording adopted is that you should use the island group listings now on line on Internet or, alternatively, in an IOTA Directory no earlier than IOTA Directory 2000 - this could be your own or a friend's. The Directory will continue to be published and copies may be obtained from RSGB Sales - details available at www.rsgb.org/shop or by mail from RSGB Sales, Lambda House, Cranborne Road, Potters Bar, Herts EN6 3JE, UK. Please, do not send Directory requests to the IOTA Manager!

Monthly Update of Data in IOTA Directory (11th Edition)

New IOTA reference numbers issued

OC-263	V73	Taongi Atoll (Marshall Islands)
OC-264	FO	Maria Island (Austral Islands)
OC-265/Pr	VK9	Coral Sea Islands Territory South (Australia)

Provisional IOTA reference number as at 20 December 2003

OC-265/Pr	VK9	Coral Sea Islands Territory South (Australia)
-----------	-----	---

IOTA references issued since publication of Directory (11th Edition)

AF-092	3V	Sousse / Monastir / Mahdia Region group (Tunisia)
AF-093	J5	Guinea-Bissau Coastal Region group (Guinea-Bissau)
AF-094	7X	Mediterranean Sea Coast West group (Algeria)
AS-162	3W	South China Sea Coast North group (Vietnam)
AS-163	RØQ	Laptev Sea Coast East group (Russian Federation)
AS-164	RØQ	East Siberian Sea Coast West group (Russian Federation)
AS-165	XZ	Arakan Region group (Myanmar)
AS-166	EP	Hormozgan Province group (Iran)
AS-167	XZ	Irrawaddy/Yangon/Pegu Region group (Myanmar)
AS-168	HL2	Kangwon-do Province group (Korea (South))
NA-222	KL	Southern Alaska Peninsula West group (Alaska)
NA-223	HR	Gracias a Dios Department group (Honduras)
NA-224	XE1	Veracruz State South group (Mexico)
NA-225	VYØ	Nunavut (Prince of Wales and Somerset Islands) group (Canada)
OC-249	YB8	Aru Islands (Indonesia)
OC-250	YB3	Masalembu Islands (Indonesia)
OC-251	VK3	Victoria State West group (Australia)
OC-252	YB7	Kalimantan's Coastal Islands West (Indonesia)
OC-253	V63	Hall Islands (Federated States of Micronesia)
OC-254	V63	Mortlock Islands (Federated States of Micronesia)
OC-255	VK4	Queensland State (Gulf of Carpentaria) North group (Australia)
OC-256	P2	Kilinailau (Tulun) Islands (Papua New Guinea)
OC-257	P2	Nuguria Islands (Papua New Guinea)
OC-258	P2	Papua New Guinea's Coastal Islands North (Papua New Guinea)
OC-259	V63	Nukuoro Atoll (Federated States of Micronesia)
OC-260	V63	Oroluk Atoll (Federated States of Micronesia)
OC-261	VK5	South Australia State West Centre group (Australia)
OC-262	YB4-5	Sumatra's Coastal Islands South (Indonesia)
OC-263	V73	Taongi Atoll (Marshall Islands)
OC-264	FO	Maria Island (Austral Islands)
OC-265/Pr	VK9	Coral Sea Islands Territory South (Australia)
SA-092	PZ	Suriname group (Suriname)
SA-093	HK4	Choco Division North/Antioquia Division group (Colombia)

Operations which have provided acceptable validation material

AF-013	5R8HA	Madagascar Island (September 2003)
AF-014	CT3/CT1EAT	Porto Santo Island, Madeira Archipelago (July 2003)
AF-014	CT9T	Porto Santo Island, Madeira Archipelago (July 2003)
AF-053	J2ØRM/P	Moucha Island (September 2003)
AF-090	5R8HA/P	Sainte-Marie Island (September 2003)

AS-110	BQ9P	Pratas Island (October 2003)
AS-168	DSØDX/2	Cho Island (October 2003)
EU-035	R1PQ	Novaya Zemlya Island (August 2003)
EU-067	SV8/F5TGR	Naxos, Paros & Santorini Islands (September 2003)
EU-070	TM3OR	Or Island (June 2003)
NA-162	XF1K	Todos Santos Sur Island (September 2003)
OC-078	V63TXF/P	Falalop Island, Ulithi Atoll (August 2003)
OC-110	YJØAMY	Tegua Island, Torres Islands (October 2003)
OC-110	YJØATU	Tegua Island, Torres Islands (October 2003)
OC-263	V73T	Taongi Atoll (August 2003)
OC-264	FO/I1SNW	Maria Island, Austral Islands (October 2003)
OC-264	FO/IT9EJW	Maria Island, Austral Islands (October 2003)
OC-264	FO/IT9YRE	Maria Island, Austral Islands (October 2003)
SA-070	3G5Q	Quiriquina Island (February 2003)

Note: This list includes operations where validation material was volunteered, ie not specifically required for credit to be given. In all cases, cards now submitted will be accepted by Checkpoints if they meet normal standards. This means that the island name should be printed on the card.

Operations from which validation material is awaited as at 20 December 2003

NA-162	XE2/W7KFI	???????????? (April 2003)
OC-079	FK/AC4LN	Belep Islands (September 2003)
OC-132	V63MB	???????????? (May 2003)
OC-158	H44VV	???????????? (August 2003)
OC-258	P29VVB	???????????? (August 2003)
OC-265/Pr	VK4GL/P	Cato Reef, Coral Sea Islands Territory (Dec 2003)
OC-265/Pr	VK4WWI/P	Cato Reef, Coral Sea Islands Territory (Dec 2003)
SA-089	YV5ANF/1	Sal Key (April 2003)

Note: Checkpoints are not authorised to credit QSL cards for an operation where validation is required.

IOTA 2004 Activity Programme

Some of the regularly activated island groups counting for premium points during January to April 2004

January 2004

			OC-010	V63	Pohnpei Islands
			OC-011	V63	Chuuk Islands
OC-004	VK9	Lord Howe Island	OC-016	3D2	Viti Levu/Vanua Levu
OC-005	VK9	Norfolk Island	OC-028	V73	Ralik Chain

OC-031	C2	Nauru
OC-032	FK	New Caledonia Island
OC-035	YJ	New Hebrides
OC-036	ZL	North Island, New Zealand
OC-047	H4	Solomon Islands
OC-049	A3	Tongatapu Group
OC-064	A3	Vava'u Group
OC-134	ZL	South Island, New Zealand

February 2004

AS-007	JA1+	Honshu Island
AS-017	JA6	Okinawa Islands
AS-018	RØF	Sakhalin Island
AS-020	BV	Taiwan
AS-031	JD	Ogasawara Islands
AS-076	JA5	Shikoku Island
AS-077	JA6	Kyushu Island
AS-078	JA8	Hokkaido Island

OC-001	VK	Australia
OC-006	VK7	Tasmania
OC-012	V63	Yap Islands
OC-026	KH2	Guam Island
OC-034	YB9, P2	New Guinea
OC-042	DU1-4	Luzon Island
OC-086	KHØ	Northern Marianas
OC-130	DU8-9	Mindanao Island
OC-146	YB8	Celebes Island

March 2004

AS-006	VR2	Hong Kong Islands
AS-015	9M2	Pinang State group
AS-019	9V	Singapore
AS-042	RØB	Severnaya Zemlya
AS-053	HS	Malay Peninsula W
AS-075	XX	Macau Islands
AS-094	BY7	Hainan Island

OC-002	VK9X	Christmas Island
OC-003	VK9C	Cocos (Keeling) Is
OC-021	YBØ-3	Java Island
OC-022	YB9	Bali Island

OC-088	YB7/9M/	Indonesia Kalimantan/V8 East Malaysia/Brunei
OC-143	YB4-6	Sumatra Island

April 2004

AF-006	VQ9	Diego Garcia Island
AF-017	3B9	Rodrigues Island
AS-003	4S	Sri Lanka
AS-005	RØB	Kara Sea Coast W
AS-013	8Q	Maldives
AS-083	R9K	Kara Sea Coast E

IOTA 1000 Islands Trophy

The IOTA 1000 Islands Trophy is now available to top Honour Roll performers who reach the dizzy heights of 1000 IOTA groups confirmed. The trophy takes the form of an attractively produced diamond glass feature resting on a highly polished wooden base. This base is fitted with a metal plate, suitably engraved on the front with the holder's details, with space for 8 metal mini-plates, 2 on the front, 2 on the sides, and 4 on the back, for 25-island group increments. The price is £55 plus postage.

IOTA Coordinator change

In early November Teresa Baker took over from Sylvia Manco as the IOTA Co-ordinator at HQ. Her duties are the day-to-day management of the Central IOTA Database, input of application data submitted by Checkpoints, despatch of certificates, Plaques of Excellence and 1000 Islands Trophies, and the handling of routine queries. We welcome Teresa and at the same time thank Sylvia for her support and commitment to the IOTA Programme during her time in post.

Roger Balister, G3KMA,
RSGB IOTA Manager

E-mail: IOTA.HQ@rsgb.org.uk
WWW: <http://www.g3kma.dsl.pipex.co>

The RTTY Column

Phil Cooper, GUØSUP *pcooper@guemsey.net*

Yet another year has come to a close! Sometimes it seems as though my life is spent preparing for the next contest, or sorting out the log from the last one. I had even planned to do some CW in CQ WW CW and the ARRL 10m, but a dose of the flu put paid to that, but I wanted to save a few Brownie points to allow me to play in the OK RTTY contest. Occasionally you have to keep the XYL happy, especially at this time of year.

What has the year meant for you? Plenty of new DX entities? I've had my share this year, with some nice ones being worked, and some very handsome cards in the post. I've missed a few too, but that's DX-ing, and it wouldn't do to be able to work everything that was available!

After getting WAZ a few years back, I am now very close to being able to claim WAZ on 20 and 15, which I am pleased with. This is a very nice award, and to my mind, is harder than DXCC. I doubt I will ever get 5BWAZ, but it would be nice to achieve it on 10, 15 and 20m. I am also trying hard to get towards DXCC on 40m, but that is quite a challenge with my antenna set-up.

What are your impressions of conditions over the past year? It seem to me that the first nine months of the year were very poor, but that they picked up for CQ WW RTTY at the end of September, and haven't changed much since then.

Usually, one would expect the winter months to be reasonable, but the first three months of 2003 were not good for me. I judge this on the fact that instead of making hundreds of QSOs on 10m, I was only making between 5 and 20 contacts in each contest. Having said that, I

seem to have been able to work KH6, ZL and VK quite reliably on 20 and 15m. I have missed the nice early morning runs of JAs on 15 and 10m, though.

In many of the contests my scores have been lower than the previous year, often despite the fact that I have made more QSOs this year.

This may be partly due to the fact that I have called CQ a little more often than usual. However, I do find that when I call CQ, I get swamped by the usual European stations, and then miss out on the DX that may be calling me.

I keep a spreadsheet of my contest entries, showing the claimed score and number of contacts made. This allows me to see what sort of progress I have made, but maybe I ought to consider showing the number of contacts on each band for future use.

After a lot of deliberating, I managed to put up an inverted-L for 80m. It isn't very high, but my main aim was to be able to work a few extra mults on the lower bands, particularly for those contests that give extra points for working mults on 40 and 80.

I did play around with radials, but found that two worked as well as anything, and it was easier to lay out just the two. My first real use of the new antenna was in WAEDC, and I was quite impressed with being able to work 30 or so mults on the first day. Sadly, I missed Don, G3XTT, but I did find him on 20 and 15 the following day!

On the second evening, can you imagine my surprise when I saw VK6HD under a pile-up? I sat and watched him working for a while,

and saw that there were people just calling over each other, so I just waited until there was a gap, and then sent just my call twice. Oh yes! He came straight back to me, and – even more of a surprise – we didn't even need to repeat the serial number! That was a good moment for me, and all the more enjoyable with a bit of wire that goes up about 20', but then slopes down to about 12'. Even better was when the card came through the letter box!

Did you have a go at playing with QTCs in WAEDC? In the BARTG magazine, Datacom, we put in some tutorials on how to handle QTCs with the various contest programs available, and I think it helped a few, but there were still a lot of folk sending SRI NO QTC. I also gave a few hints on how to handle them in the last edition of this magazine. Did that help you? There seemed to be a lot of people who hadn't read the rules either, as I was asked to exchange QTC traffic with several European stations, and a few asked what QTC meant!

Since my last column, I have bought myself a second-hand Icom IC-756 PRO, which means the older IC-756 will now become my back-up radio. Swapping them over was quite simple, as all the connections are the same. A few of the buttons are different, but it is basically the same layout, and it all seemed very familiar.

The main difference is that it is totally DSP, and needs no additional filters. To me, that makes it sound a little tinny, but I can live with that. Being able to set three different filter shapes is very useful, and you get three for each mode, which is even better. For RTTY, I use 2.4kHz, 500Hz and 250Hz, as these seem to give me the best variety. It is possible to vary these settings with the twin-PBT knobs as well, which gives even greater range.

I've found that a weak signal can be peaked up by using a very narrow filter setting, such

as 150Hz, and what was just a faint warble can be made to give decent print.

It is nice to see the number of non-USA stations participating in LoTW now, and I am quite pleased to see that I have confirmations for some countries that have eluded me via the more traditional routes.

Upcoming contests

January 24-25 is the date for our own BARTG Sprint contest. See www.bartg.demon.co.uk and use the navigation bar.

February 7-8 is the XE RTTY contest. See here www.fmre.org.mx/index2.html (the page has not yet been updated for 2004!). Click on 'Concursos' on the left hand side to see the rules.

The CQ/RJ WPX RTTY Contest takes place over the weekend of 14-15 February, so please have a go in this contest. That M3, G1, G6, G7 and G8 call will be in great demand! See www.cq-amateur-radio.com/awards.html and click on the 'Contests' link for the rules. At the time of writing this, the website shows February 7-8 as the dates, but this is wrong, as are the dates shown in the January CQ magazine. The correct dates for this contest are indeed the 14-15 February.

Upcoming DX

In the New Year look out for 4V2ØØYH (Haiti) by DL7CM, DM2AYO, DK1BT and DL7UFN using RTTY and PSK plus other modes. They will be active from January 28 until February 15. QSL is via DL7CM.

ZK3, Tokelau, will be activated by I2YSB, I2MOV, IK1AOD and IK2DIA between 15-25 February. Although they don't mention RTTY, I2YSB usually includes the data modes. QSL via operator instructions.

VK9L, Lord Howe Island, will be activated by DL7AFS and DJ7ZG between 16-27 February. QSL via DL7AFS.

18 March! I am sure they will be active on all bands and modes, so this will give many of a chance of a new one on RTTY or PSK.

T32, East Kiribati, will be activated by KH6GMP (T32I) and KH6DFW (T32BI) between 1-8 March. QSL via home call.

Seasons greetings to one and all, and I hope to find a few of you on 80m (or the other bands) in 2004.

73 de Phil GUØSUP

There are even rumours that a very nice group of people will activate Rodrigues Island from

CDXC Goods

The following CDXC goods are available from the Secretary:

Paperweight A square, marble-effect paperweight, fitted on the front face with an enamel CDXC logo. As this item is heavy it is not available by mail order, but can be purchased at various functions, eg the RSGB HF Convention, the CDXC AGM etc.

Key fob An imitation, black leather fob fitted with an enamel CDXC logo.

Rubber stamp A rubber hand-stamp with the CDXC logo. Use for all your amateur radio correspondence.

Replacement membership badge

These can be provided on request in the event of loss - or change of callsign. The engraving of badges is normally undertaken in batches, so delivery may extend to a number of weeks.

Prices

Paperweight	£2.50	not available by mail order
Key Fob	£1.50	including postage/packing to UK
Rubber Stamp	£6.00	ditto
Replacement Badge	£2.50	ditto

Payment

Cheques and Postal Orders should be made payable to CDXC and drawn on a UK bank. No foreign cheques please. Send your payment to:

Shaun Jarvis, MØBJL, 11 Charnwood Way, Langley, Southampton, Hants SO45 1ZL, UK.

Contesting

Tim Kirby, G4VXE tim@g4vxe.com

Many thanks to Don, G3XTT, for coming up with a fascinating article regarding the Voodudes trip to Niger and the 5U5Z operation at such short notice. I've been promised some more articles regarding CQ WW operation, which I hope to be able to include in the next Digest.

Software selection for contests

The article by Eric Tucker, G3TXZ, in the last Digest created lots of comment, particularly from NA software users saying that they had never had similar problems! So often it seems to be the case that some users have problems with software that other people simply haven't experienced. As a keen Writelog user, I hardly notice any errors with the software, yet I'm often intrigued to notice that other people I know, who are competent and experienced computer users, have problems I never see!

Sometimes I think that software can be like a dog that smells your fear! Suffice to say, don't necessarily be put off from using NA, or any other software, by what you read of other people's experiences. Try it out yourself and see how the software fits the way that you operate and how you like to log contacts. It's best, of course, to try that out quietly before the contest starts and not in the heat of battle!

You will almost certainly find that some software suits you well and other that does not. Some software, such as Writelog and TR, in particular, requires a considerable investment in working out how to make the software do what you want. Other software such as SD is very simple to get on with and doesn't require quite so much poring over manuals and help files, but lacks some of the very advanced features, which the majority of

users will never use. So think carefully about what you are trying to do and pick a software package to match.

The Doodles do Niger by Don Field, G3XTT

CDXC members will have read (May 2003 Digest. p.34) about the recce trip by G3SXW and G4BWP to Niger, in preparation for this year's Voodoo Contest Group effort in CQ WW CW. The group has been contesting from West Africa for many years now, with TY, 5V, 9G and XT to its credit, and members consider that operating from new locations, rather than simply revisiting the old ones, is half the fun. And 5U is, by all accounts, a rare DX location in its own right, contest or no contest.

Following the recce, when provisional hotel reservations had been made, and the licensing process put in hand, the main task was to put together the operating team. Although the Voodoo Contest Group is very much an *ad hoc* group of friends, drawn primarily from the Central Arizona DX Association and various G contesters, actual participants vary from year to year as time, finances and other circumstances allow. In the end, the 2003 team comprised Fred, G4BWP, Lee, GØMTN, Andy, G4PIQ, Mike, KC7V, Vince, K5VT, Lee, KY7M, and myself, G3XTT. Yes, this was the first year for a very long time that Roger, G3SXW, didn't come, although he remained very much a part of the organising team, bringing his many years' experience of sorting logistics in West Africa to bear on the various issues we faced.

The next matter to be faced was that of obtaining visas. The US members had few

problems (although more about K5VT later!) as both Burkina Faso and Niger have representation in the USA. However, neither is currently represented in the UK. We were told that a new, five-nation tourist visa was being introduced for the five countries of French West Africa (TU, 5V, TY, XT and 5U) and this would have been ideal. However, the TU embassy in London (the only one of those countries with a UK embassy) had received no briefing on how to issue these new visas.

In the end, G4PIQ was able to take advantage of a trip to Paris to get visas issued there. GØMTN and G4BWP had to pay an arm and a leg to do so remotely through a commercial visa service. Fortunately, my own plans were to travel out via Accra in Ghana, where I expected to be able to get visas on the spot (which turned out to be the case). Final arrangements were made at an informal get-together of GØMTN, G3XTT, G4BWP and G3SXW at the HF Convention at Didsbury, and it looked as though we were all set.

Africa

For the past two years the Voodoo equipment stockpile has been stored in Ouagadougou, courtesy of Hugo, XT2HB. The plan was to take it overland to 5U and, once there, decide whether to leave it for a second 5U operation in 2004, or return it to XT. Either way, it meant that most of the team needed to meet up in XT. In my case, that meant taking the overnight bus from Accra to Ouagadougou (or flying, but local flights in West Africa are expensive and not always reliable). The bus runs three times a week, and costs about £16 for the 970 km trip. It's long and tedious, but uses a modern Volvo air-conditioned coach, so is reasonably civilised.

So, the Sunday before CQ WW saw me arrive in XT, to meet up with G4BWP, KY7M and GØMTN, who had flown in the day before. Later on we went to the airport to meet KC7V, but there was bad news about K5VT. Vince

had received his passport back from the XT embassy with a single-entry visa, rather than the multiple-entry one he had requested. He had promptly returned it, for the error to be made good, but it was still somewhere in the postal service. It wasn't clear if and when Vince would be able to join us. If not, we would be just six operators (G4PIQ would be flying directly to Niamey and meeting us there), which is pretty tight for a multi-multi, although it wouldn't be the first time the Voodoos had managed with this number (or less!). The other hiccup was that there was no confirmation of the availability of the bus which we had hired to take us to 5U. However, Hugo, XT2HB, was on the case, and assured us there would be no problem (which there wasn't – typically of West Africa, things tend to come together at the last possible minute).

Journey to 5U

Monday morning, and time to load up the bus. This involved going to Hugo's sister's house, where the radios, linears etc. were stored, then to another location where the masts and antennas were in safe keeping. It was 1230 before we finally hit the road out of Ouagadougou. It is about 380 km to the border, along a good road, although with frequent stops for checkpoints, péages (toll booths, copied from the French system) and, finally, the various border controls.

It was after 1900 (2000 Niger time) before we headed into no-man's-land; it then took almost 90 minutes from leaving XT passport control to arriving at 5U passport control! The road on the Niger side of the border is compacted mud, full of potholes, for most of the 120 km from the border to Niamey. A new road is being built with EC funds, but only runs the first 20 km or so from Niamey at this stage. Our late arrival into 5U caused some mutterings at some of the checkpoints along the way; in at least one case the relevant official had to be dragged from his bed! But

Fred, G4BWP, who throughout the trip was our spokesman, translator and general facilitator, said all the right things and we were eventually on our way.

Even so, it was after midnight when we finally crossed the Niger River and looked up to see the lights of the Grand Hotel no more than a mile away. However, fate still had one final trick to play. We were stopped by police at the roundabout at the end of the bridge and, while they were checking our papers and passports, the bus engine died on us! Only some serious manual pumping of the last few dregs of diesel enabled us to struggle fitfully to the hotel and dash into reception asking, not for our rooms in the first instance, but for cold beers all round! We learned that G4PIQ had arrived safely, so went to hammer on his door to put to rest any fears he may have had about our non-arrival. Instead it turned out he had been fast asleep without a care in the world!

Let the Erections Commence

Roger and Fred had done their homework well. The Grand Hotel in daylight looked an excellent contest location, with expansive flat roofs suitable for our antennas and the ground falling away westwards towards the Niger River. The town was bustling, with the occasional train of camels crossing the bridge, reminding us that we really were in one of the world's more exotic locations. The hotel were extremely co-operative in allowing us free rein for our antennas, and once the bus was unloaded and on its way back to XT we set to in the hot sun, assembling towers and antennas.

By day's end we had the four high bands ready to go: 4-element Force 12 on 10m, on 20ft of tower; 3-element Force 12 on 15m, on 20ft of tower; 3-element Force 12 on 20m, on 30ft of tower; and Cushcraft 40-2CD on 40m, on 20ft of tower. All these towers were on the flat roofs of a series of 'chalets', two of which were to serve as our operating shacks.

That evening we had an invite to the home of Jim Bullington, 5U7JB. Older DX-ers will recall Jim's days as US ambassador in various African countries, from which he operated as N4HX/TT8, TYA11 and 9U5JB. Nowadays Jim is Director of the Peace Corps in Niger, co-ordinating the activities of some hundreds of young volunteers who live and work in remote villages.

Jim and his charming XYL made us extremely welcome, entertaining us to an excellent supper. What most impressed us, though, was Jim's antenna installation, all made up of wires, with fixed beams and loops for all bands and all main directions. A real reminder of the good old days of ham radio!

On the Wednesday we pressed on with the antenna installations, adding the Force 12 loaded vertical dipole for 80m, the Force 12 linear-loaded vertical for 160m, and a 400ft Beverage plus a K9AY loop for low-band reception. The K9AY loop was one which Tony, GØOPB, had built for us to trial pre-3B9C. I had had good results using it briefly from home, and was looking forward to seeing how it performed in the tropics.

Meanwhile the indoor team (mainly G4PIQ and GØMTN) were busy putting the stations together: IC-756 on 160m, TS-930S on 10, 40 and 80m, TS-850 on 20m and Elecraft K2 on 15m. Linears are all Alpha 76 and 78. Everything that had been left in XT still seemed to be working, although there was a valve to be replaced in one of the linears.

As always, the biggest technical challenge was the CT network, which required some innovative engineering, and plenty of decoupling to keep out unwanted RF. Sadly, despite trying various possibilities, we were never able to get a local Internet capability, so we would have to be without packet spotting for the duration. Maybe for 2004 an RF link back to the UK or elsewhere would be the solution (such a link, alternating between 12

and 17m, back to K5TR, had worked well the previous year when I had been at HC8N).

Thursday and Friday were spent adding the finishing touches – a delta loop for 80m, Force 12 C-3 tribander for multiplier spotting, etc. We had also learned that Vince now had his passport back and would fly direct to Niamey on Friday, so would be there in time for the start of the contest. Fred was a little taken aback on the Friday to be asked, while checking the Beverage feed point, if all these antennas were to do with the Prime Minister's visit! Sure enough, police started to converge on the hotel, the waiters appeared in their finest outfits and the red carpet was rolled out.

Then the limousines started to arrive, with their police outriders. They brought the PM and his ministers and advisers, plus delegates from most of the French West African countries, as well as the US ambassador and representatives of the EC and other major bodies. It was bizarre to see the US ambassador's official car parked right next to cars from Iraq and Iran! We kept our heads down, and were not entirely sure what the event was, but at least we weren't asked to take our antennas down or otherwise inconvenienced.

The Contest

Contesting from West Africa is a case of running hell for leather on the high bands, which are open pretty much round the clock (yet again, we saw several hours of long-path propagation to JA on 10m through the night), and a struggle to work reasonable totals on the LF bands during the hours of darkness. This latter is due both to the high noise levels in the tropics, and also to the difficulty of being heard, especially in Europe and North America, where the low bands are wall-to-wall with loud local stations. Actually, noise levels weren't too bad from 5U, and we were able to hear quite well on the Beverage (which worked best on 80m) and the K9AY loop

(which worked best on 160m, probably because the Beverage was too short for that band).

In terms of being heard on the low bands, it is usually a case of CQ-ing into the void until someone works us and spots us and at that stage, all being well, a pile-up will start and we can run, at least for a while. So from dusk to dawn we need to have six stations manned, while during the day this drops to three and any operators not sleeping are best utilised in manning a spotting station (we had things set up so that both the 160 and 80m stations could be used for this purpose during the daylight hours).

We ended the contest with a new Voodoo record in QSO numbers, but our multiplier total was lower than in recent years, probably due mainly to the lack of packet spotting, although it was noticeable that there were a number of countries (eg. HC, 8R, PZ, T7, C3 and GD) which simply didn't seem to be around or were activated only by single-band efforts.

We encountered very few problems as the contest went on, despite much of the equipment only getting used once a year, and being stored in hot and dusty conditions in West Africa. The major snag was a couple of power cuts of around 20 minutes each, which lost us a few hundred QSOs and probably some multipliers.

Towards the end of the contest I was operating on 10m, when the grid current on the linear shot up. Andy, G4PIQ, came to fault-find, and decided the antenna had gone open circuit. The obvious culprit was a barrel connector, which he decided to replace. However, when he grabbed it he leapt about three feet in the air. That was obviously where the watts from the linear had been ending up, and it had become rather hot!

The table shows our claimed scores. Once again, HC8N was a major competitor, and we were conscious of PT5A, but there were relatively few other big multi-multi entries likely to challenge our score (the ZA1A effort was huge – their signals were way above other Europeans on the LF bands from 5U – and are likely to have set a new European multi-multi record, but with EU QSOs at one point each there is no way they could compete at the global level). Maybe the drop in big multi-multi entries in recent years is because of the logistical difficulties of putting a big multi-multi on the air, or because the new multi-two category is drawing some of those who might otherwise have gone multi-multi.

Après Contest

A quick wrap-up and off to bed. Then an early start on the Monday to dismantle everything and clear the shacks. The good news was that we wouldn't need to take the equipment back to Burkina Faso. Jim Bullington had kindly agreed to make some storage space available at the Peace Corps headquarters in Niamey, and we had organised a truck to move everything. Naturally, we were happy to make a modest donation to be used towards any Peace Corps projects as appropriate.

By the evening it was time to relax and enjoy a team meal at a local, and very good, Chinese restaurant we had discovered the previous week. Andy then went off to catch his flight back to London via Paris. Vince would be travelling in the bus with us, back to Ouagadougou. Which, on the Tuesday, is what we did. The journey took a little less time than on the way out, partly because we made it in daylight, and partly because the bus wasn't burdened with all the gear.

There were still the frequent stops, of course, for checking of papers and other pretexts. Most took only a few moments when the requisite exchange of 1000 CFA (about £1) had taken place. Back in XT, some of the

guys, still not having had enough of the pile-ups, commandeered top-floor rooms in the hotel to air their XT calls for a few days, making around 1,000 QSOs before heading off back to the UK and the USA.

Observations

Why do the Voodoo Contest Group go to so much effort each year for CQ WW? It's hard enough running a multi-multi at the best of times. It's even harder when you have to build up the station Field Day fashion each time, as those of us who have been involved with M6T over the years are well aware. But to then compound that by doing so 3,000 miles from home, taking the equipment across obscure international frontiers and then having to build everything up in 40 degree plus temperatures may seem total madness.

There are several answers, of course. Propagation is better from those southern latitudes, so the pile-ups are bigger and better than from Europe (and the scoring system favours stations located outside North America, Europe and Asia, but with good propagation to all three).

But it's more than that. The sheer challenge of pulling it off is half the fun. The teamwork and friendship. The experience of visiting new places and enjoying the ambience of West Africa, which is so unlike day-to-day life in Europe or the USA.

For my own part, it was interesting to contrast my 2002 HC8N experience - where I flew in, operated a working station, and flew out again - with the 5U5Z experience which encompassed so much more than simply operating the contest. In many ways the 5U5Z approach is more satisfying, but it's hard work, so it's undeniably very nice occasionally to be involved in a contest where you can just turn up and operate!

It's certainly clear that we made a lot of people happy with 5U5Z. The QSLs started arriving at G3SXW's just a couple of days after the contest was over, with people pleased to have a new band-country, new prefix or whatever.

Several members of the team had also taken the opportunity to get 5U callsigns of their own: G4BWP/5U7WP, KC7V/5U7MF, KY7M/5U7LF and K5VT/5U7VT. These calls were used outside the contest to add a few thousand more contacts to our totals so that, all in all, we probably made 20K+ QSOs during our 5U sojourn. A good number, although it won't have pushed 5U very far down the Wanted Lists, and the Voodoos can be sure of some fierce pile-ups once again in 2004.

Niger

A few words about Niger, which is relatively unknown to the world at large. The UN rates it, by GDP per head, as the second poorest country in the world (Sierra Leone is bottom). Niger enjoyed brief prosperity in the 70s as the third largest uranium producer in the world, but the bottom dropped out of the market after Chernobyl and Three Mile Island. The population is around 10 million and growing fast. There are almost 1 million cases of malaria each year. The Niger River supports crocodiles and hippo, and giraffes roam the open spaces. Politically, the country is currently stable, and relies heavily on international aid to keep the administration functioning.

9G Licensing

As a PS, and not directly related to the above, while in Accra I obtained a set of licence application forms from the NCA (National Communications Authority) and am happy to photocopy them for any CDXC member who may be seriously interested in pursuing a 9G licence.

CQ WW DX Contest 2003

Call	5U5Z
Country	Niger
Category	Multi-multi
Zone	35
Power	High power
Band	All-band
Mode	CW

Summary

Band	QSOs	Zones	Countries
160	178	14	56
80	701	25	81
40	2640	34	112
20	4624	37	128
15	4778	39	134
10	3773	33	115
Total	16694	182	626

Total score = **40,200,424**

CHILTERN DX CLUB
The UK DX Foundation

Not the GB2RS News *by RFX*

Amid growing concern that the number of special prefixes to be heard on the air could soon outnumber the boring old normal ones, all IARU member societies have been invited to attend a special conference on the matter to be held in Cyprus later this year. On the air from the Larnaca conference venue itself will be H2X and P3Z.

North Korea, P5, is the latest country to abolish the Morse code requirement for access to the HF bands.

Special event station news

TM5ØLOO will be on the air next weekend to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the first fully flushing public convenience to be erected in Paris. This station will be using a paper log.

HF DX News

Haiti. Listen out this month for 5H3HH signing HH5/5H3HH/P, CW only. Station identification on the hour, with a bit of luck. QSL via G3SWH.

A major Russian DX-pedition, 3B9U, will be active from Rodrigues Island, AF-017, between the 16th of March and 14th of April, with up to 20 high-power HF stations on the air simultaneously. QSL via UA3SWH.

French Polynesia. Next month G3RFX will be active as FO/G3RFX from the sun-drenched paradise island of Bora Bora, OC-067, and listening occasionally for Europe. QSL via G35WH.

IOTA News

During the month of February members of the West of England Transmitting Society

(WETS) will be operating pedestrian mobile from a traffic island in the A38, in the centre of Bristol. However, contacts will only count for IOTA credit if it's been raining heavily and this traffic island is surrounded by at least 2 inches of water.

Contest News

The Worked All Rather Small Italian Villages Contest, organised by the Parma Ham Radio Club, takes place next weekend on 160 through to 10m, on both CW and SSB. The report format is the usual 59(9) plus the name of your favourite Italian salami or meat product. Vegetarians quote their favourite Italian pasta.

The Solar Forecast

This week the more active side of the sun is expected to be looking our way. Adequate protection can only be guaranteed if you use a sun cream, Factor 2 or more.

Solution to Digest Prize Crossword 1

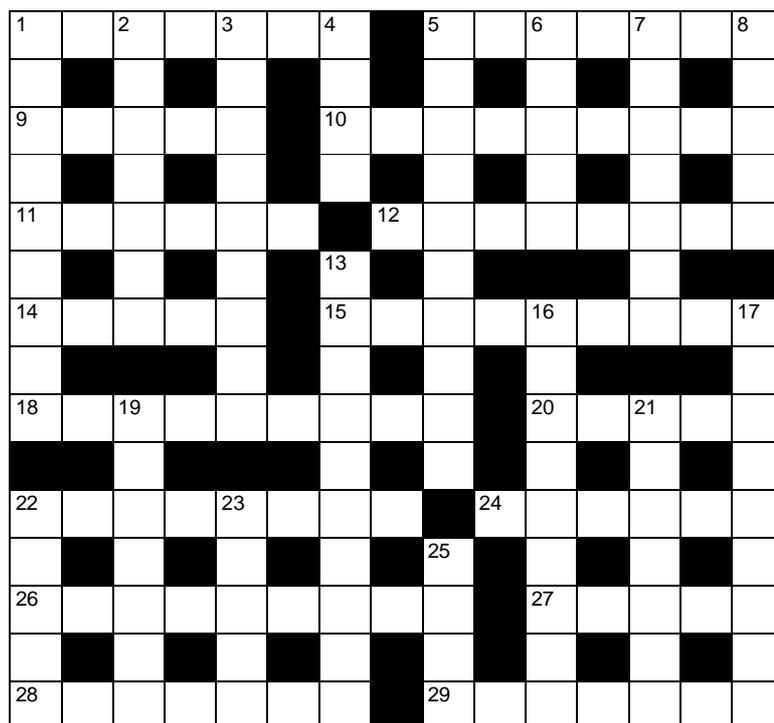
D	I	P	O	L	E		B	A	R	B	A	D	O	S	
A		I		Y			P		A		O		P		
S	T	R	I	N	G	S		U	P	S	U	R	G	E	
H		A		X		E		L		H		M		C	
I	O	T	A		S	T	R	I	P		Y	A	G	I	
N		E		K		T		A		S		N		A	
G	A	S	M	E	T	E	R				P	E	T	A	L
				N		R		P		L					
D	O	T	T	Y			R	A	D	I	A	T	O	R	
E		R		A		G		N		T		U		O	
N	E	A		R		O	R	G	A	N		T	A	L	C
M		G		M		E		M		P		M		K	
A	V	E	R	A	G	E		A	R	I	Z	O	N	A	
R		D		Y		C				S		T		L	
K	E	Y	M	O	N	E	Y			M	A	N	U	A	L

Digest Prize Crossword 2 by RFX

A very heartening response to this one last time round (I was quite surprised...), with both postal and e-mail entries from as far afield as VE and VK. So it looks as if the Digest Prize Crossword is here to stay!

You'll find the solution to Crossword 1 on the previous page, seeing as I couldn't quite fit it in here. And there'll be another £10 note up for grabs for the first correct solution 'out of the hat' to this month's puzzle. Entries please by 20 February.

Winner of Prize Crossword 1, November 2003: Mike Whitaker, G3IGW, Lightcliffe, Halifax.



ACROSS

- 1 Oppose the Commonwealth, say (7)
- 5 Donation despatched in advance? (7)
- 9 Caribbean island located between Belize and Namibia? (5)
- 10 Like most beams, rubbish when sited next to a mountain in ZS (9)
- 11 Scab taking part in most strikes - charming! (6)
- 12 Drink giving lengthy erection (8)
- 14 Something valuable, when congealed (5)
- 15 Find nightclub extremely vile and raunchy (9)
- 18 French money Ian changed in part of SA (9)
- 20 Commotion about the last of three safety devices (5)
- 22 Income generated when non-amateur gives up, we hear (8)
- 24 Coppers have a swinging time in Chile! (6)
- 26 Faints, like all successful cadets (6,3)
- 27 Felt unwell when celebrity chef returns (5)
- 28 The amateur allocation for leading musicians? (3, 4)
- 29 GW island, dull indeed in retrospect (7)

DOWN

- 1 Unusual car with no name in EI area (9)
- 2 Squeaky-clean beginners, by the looks of it (9)
- 3 Spanish lad welcomes diplomacy in this part of London (4,5)
- 4 Expression associated with Hilary, say (4)
- 5 Harry's favourite watering hole on the Hogwarts line? (7,3)
- 6 One from Chiang Mai, we hear? No, Italy (5)
- 7 English doctor on heat gives you a hug (7)
- 8 Topic gleaned from short article on moon-bounce (5)
- 13 Re-connect odd wire, Don? That's novel! (5,5)
- 16 QRT, having got fed up with the tune? (3,3,3)
- 17 Dry eyes at variance in the recent past (9)
- 19 Polish operator in Derbyshire town (7)
- 21 Small fireplaces for people on their own (7)
- 22 Bird seed with that indefinable quality (5)
- 23 Medical procedure down under (5)
- 25 Matching device found in most U-boats (4)

DX and Events Calendar

Compiled by G3XTT

(thanks to the 425 DX News for most of this)

till Jan 2004	8J1RF: Dome Fuji Base (AN-016) (WABA JA-04)
till April	IR7LH: Italian lighthouses by IK7JWX
till March	JR1EEU: Aoga Shima (AS-043)
till 30 May	JW5RIA (Svalbard) by LA5RIA
till 25/01	KC4/WA1O: Antarctica
till 2004	R1ANZ: 'Mirny' Base (WABA UA-07)
15/12-15/01	ZW5SF: São Francisco do Sul (SA-027)
01/01-31/12	IOTA 2004
01/01-18/01	T2 (Tuvalu) by HA9SD & HA9RE
03/01-23/01	3B8 (Mauritius) by G4FKH
11/01-15/01	ZL1CT/4: Stewart Island (OC-203) by GM3WOJ
16/01-30/01	C56 (Gambia) by GØVUH
17/01-31/01	G4RCG/HI9 and KI7VR/HI9 (Dominican Republic)
20/01-04/02	A35RE (Tonga) by HA9SD & HA9RE
28/01-15/02	4V2ØØYH: Haiti (NA-096) by DLs
1st week of Feb.	XU (esp. 160m) by NO2R
06/02-09/02	9M2/PAØRRS: Malaysia
09/02-20/02	9M6/PAØRRS: East Malaysia (OC-088)
11/02-25/02	J6 (St.Lucia) by members of J6DX team
13/02-25/02	ZK3: Tokelau by I2YSB, I2MOV, IK1AOD, IK2DIA
14/02-27/02	J6 (St.Lucia) by G3VMK
16/02-27/02	Lord Howe (VK9L) by DL ops.
20/02-02/03	9M2/PAØRRS: Penang Island (AS-015)
28/02-14/03	6Y5 (Jamaica) by W9 ops.
29/02-13/03	Norfolk Island (VK9N) by DL ops.
01/03-08/03	T32I and T32BI: East Kiribati by KH6GMP and KH6DFW
01/03-12/03	XU7AJV & XU7TZG: Koh Poah (AS-133) ON4AJT & ON6TZG
15/03-12/04	3B9C: Rodrigues Island (AF-017)
15/03-19/03	VK4FRI: Fraser Island (OC-142)
March-April	9M8: Pulau Satang Besar (OC-165) by 9M2/G3TMA et al.
March-April	V8: Pulau Muara Besar (OC-184) by 9M2/G3TMA et al.
17/04-18/04	GX4NOK/P: Inner Farne Island (EU-109)
April	T33C: Banaba (OC-018)

Standing Order Request Form

To: Bank

Branch :

Please pay:

Bank: **NatWest Bank**
Branch: **Kingston-upon-Thames**
Sort Code: **60-60-02**
Account: **44532385**
Account name: **CDXC**

Reference: (Please write your **callsign** here)

The amount of £15.00 (fifteen pounds) / £20.00 (twenty pounds)
(Delete as appropriate)

1. starting with an **initial payment TODAY**
2. followed by an **annual payment on 1 July** thereafter,
starting with 1 July 2004 and until further notice in writing.

Please debit my/our account accordingly.

Name of account to be debited :

Account number :

THIS REPLACES ANY EXISTING STANDING ORDER PAYABLE TO
'CDXC' or 'Chiltern DX Club' (Delete if this is a new Standing Order request)

Name(s) :

BLOCK CAPITALS PLEASE

Signature :

Signature :

(For accounts where two signatures are required)

Date :

Address :

.....

Postcode :

**After completion of this Standing Order Request Form,
please send the signed form to the bank branch looking after your account.**

How to fill in the CDXC Standing Order Request Form

1. The form should be addressed to your own Bank and branch.
2. Write your CALLSIGN after 'reference'. This is very important as it is the way your subscription is identified in the CDXC bank statements.
3. Delete one of the amounts (£15.00 is the 2003-04 subscription for UK members; the subscription is £20.00 for those living abroad.)
4. The form has been pre-filled with "today and on 1st July annually thereafter".
5. Enter your account details after 'Name of account to be debited' and your account number.
6. Complete the lower part of the form with your name, address, date and don't forget to sign it.
7. THE COMPLETED FORM SHOULD BE SENT DIRECTLY TO THE BANK BRANCH WHICH LOOKS AFTER YOUR ACCOUNT.
8. It helps the CDXC Treasurer if you also tell him that you intend to pay by Standing Order in future.
9. Check your bank statements after the first payment should have been made to ensure that your bank is executing the order correctly.

Thank you for helping CDXC by paying your subscription by Standing Order!

On-Line Banking

If you use **On-Line Banking** then you can make a transfer directly to:

Sort-Code : 60-60-02
Account : 44532385
Account Name : CDXC
Reference : [your callsign]
Bank : NatWest - Kingston-upon-Thames Branch

CDXC Members QSL Card

Priority Order Form

Quantity	Price	Tick the appropriate box ✓
500	£36.42	
1000	£66.38	
2000	£122.78	
3000	£178.60	
4000	£234.41	
5000	£290.81	

All the above prices are inclusive of UK VAT. Packing and postage within the UK included.

To customise your card please enter your details below:

Callsign:

Name:

Address:

Please Note: Delivery will be made to the address given above, unless notified otherwise.

Payment details:

Name of cardholder (as given on card):

Card Number:

Card Type *: Mastercard Visa Switch

** Delete as appropriate*

Expiry date (Month/Year):

Issue Number (Switch cards only):

Cardholder's address, if different to one given above:

E-mail this order form to: *sales@hdprint.co.uk*

or fax to: +44 (0)1920 463212

or post to: Hertfordshire Display plc, 51 High Street, Ware, Herts SG12 9BA UK

Tel: +44 (0)1920 461191

