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Club News and Views

Editorial

Martyn Phillips, G3RFX

So what did you get for Christmas? I got an Icom IC-7800 and a Kenwood TS-480.

No, not really. Anyway, find out about both – and what Santa didn't bring you either, dammit - in this month's 'Rig Review Special' by Chairman John, G3LAS.

Globetrotting regular contributor Roger, G3SXW, has been working overtime too. A very generous triple helping from him on 'African 'Appenings', 'DX Cluster Abuse' and 'Turkeys in Africa' - of which there would not appear to be very many.

In this 68-page *Digest* it's excellent value for money for contest enthusiasts too. Apart from Lee, GØMTN's, regular column on the subject, Shaun, MØBJL, fills us in on 'MØC – CQ WW Revisited' and Mark, MØDXR, sings the praises of the G6PZ super-station in Weston-super-Mare. I certainly wouldn't get that little lot in our front garden.

Talking of Mark, MØDXR: last month he very reluctantly stood down from the Committee due to pressure of other commitments. At which point the average age of the Committee rose abruptly by a few hundred years. If you think you can help to bring it back down again into two figures, then do let Chairman John know. Ideally we're looking for a young and vibrant DXer with plenty of constructive ideas. If he or she happens to live in Harlow, Essex, has a keen professional interest in aviation and is going to Kerguelen in March [see also page 9], then of course even better.

A reminder now that we're happy to publish small ads both on the CDXC website and in the *Digest*, space permitting. Radio-type ones, that is. Actually they don't have to be that small - and they won't cost you a thing either. A few small ads would also make my Editorial life a lot easier by helping to fill some of the spaces which articles an' things tend to leave behind (how dare they...).

Finally, and on a serious note: there are several references in this *Digest* to the VU4 Andaman Islands operation – almost all of them written before the terrible tsunami on 26 December which devastated many coastal areas of South-east Asia. Such natural disasters put amateur radio into perspective. They also demonstrate how our technical knowledge and radio expertise can be of considerable assistance in the context of emergency relief operations.

At the time of writing we've now heard that thankfully the Andaman operators are alive and well – and immediately turned their on-air efforts, as one would expect, to doing all they could to help in this difficult situation, something which by no means escaped the attention of the Indian authorities.

Meanwhile I'm sure our thoughts and prayers are with all those, wherever they may be, who have lost friends and loved ones in such tragic circumstances.

73 Martyn, G3RFX

www.btinternet.com/~g3rfx

Chairman's Chat

John Butcher, G3LAS

By the time you read this it will be well into the New Year, so I hope the page doesn't look too blurred and that everyone has had a great break. For some this may depend on whether you worked the VU4 expedition to the Andaman Islands. As I write they are still there, but sadly conditions seem not to have been very favourable for them. Signals here have been pretty weak, although yesterday, 13 December, I noticed a distinct lift, so hopefully things will improve before they close down.

I suspect, however, that quite a few people will be disappointed this time as the QSO count seems inevitably to be heading for a lower total than we would have liked. It may be that the main and certainly not insignificant success of this group will be in breaking the barrier to getting permission to operate there at all, after years of silence.

Hopefully they will have convinced the Indian authorities that amateur radio is not a threat to national security and that future applications for licences should be treated sympathetically. How about the Laccadives next?

I am reminded that at present most of the world's most needed DXCC entities are embargoed or at least made very difficult to access for similar reasons. If it's not military or political security, it is frequently wildlife protection policies or other environmental restrictions. It is important that we all help whenever possible to (a) inform and (b) reassure the authorities that our hobby, far from being a threat to civilisation, can be a force for good, publicising these and other issues and often bringing tangible benefits to local economies and fragile environments. Of course, the expedition teams themselves can

do much to achieve these ends, but we all have a part to play. I hope that not too many governmental and military officials were monitoring the VU4 frequencies during the pile-ups.

Talking of threats reminds me of a couple of other clouds looming on the horizon.

No one can be unaware of all the advance publicity about PLT, which some governments see as a great, low-cost way to bring broadband Internet access to all, especially in the more remote parts of a country.

Many commercial interests likewise see such a service as a heaven-sent opportunity to make lots of cash by utilising the enormous infrastructure of the power systems already draped around the countryside.

Most if not all of the reputable, ie unbiased scientific studies have concluded that any widespread introduction of such technology would be disastrous in terms of the pollution it would bring to the electromagnetic environment. Specifically, it would result in S9+ QRM – or is it QRN? – over vast swathes of the spectrum, including the HF amateur bands.

Reports from various sources as to the likelihood of PLT broadband coming to pass in practice have been, to say the least, confusing and contradictory.

They range from “It could never happen because the military interests would never agree” to “It's inevitable like all government plans if it is seen as a vote-catching opportunity”. I suspect that many people have

taken an ostrich-like stance, hoping it won't happen and relying on the much-publicised efforts being made elsewhere, eg by the ARRL in the USA, to fight the threat.

In my opinion (I nearly wrote IMHO, which shows how us oldies are being influenced by our grandchildren) we should remember that the situation in the UK is quite different from that in the USA. Our distances are much smaller and the power systems much more homogeneous. The difficulties to be overcome in implementing PLT are smaller and the potential 'benefits' greater in this country. Did you know that at least two electricity supply companies in the UK are already advertising PLT broadband services to their customers?

I don't want to be too depressing at the start of a New Year, but what about the Spectrum Review document published recently by Ofcom? Much can be read into it, but it formalises what many of us have known for a long time. Ofcom, aka the British Government, has little interest and few resources to devote to the future regulation of minority interests such as amateur radio licensing.

De-regulation is the name of the game and, while some amateurs may think it's a good thing to escape from the regulatory yoke, don't forget that it is not just us who would be able to operate unchecked. Many of our competitors on the battlefield of the RF spectrum would do so too and it is very probable that we would be the losers, having lost even the minimal protection we now have. Some say that it could signify the end of amateur radio as we know it.

While such apocalyptic views tend to be written off as over-reactive, we should not be deceived into thinking that the prognosis is good or even neutral. Things could turn very

nasty out there, even in the relatively short term.

If you haven't already done so, I suggest you visit the Ofcom website and read the document and also check out your local electricity suppliers to see when you are going to be submerged in an unprecedented noise level.

The other thing to remember is that if there is to be a strong and coherent voice speaking on behalf of amateur radio, it can come only from the RSGB, so whatever you may think about their activities in general, please support them in these and future battles. In the first instance, this means being a member of the Society.

This CC does seem to have turned out to be a bit gloomy, but I'm sure the future isn't entirely black. Maybe I'll work Peter 1 and Kure this year. Even if I don't, I wish all CDXC members a very happy and exciting 2005, with loads of DX and plenty of fun in the pile-ups.

CU at the Dinner at the Pendley Manor on April 16. Book early to avoid disappointment!

73 es gud DX John, G3LAS

CDXC
CHILTERN DX CLUB
The UK DX Foundation

President's Patter

Neville Cheadle, G3NUG

We recently held a CDXC Committee meeting in Bristol at the home of Jane and Martyn, G3RFX, our Digest Editor. We were well looked after and had a full house, which is remarkable since the total distance driven was nearly 1,500 miles even with some sharing - some dedication! Our finances continue to be in good shape, requests for DXpedition sponsorship seem to be falling; this is no doubt due to the declining sunspot cycle.

The CDXC Annual Dinner on Saturday, 16 April, will again be at Pendley Manor near Tring, Herts. We hope to have two very interesting talks, so I would like to encourage members to join in the fun and return the enclosed booking form as soon as possible. We also hope to present the new TS-480HX transceiver to the winner of the Kenwood Challenge. This was very generously donated by Kenwood UK; David Wilkins, G5HY, General Manager of Kenwood and a CDXC member, will hopefully be joining us at the Dinner to present the transceiver.

One member recently asked us whether we would be willing to institute a new life membership category. This may be attractive to those members soon to retire. I remember getting involved in lengthy discussions on this subject at the RSGB's Management Committee, where there were some very polarised views. We're going to look at the formula used by organisations such as the National Trust, MCC and the ARRL to see whether we can come up with a viable proposal. In the meantime if any members are interested please drop a note to Chairman John or myself.

Mark, MØDXR, has advised us that he wishes to stand down from the Committee. It's been

great to have Mark on the Committee. He brought lots of fresh ideas to us elderly G3s and he made a most significant contribution. Thanks Mark. We are now seeking a youngish replacement.

We have recently renewed our special contest call, MØC. This can be used by any member. Our rules are quite simple:

1. Advise Ofcom as to the location of the operation.
2. Process all QSL cards received. All MØC records show G3NUG as QSL manager, who will forward the cards to the operator concerned.
3. Print the CDXC logo on the card.
4. Send G3NUG a copy of the log in TXT format by e-mail a.s.a.p. after the contest.

Please just e-mail me to reserve the call. As a reminder, the MØC call can be used in the following 25 contests:

- ARRL DX CW
- ARRL DX SSB
- ARRL 1.8 MHz DX CW only
- ARRL 28 MHz Multimode
- CQ WPX CW
- CQ WPX RTTY
- CQ WPX SSB
- CQ World Wide CW
- CQ World Wide RTTY
- CQ World Wide SSB
- CQ World Wide 160 CW
- CQ World Wide 160 SSB
- IARU Championship Multimode
- IOTA Multimode

- WAE DX CW
- WAE DX RTTY
- WAE DX SSB
- ARRL RTTY Roundup
- BARTG RTTY
- IARU 50 MHz Trophy Multimode
- IARU 144 MHz Trophy Multimode
- IARU 432 MHz to 248 GHz Multimode
- March 144 and 432 MHz
- May 432 MHz to 248 GHz Contest
- November Marconi Memorial 144 MHz

QSLing the 3B9C operation has continued apace. As I write, we have just passed the 70,000 mark. Popular opinion is that we will eventually QSL 66% of the total contacts, ie around 101,000 QSOs will be QSLed. But the 70K figure is interesting as only two operations have ever exceeded 100,000 QSOs, ie 3B9C and D68C. This probably means, if the 66% figure is correct, that we have already QSLed more QSOs than any previous operation except D68C - for which Phil, G3SWH, continues to do sterling work.

Three members of the team of 3B9C QSL managers have had to drop out due to business pressures. If any CDXC member would like to join the team, please let me know. The StarQSL system is a delight to use. Internet access is essential - together with a reasonably powerful computer, familiarity with Windows etc. The main work from now on will be

processing bureau cards; direct cards have dropped to around 75 per week and I am handling these personally.

We are having another membership drive this January with an updated prospectus, thanks to Chairman John. We're going to mail 500 potential members extracted from two groups.

- Those UK stations who have already QSLed 3B9C
- Those who worked us on the largest number of band-slots.

Our thanks to John, G3WGV, for producing the analysis.

By the time you receive this, Christmas and New Year will have passed. I hope everyone had a great time and that 2005 is a very happy one for all our members, with lots of great DX.



73 Neville, G3NUG

CDXC Annual Dinner 2005

Saturday, 16 April

at the Pendley Manor Hotel, Cow Lane, Tring, Herts HP23 5QY

see page 9 for details

New Members

CDXC offers a warm welcome to the following new members:

<i>Call</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Location</i>
GØRTN	Gerry Lynch	London
G4FSU	Ian Greenshields	Wells
G4WFQ	David Hulatt	Peterborough
WK3N	James Scott	Hartstown, PA

Committee Vacancy

There is currently a vacancy on the Club Committee for a general Committee member. If you would like to help with the organising and functioning of the Club, we would be delighted to hear from you. We would be particularly interested to hear from our younger members or those fresh and enthusiastic to the art of DXing. Please contact our Chairman, John Butcher, who can provide further information.

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>

CDXC Annual Dinner 2005

The CDXC Annual Dinner will be held this year on Saturday, 16 April. We will be returning to the Pendley Manor Hotel at Tring in Hertfordshire, where we have the use of their large dining room. We would like to encourage as many members as possible to come along together with partners and friends to what promises to be an excellent and most enjoyable evening.

Menu

Fan of Charantais Melon with Compote of Seasonal Berries

Breast of Maize Fed Chicken with a Tomato, Mushroom and Bacon Sauce

or

Sun Dried Tomato and Basil Risotto with Brown Butter Vinaigrette (vegetarian option, no nuts)

Profiteroles with warm chocolate sauce

Coffee and Pendley mints

Following the dinner we have provisionally arranged for two talks – Mark Haynes, MØDXR, will show us pictures and talk about the FT5X Kerguelen Island DXpedition planned for March 2005. Mark is joining the multi-national team who hope to make a big impact in reducing the rarity of this most-wanted entity. Peter Hart, who has been reviewing equipment for 25 years, will also tell us about the various radios he has experienced and what we may expect for the future.

The cost of the Dinner and evening's entertainment is £29.50 per person. You will find a booking form enclosed with this Digest. If for some reason you don't have the form, contact the Secretary, Peter Hart, G3SJX, to make your booking.

For those of you who will be travelling some distance, you may wish to stay overnight in the area. Pendley Manor have rooms available at £55 per person sharing a twin or double, or £100 per person single occupancy. These rates include a Full English Breakfast. Make bookings directly with Pendley Manor quoting CDXC (tel 01442 891891). Cheaper accommodation is available in the area, eg at the Rose & Crown in Tring (tel: 01442 824071), and further information is available on the CDXC website.

Full details on how to get to Pendley Manor will also be published in the March Digest and can also be found on the CDXC website.

The CDXC LF Challenge 2005

Please note the change of the month of the Challenge from January to March

Aim: The aim of the competition is to work as many DXCC entities during the month of March 2005. Each DXCC entity is counted ONCE only.

When: 0001 UTC, 1 March 2005 to 2359 UTC, 31 March 2005.

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. The list must contain the headings in this order, please.

DXCC entity, Callsign, Date, Time, Band, Mode.

Entries which are not submitted in this format will be disqualified

QSL cards are not required, but in the event of a dispute the CDXC Committee may request a photocopy or print-out of the applicant's 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. Logs to be received no later than 30 April.

AWARDS – Multi-band.

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 – For the person in third place a small engraved plaque which is retained.

AWARDS – Single Band.

The leading station on each band (1.8, 3.5 and 7 MHz) will also receive a small engraved plaque which will be retained by the winner.

Entrants who work more than half the Penallt Trophy winner's total will receive a certificate.

DX an' all that

Don Field, G3XTT g3xtt@lineone.net

I wrote the last of these columns just prior to the CQ WW Phone Contest, and since then we have had both legs of that contest, with some excellent conditions at times. During the Phone contest 10m was positively buzzing with something like 150 countries workable over the weekend, including such DX as VK9X. David Whitaker writes that he and Arthur Miller heard 162 DXCC entities between them over the contest weekend, including 129 on 10m, 123 on 15m and 129 on 20m. XX9C was heard on 5 bands. The CW leg was slightly less fortunate, but for DXers rather than contesters the consolation was that the bands were buzzing in the week leading up to the contest (27 days or one solar rotation after the Phone leg, I guess), and all those contest expeditions were busy doing pre-contest testing. Dave, G3TBK, who had been hard on my heels in the Annual CW Table run by G3WGV, managed a staggering 145 new band-slots in the course of that one week (including the contest), from a far from low starting point of 1318.

Things have definitely taken a turn for the worse since then – Dave and I have been doing well to work 10 or so new ones in a week during December. However, I was quite delighted finally to achieve 9BDXCC on CW in the year, the first time I have managed this. Usually at sunspot peaks my 160m total falls short and at sunspot minima it is my 10m total that suffers.

Anyway, there is lots to look forward to over the next couple of months, so let's hope the propagation cooperates. Peter 1st will be imminent by the time this appears in print, and we have Kerguelen, the North Cooks, Mauritania, and other rare and less rare ones coming up too.

The great surprise recently was the news that an Andamans operation had been authorised by the Indian government, and members of the NIAR (National Institute of Amateur Radio) were quick to mount a DXpedition, to run throughout December - quite a feat at such short notice. Nevertheless, with such a huge pent-up demand and the licence stipulating that operators must be Indian nationals (and therefore, by implication, relatively inexperienced) there were bound to be complaints and criticisms from the DXing community. Which leads me to my topic *du jour*.

The Mind of the DXer (or can an expedition be a bad thing?)

I have received several suggestions for topics to cover in this column, for which many thanks. I hope to get round to them all over the next few issues. But, as I said in the previous paragraph, my mind has been focused by the unexpected Andaman Islands operation, and by some other recent DXpeditions. DXCC entities are generally rare for one of three reasons. They are hard to reach (Peter 1st being a classic example), are politically fraught (perhaps Somalia in recent years), or licensing and other authorisations are hard to obtain (Navassa, Desecheo).

The Andamans fall into the latter category, and it is to the credit of the Indian amateurs concerned that they have finally obtained permission to undertake an operation from VU4. Many others have tried and failed in recent years. One would have thought that the DX fraternity would have applauded. But - and, sadly, true to form - within days of the team becoming operational there were many detractors. Complaints about the ability of the

operators. Complaints about the bands and modes being operated. And so on.

What would these detractors rather have? No operation at all? Perhaps, but that would be to deny a contact to the many thousands who have already made it into the log (and remember, this operation was for a month in all, so the first few days were almost incidental). Naturally we would all love to see a major DXpedition, with experienced operators able to handle all bands and modes with consummate ease, and putting out huge signals on all bands. But that's cloud cuckoo land. The Indian authorities have made it quite clear that only Indian amateurs are to be allowed to operate; K4VUD flew in to meet the team, but was not to be allowed on the air. I feel sure the Indians have been doing their best in the circumstances. They don't have vast expertise and in any case their concept of what makes a successful DXpedition is almost certainly somewhat different to what ours might be, for cultural and other reasons. And the whole effort had to be mounted at almost zero notice. The promise is that, if all goes well with this one, the authorities may be willing to authorise further operations in the near future.

It does seem to me that the problem lies more in the mind of DXers than in the conduct of the DX operations themselves. Perhaps the more successful DXpeditions are themselves to blame, by helping to raise expectations. Now, when a more modest expedition takes place, our first reaction is often one of dismay. I know that I, for one, am guilty. When EA3BT and EA3WL were QRV from TN in 2002, they made a good number of QSOs for a two-person team, but didn't do much CW and nothing on the low bands (which remain very rare from TN). My reaction was, "Oh no, this will bring TN down the Wanted Lists and discourage future expeditions which might have filled the slots I need". More recently Baldur, DJ6SI, has appeared as TN6X, almost

exclusively on CW. So that's that one taken care of, but again my reaction was, "I still need that one on RTTY and 160m. Who'll bother with those now?"

One of the great things about DXing is that there's always plenty to chase, provided we aren't just content to make Honor Roll and hang up our microphones/keys (which, sadly, is what some early CDXC members did). But we need to get things into perspective. I was recently engaged in an exchange with a well-known 160m DXer who had criticised one of the FSDXA operations mainly, reading between the lines, because the DXer concerned hadn't worked us on 160, for one of his few remaining entities on the band. This was clearly (in his mind) our fault. He then went on, in our correspondence, to suggest that we should choose our next destination to be one that he still needed on 160m, and arrange the timing to be most propitious for 160m propagation to his QTH. As far as I could tell, all this was said with no awareness of irony at all. Yet this is selfishness in the extreme. Here was someone who, over the years, has benefited enormously from the efforts of others in order to achieve one of the highest 160m scores in the world. In the process, I dare say others have missed out on much-desired contacts on other bands (many DXpeditions have to move away from higher rates on other bands every time they go to 160m). And this amateur has never, himself, been out on a low-band expedition to put his very considerable 160m expertise to work for the benefit of others. His only thought is to want more for himself and bugger the rest. I rather suspect there is a touch of this sort of selfishness in many of us, but we need to become self-aware and to learn where to draw the line.

Competition is what drives us, and is behind human success in many other walks of life, such as business and sport, so a level of frustration is understandable if we don't get

them in the log as and when we want to. And many of the complaints are exactly that, an expression of personal frustration rather than a real gripe with the DXpedition concerned. The number of complaints inevitably falls off as a DXpedition puts more QSOs in the log. Our first recorded complaint at 3B9C was just 15 minutes into the operation, when an Italian offered, via the Packet Cluster, "Why no 40m SSB?". We were QRV on 9 bands simultaneously at that time, several of those bands open into Europe, and the DXpedition had three weeks to run!

So if many of the complaints say more about our frustration than about the conduct of a DX operation, can there be legitimate complaints about a DXpedition? I think the answer is 'yes'. There are a number of ways in which a DXpedition can, in my view, be counter-productive. Perhaps the most significant is where the DXpeditioners have a negative impact on the local community or local officials (especially in licensing departments), damaging the image of the hobby and perhaps reducing the chances for future expeditions to that location. I would suggest that some operating practices are counter-productive too (for example, using lists and nets, failing to identify regularly, not making effective use of split-operation), but it is unreasonable to expect every DXpedition operator to be highly experienced (we all have to go through a learning curve) so these are matters which are better addressed through constructive help and suggestions, rather than adverse criticism.

None of these issues is new. Read RadCom or QST from decades ago, and similar editorials would be run from time to time. Unfortunately the Internet allows comments, however ill-judged, to propagate around the world in milliseconds, after which they cannot be retracted. Perhaps there is little we can do as individuals to change what seems inevitable, but at least we can be aware of the dynamics which are at work in the whole process (which

OH2BH has likened to a theatre with players and audience, not a bad analogy when you think about it). And each of us must learn to curb our frustrations and accept that a band-slot missed is a band-slot to look forward to at some time in the future! Meanwhile, your views and feedback are more than welcome.

Kenwood Challenge and IOTA 2004 Latest

As I write this, there are just 13 Challenge days to run, so scores probably won't change much, if at all. The only new ones I was able to add to my own score in December were TN6X and VU4NRO. It's been fun watching the scores advance as the year has gone on, especially during the 6m Sporadic E season when an ill-timed trip out could result in missing a useful Caribbean opening. I haven't been taking part in the IOTA 2004 programme, but I do have the task of adjudicating the entries as they come in (several have already done so) and I hope that any of you who have participated have enjoyed the fun of the chase. While totals are likely to be down on IOTA 2000, there are certainly some high scores posted on the CDXC Web page. Our thanks are due to those who go out and activate the various islands. Some are easy-to-mount holiday trips, some turn out to be major logistical exercises. Recent operations have included those from VK and 3D2 by GØUIH and a couple of A6 islands activated by ON5NT and friends.

Topics waiting in the wings include split-frequency operation, the best location from which to work DXCC and DXpedition logging accuracy. I look forward to input on these and any other topics you may consider appropriate. Meanwhile, I trust you all enjoyed reading that nice new RSGB Operating Manual that Santa brought you for Christmas (plug!). [*What nice new operating manual is that? Ed.*]

73 Don, G3XTT

Out and About

African 'Appenings

Roger Western, G3SXW

g3sxw@compuserve.com

2004

Nov 19 – 21 Eight VooDudes arrive in Ouagadougou, capital of Burkina Faso (XT2)

Nov 22 Drive Ouaga to Niamey, 500 kms, capital of Niger (5U)

Nov 23 – 26 Install seven stations and a dozen antennas

Nov 27 – 28 CQ WW CW Contest as 5U5Z, multi-multi – 14,500 QSOs

Nov 29 Tear-down

Nov 30 Drive Niamey to Ouaga with all the equipment, 500 kms

Dec 1 Drive Ouaga to Bobo and back, 720 kms, put equipment into storage

Dec 1 – 3 Team flies home

An alternative title for this piece could well be 'A Funny Thing happened to me on the way to Burkina Faso'. Here are some tales - some funny and some less so - from our trip to Burkina Faso and Niger in November 2004 for 5U5Z (CQ WW CW). A team of eight from the VooDoo Contest Group flew into Ouagadougou, capital of Burkina Faso, then drove with bus and driver the 500 kms to Niamey, capital of Niger, where we were reunited with our stock-pile of equipment which had been in storage for a year. After the contest we drove back to Burkina Faso, with all the gear. These were 11-hour journeys.

These lengthy road journeys were necessary because of airline fare structures. We *did* need to drive Niamey to Ouagadougou after the contest so as to move all the equipment back from 5U to XT2, but a one-way road journey

means an 'open jaw' airline ticket – flying from A to B, but then returning from C to A. The London-Ouaga return ticket was about £750, but the London-Niamey and then Ouaga-London fare was quoted at over £2,000. Air France, like most airlines, is not interested in one-way tickets. This is not our favourite airline for several reasons, but it cannot be avoided on these routes – it is the only carrier. So we ended up doing the road journey both ways. All the more frustrating because flights between Paris and Ouagadougou make a stop in Niamey!

Now, we all do believe in the power of Mr Murphy, don't we? In our experience he visits us once every ten years. That is to say the last (and first) time was in 1994, ZC4Z, when anything that could go wrong did go wrong – misfortunes a-plenty. Since then we have barely even heard a whisper from him, but this year, exactly ten years later, he was back. Well, not nearly as bad a dose of Murphy-itis as in 1994, but, as will be told, enough to keep us gritting our collective teeth. Of course a Murphy attack only counts as such if it involves a set of circumstances that are completely beyond one's control.

Wrong Visas

It started some weeks before the trip. To enter these countries you need to acquire a visa before leaving home. Airlines won't let you board without one. The problem is that Burkina Faso and Niger do not have embassy

or consular representation in UK. Our American team members were able to post their passports to Washington DC, but the Brits had to post to Paris (Niger) and then Brussels (Burkina Faso). To allow for processing and postal delays we had to start this tortuous task some two months before travelling.

Those who have duplicate passports were not too inconvenienced, but those with only one passport were trapped in UK for this period. The Niger visas came back from Paris in about three weeks - all except one. We eventually found out that this application had been received with the envelope opened and resealed and the visa fee (50 Euros in cash) missing.

Of course the Niger embassy couldn't be bothered to let us know this, so we just waited until it became apparent that something had gone badly wrong before making enquiries, by which point we were very short of time. A cash transfer by Western Union was required to replace the missing visa fee plus a payment for the rush delivery of the passport back to UK. That worked, albeit at great expense, but left only one week for this Burkina Faso visa to be issued.

In the meantime we learned, thanks to some fortuitous web surfing, that Burkina Faso had just appointed a brand new Consul to the UK, in Surrey. A quick phone call confirmed that he could issue visas and that we should use the same forms, in French, as we were intending to send to Brussels. That all worked OK for three of five British passport holders, but for the other two the visas were mistakenly issued as 'single-entry', not 'multiple-entry' as requested. We would actually enter Burkina Faso twice, once when arriving from Paris and once when returning from Niamey. There was just time to get one of them corrected (yet further expense for two-way registered post), but the one which had gone so wrong in Paris was simply out of time. He was advised to

visit a police station in Ouagadougou to get the visa amended, which turned out to be impossible on a Sunday. His last option was to get it done at the Burkina Faso embassy in Niamey. If that didn't work out then he would be trapped in Niger with a return airline ticket that departed from Burkina Faso. On passing through the road border exiting Burkina Faso to enter Niger we asked the friendly immigration officer if the single-entry visa would present a problem on re-entry. He said that only the validity dates mattered and not to worry. We did worry, nonetheless, until we were safely back into the country, but it did all go smoothly.

We have learned from past experience that you must do everything possible to avoid giving officials in Africa the opportunity to make trouble for you, so we make sure that all the paperwork is precisely in order. On this occasion it was an unnecessary worry.

These big visa headaches were something of an omen of things to come. It does sometimes seem that when things start to go wrong in life they can just keep going wrong. It may be worth pointing out that these countries stand no chance of developing a tourist industry when they make it so hard to visit their countries. Furthermore, it may also be worth pointing out that each of us had to spend well over £100 to get these two visas - visa fees, registered post, photographs.

Full Hotels

The tribulations continued when we learned that the Francophonie Summit was being held in Ouagadougou at the time of our visit. This is a huge event, attracting French-speaking peoples from around the world (even Quebec), which led directly to a doubling of hotel room rates. Instead of 38,000 CFA it was unceremoniously increased to 76,000 CFA (about £85) per person per night, take it or leave it. Even more worryingly our hotel, the

Independence, had not replied to my latest three e-mails requesting final, corrected confirmation of our bookings. So our local friends visited the hotel on our behalf a couple of days before our arrival, only to be told that the whole hotel had been requisitioned by the government and that our booking was cancelled. We scrambled to find alternative accommodation, eventually finding rooms, but only for half the team and only for one night. To secure those four rooms on the first night required a cash transfer from London by Western Union. This was also at the inflated room rate. It seems that every price in the city doubled – presumably on the grounds that most visitors were on government expense accounts, so all the locals could cash in. Upon visiting the Independence the next day they wanted to charge us for a no-show night. Pah! We never got to the bottom of this chaos, but our subsequent nights (on the return from Niamey) were confirmed, at the normal rate. It all worked out OK in the end (though much more expensively than expected) but was cause for some considerable concern at the time – we didn't want to sleep on the streets!

Having solved these problems, we all met for a cool beer late one afternoon at the Independence Hotel, sitting around the swimming pool. By chance I was sitting facing the pool and noticed a chap heaving the lifeless body of a 6-7-year-old girl out of the deep end of the pool. I pointed. Vince/K5VT, a medical doctor, shot around that side of the pool like a bullet out of a gun. He is a big bloke, but boy did he move fast! Two to three minutes of resuscitation did the trick – she recovered. Some thirty minutes later the emergency services arrived. Without Vince they would have been recovering a dead little girl. There were maybe fifty people sitting around the poolside at the time. It was a weird atmosphere when the whole place fell silent and then there was a collective sigh of relief when the little girl eventually spurted water from her lungs. This incident put everything into perspective for us. A child very nearly

died. Who cares if our hotel reservations had gone wrong? Shivers down the spine.

Road Blocks

So, after a couple of nights in Ouagadougou, we set off for Niamey. A little-known reality of life in West Africa is the ubiquitous road block. We have grown used to them on the many cross-country trips that we have taken over the years.

The extent of hassle seems to reflect the size of your load. Travelling with an empty bus (just personal luggage) to Niamey was easier than the return trip with all our equipment piled on the roof. On a 500 km trip we counted no fewer than 18 enforced stops. Payment of road tolls, having passports stamped and customs formalities are to be expected, but it is the many police road blocks that cause the frustration. One stop was apparently for a vehicle check. After 20 minutes we were rolling again and our driver told us that the gendarmes had insisted on seeing the security triangle which would be set on the road in case of breakdown. On another occasion we had to pay 8,000 CFA (about £9) in fines for two transgressions of regulations. The explanation given on the receipt was utterly vague. Actually, we were very lucky on this trip because whilst the number of road blocks seems not to have decreased in recent years we did have a thoroughly experienced driver who often plies this route and evidently knew personally many of the officials who crossed our path. No-one ever inspected our rather strange equipment. We had to simply sit (im)patiently like lemons and wait for WAWA to take its course. (West Africa Wins Always = you can't buck the system).

Hitch-Hikers

An unexpected twist was when two Ghanaian drivers carrying spare parts begged us for a lift

back to their broken-down truck. We had a 35-seater bus with only eight of us on board so it was hard to refuse. They were nice guys, but we had not realised that they needed to be with us for about three hours. On the return journey we had a similar but quite different experience. At yet another police road block our driver explained to us that the gendarmes were asking that we give a lift to a chap who had no money. It was hinted that if we found it difficult to comply then they might delay our progress, so we naturally agreed. We then realised that the chap climbing aboard our bus was carrying two live chickens, held by the feet. He came with us all the way to Ouaga, about six hours driving, with violent squawking and flapping of wings every few minutes. To add insult to injury, when reaching our destination one of them sprayed chicken shit around, catching a member of our team full-blast. Not pleasant. The final insult was when he walked off without even saying thank you. Oh well. Perhaps he was bamboozled by not being able to speak to foreigners.

Arrival on Site

We finally made it to the Grand Hotel, Niamey, early in the evening and checked in. It had not escaped our attention upon arrival that since our previous visit one year earlier there had suddenly appeared a new building in the grounds, exactly where our LF verticals were meant to go. This was a new conference centre, a complete building but still a shell. Upon reflection (and always with a positive outlook, to maximise every opportunity) we realised that the broad, flat roof would actually be ideal for the 80 metre vertical. All it needed was permission from the big boss and a ladder to get up there. Both were obtained the next morning and suddenly a potential disaster was turned into a major bonus. The 50' inverted L was way up in the clear and worked extremely well.

We settled into our new home and enjoyed brochettes on the terrace. This is a 'must' for any visitor to this hotel. The juicy beef kebabs and cold beer are a special treat, watching the sun set over the River Niger. Of course, don't forget Murphy's persistent presence. For almost the whole of our stay the Hamatan was blowing – a hot wind from the North, bringing in dust from the Sahara. It was like heavy pollution, filling the sky to 1,000' or so and irritating the throat. There were precious few photo opportunities on this trip.

Personal Problems

On that ill-fated ZC4Z trip ten years earlier a member of the team received a phone call just a day before the contest to say that his mum had died. It was somewhat spooky that exactly the same thing happened to another member of the team this year, with the same timing. Unfortunately, because of the Francophonie summit, all flights back to Paris were booked and over-booked, so he could not fly home in time for the funeral.

One member of the team fainted, presumably from the heat. This was a little scary, but thank goodness we had a doctor on the team, Vince/K5VT, to revive him and he was fine thereafter. Another teammember suffered severe abdominal pain and spent a day in a local clinic. This turned out to be a dehydration-induced blockage (constipation). Again K5VT's on-the-scene advice was invaluable. Around the same time a third member of the team reported a dose of diarrhoea, but fortunately that settled down quickly. Vince was with us for his contesting skills, but we were seriously advantaged (for the first time on these trips) by his doctoring skills too and we were extremely grateful for that.

In our new book 'Contesting in Africa' we include a chapter on health issues which emphasises how much safer West Africa is

than its reputation suggests. The heat, dehydration and tummy upsets are the most likely causes of any difficulties, as indeed was the case this year. So far, no-one has contracted malaria, but we are all careful about taking the tablets.

No Ice in That

To help avoid those stomach upsets we normally don't drink the local water, preferring bottled mineral water. Of course salads are washed in local tap water, so most of the team avoid them too. Also, ice is avoided. It is made from tap water and melts into the drink, so we always order 'sans glaçons' (without ice). Usually the waiter will forget to leave out the ice, so he brings a tray of glasses filled with ice, then returns to the bar for the bottles of drinks. The team then promptly pours their ice back onto the waiter's tray or, if sitting near a shrubbery, we tip it into the bushes. On one hilarious occasion one of us had ordered a Scotch and soda, then left the table to take a phone call. Drinks were served and – you've guessed it – the ice including the whisky got tipped into the bushes. I'm sure our Scottish brethren are having heart attacks at this point in the story! But it was a source of great mirth at the time.

The Dreaded Titanex

Pretty much everything on the radio front went smoothly. These days we are a well-oiled machine with an outdoor and an indoor team and all antennas went up in super-quick time and all worked first time. With one exception. Yes, the dreaded Titanex. We had bought the 87' expedition version at huge expense and added our own guys, stakes, radials and tuner. During the dry run before taking it to Africa we had 'bent' it in two places and split two tubes, so we came prepared with strengthening parts and hose clamps. Nonetheless, the top 12' snapped off

and was discarded in favour of an L wire. We finished up with 75' or so vertical, but only after many hours of frustration. Being on sloping ground didn't help. Working on a building site didn't help either (the hotel was constructing new bungalows). During this exercise one team member trod on a rusty nail, deeply puncturing the ball of his foot – his bedroom floor looked like the shower scene from Psycho! We then discovered that his tetanus vaccination was out of date. So he was hauled off for a tetanus shot to the same clinic (with European standard of care and hygiene) as our abdominal sufferer the previous day. We were welcomed there like old friends! Liberal dosing with antiseptic cream kept the foot free of infection. Once in the air the Titanex performed admirably, but only on transmit. Very few signals could be heard on it, through the static - thank goodness for the Beverages.

Final Storage

After the contest our bus came over empty from Ouaga and arrived as planned the evening before our departure, which we had decided should be at 0600 to allow time to reach Ouaga before sunset. The driver informed us that in the morning he needed to get a permit to leave the city. He didn't know at what time this office opened or how long it would take. In Africa you often have no option but to just go with the flow (WAWA) – time and punctuality are unfamiliar concepts. So we all woke at 0530, piled up the gear ready for loading and then sat. The bus, with the required permit, arrived at 0830.

After an 11-hour, hot, sweaty day on the road we reached Ouagadougou again, this time with a tonne of equipment to go into storage for the next year. Unfortunately our host chose that moment to inform us that he couldn't store as planned this big pile of stuff, as he had done before, and asked us to take it to his home in Bobo-Dioulasso, some 250 miles to the west. So with great flexibility we instantly

re-jigged our plans, left the stuff on the bus overnight and drove a further 12 hours the very next day, to Bobo and back, to deliver it into storage. As only two team members were staying for an extra 2-3 days of XT2 pile-ups and the rest needed to check-in for the home-bound flight, those two poor souls had to make this trip on their own. Our heartfelt thanks to Fred and Mike for taking on this job without complaint. Really great guys. After the trip from Niamey they needed this like a hole in the head and it nearly chopped in half their XT2 pile-up time. But now the equipment is all safely stored in the west of Burkina Faso and next November it's looking good for Mali (TZ). This unbudgeted trip cost us a fifth day's bus hire and another 700 kms of diesel. But all these expenses are divided eight ways, so it is not too bad for us.

The Good News

It's funny how good news is less entertaining than bad news. The contest went very well, just about equalling our best ever score, notwithstanding the dip in sunspot activity. The computers, logging and network all held up very well (thanks to Andy), as did an Internet connection for the DX Cluster during the latter 36 hours of the weekend. No rigs blew up and the five K2/100s performed flawlessly, especially after one of them had several solder joints repaired with the aid of a field-day style gas soldering iron. The three remaining trusty TS-930s and the seven amplifiers all fired up as good as gold, like they do every year. We did have a few problems with the Alliance rotors and rotor controllers – they are getting past their sell-by date for a serious overhaul.

So please don't get the wrong impression. This article describes the problems encountered - merely because we thought it might prove more entertaining to recount these tales of semi-woe and to show that these trips are not all sweetness and light. But the trip was immense fun. Even the utter chaos at

Charles de Gaulle (Paris) airport couldn't deflate our spirits – well, only temporarily! Unfortunately Air France and transiting in Paris cannot be avoided as they have the monopoly on these West African routes. And by the way, their fares (and Paris airport taxes) are rocketing these days.

This trip, compared to others which have gone before it, seems to have encountered far more than its fair share of problems, but it may be wise to put things into perspective. These projects which we take on each November are always challenging. We do in a day or so what might normally take the locals a week. And it says a lot about the resilience of our group that we can react to unexpected difficulties with a calm head, just doing what needs to be done to resolve them. For example, on the return to Ouaga we had to settle up with the bus hirer. Four of us sat down in the hotel lobby for an hour, sorting through the paperwork. We were all very tired and rather short-fused after a long, frustrating day without a proper meal, but no-one lost their rag. At one point the hirer miscalculated by \$200. We were so tired that no-one noticed this arithmetic error (in our favour). It was picked up some time later when we had to re-work all the numbers again. It requires some judgement to know when you are too tired to undertake a given task. But sometimes you have no option but to just work through it.

Claimed Score

We scored almost exactly the same as last year, but this masks a big reduction in QSOs and a big increase in multipliers. 160 and 80m were much improved, a combination perhaps of better transmitting antennas and lower sunspots, whilst 10m lost over 1,000 QSOs (but much improved mults). Overall we are really pleased with the multiplier score – we smashed our previous best Countries total of 713 in 1999 by accumulating 736 and equalling our record number of zones (196).

Maybe this year we have got back into our winning ways - we haven't been placed first

since 1997 when we won the multi-multi category for the fourth straight year.

5U5Z – 2004				5U5Z - 2003		
Band	QSOs	Zones	Ctrys	QSOs	Zones	Ctrys
160	350	16	63	178	14	56
80	950	30	90	701	25	81
40	2,108	36	131	2,640	34	111
20	4,342	39	155	4,624	37	128
15	4,123	39	157	4,777	39	134
10	2,658	36	140	3,769	33	115
Total	14,531	196	736	16,689	182	625
Claimed Score			40,327,640	40,136,145		

The VooDoo Story

This is the group's eleventh straight year doing Multi-Multi in CQ WW CW from West Africa – a whole sunspot cycle. We have operated from five different countries and seven different locations, never finishing outside the Leader Box in the CQ Magazine results.

This story is told in a new book called 'Contesting in Africa', 192 pages, packed with photos and graphics and a myriad of tips on contesting strategy and tactics. A 'must' for any serious tester and for those with a liking for exotic locations. Visit

www.idiompress.com

or e-mail

g3sxw@compuserve.com

for more details.

We look forward to working you in the contest again next November, either from XT2 or more likely from TZ. Look at the map: if

we can get to Bamako (TZ) then suddenly a new world of 9L, 3X, J5 opens up to us for future years. And this is good – further west, closer to the sea. The VooDudes have got plenty of years left in them yet!

The Team

The eight-man team for 5U5Z in 2004 was:

GØMTN	Lee	Ace Mult-Hunter
G3PJT	Bob	Treasurer, Wise Owl
G3SXW	Roger	Mr Fix-It
G4BWP	Fred	Outdoor Chief
G4PIQ	Andy	Indoor Chief
K5VT	Vince	Team Medic
KC7V	Mike	Monobander/Beverage Wizard
N7NG	Wayne	Rookie, Only in Name

This article is dedicated to Vince Thompson, K5VT. One helluva guy. An experienced tester and DXpeditioner and all-time nice guy, but who is also a medical doctor. His doctoring skills have not been called upon during our previous trips to Africa, but this time they were crucial. Thank you, Vince.

Turkeys in Africa

Roger Western, G3SXW

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DXpeditioners beware. Not everything can be pre-planned. Rigs, antennas, visas, yellow-fever certificates... but turkeys?

Christmas lunch? Well, turkey of course. I hope that you enjoyed yours, with all the trimmings - roast potatoes, stuffing, sprouts, gravy. Yum, yum! Very special. A wonderful yearly feast. But what about our American brothers? They have turkey for Thanksgiving at the end of November. What do they do at Christmas, I ask myself. Eat turkey again? Only four weeks later. Rather takes the gloss off of it, no?

Christmas. Thanksgiving. It's all about family togetherness. Warmth and kindness. The giving of presents. Jingle bells and snow. Well, no – actually it's not. It's all about turkey. We all know this basic fact of life, but it was fully brought home to us in November when visiting West Africa. Not much snow there. Of course, our Titanex antenna was transported as check-in luggage in a ski bag, but no-one thought to ask why we were taking skis to the equator. "Carry on, sir (takes all sorts)..." seems to have been the general reaction.

So we ended up in Ouagadougou. Life-long DXers don't need telling that this is the capital of Burkina Faso, otherwise known as X-ray Tango Two land. We were on our way to Niamey, the capital of Niger, known to the initiated as Five-Uniform. 'We' consisted of a group of five Brits and three Americans, and it was five days before Thanksgiving. Preparations needed to be made for this momentous event. Actually, it occurs every year just 48 hours before the CQ World Wide CW contest, so our team is well used to a special toast and a tip of the glass on that

evening. Not actually every year – each seventh year a quirk of the calendar makes this celebratory Thursday evening (always a Thursday) one whole week before the contest.

But back to the main point - turkeys. Our host in Niamey (our American cousin Jim Bullington, 5U7JB) had asked whether there was any way in which we could manage to bring a turkey with us, because you just cannot find turkeys in Niger. This would be a special treat for their Thanksgiving celebrations. We readily identified with this plea for succour, understanding as we did the deprivations of living in just about the poorest country in the world. Our three American team members were especially keen to help out.



Scouring the Countryside

One of our team offered to ship a turkey from USA by Fed Ex. Unfortunately we didn't have a physical address to which to ship said turkey (no-one has physical addresses in Niger, only Post Box numbers) and besides, the shipper could not guarantee frozen transportation all the way from USA. So this suggestion, generous though it was, was still-born.

We couldn't possibly take one as check-in luggage, so we were reduced to one last option – finding a turkey in Ouagadougou. We recalled that the previous year another brave soul (Jim Knowlton, 5U7JK, also an American) had talked of driving from Niamey to Ouagadougou just to buy a turkey (a whole day's driving each way), so we felt there was a good possibility of finding one there. We were due to drive from Ouagadougou to Niamey ourselves. If we found a turkey, we could buy an ice-chest and a sack of ice and keep the bird frozen all the way to deliver it to our kind host.

We had been in Ouagadougou several times before and were very familiar with the one and the only European-style supermarket in town. So we felt confident that we knew what to do. This was added to our 'to do' list some weeks before travelling to deepest, darkest.

Supermarché

So we turned up en masse (see, I speakie Frenchie), about five of us, to find a turkey at the local supermarket. This is a large establishment, run most efficiently by French people, offering every delight to please the expatriate community. We prowled the aisles, hunting for turkey, but none was to be found. We eventually found the boucherie (c'mon, keep up, that means butcher) and spotted fresh chickens and something that looked like a duck. But no large birds like turkeys or geese or pheasants.

Crestfallen, the group assembled to report progress to date (nil) and to formulate a plan. Should we just admit defeat and slink back to our hotel, tails between our legs? Hell, no. We weren't that easily beaten. We'd ask the supermarket boss to produce a turkey for us. Pah!

Now, the rest of the team assume that I speak fluent French. My secret is actually that my French is only about 10% better than anyone else's schoolboy French. (But that's about 99.7% better than any French spoken by our American pals – their French is about 10% less fluent than their classical Greek). Anyway, it was down to me to interrogate the French chap in order to determine whether said establishment had for sale a said turkey.

Trouble was that I had left my English/French dictionary back at the hotel and could not for the life of me remember the French word for 'turkey'. None of the others could remember either (I didn't even bother asking the Americans in the group). Of course, the word 'turkey' is easily translated into French as 'Turquie', but that wouldn't have helped much anyway as we did not wish to buy a country a bit to the east of Greece.

At this point G3SXW was reduced, as so often before and since, to describing his needs with means other than words. A description was not easy: "a large bird, like a chicken but much bigger" (en français) was met with a vacant and somewhat bemused if not pathetic stare, the likes of which only the French can muster.

Male or Female

At this point G3SXW and his new 'friend', the French manager of a large supermarket, are standing beside the fresh-meat display. He points at a duck with a weary, quizzical expression and I say "No, just like that, but much bigger, for the Americans, big feast tomorrow" (in French). You get my drift. Even a Frenchman who had lived in West Africa for several decades would remember what Thanksgiving was all about, surely? Nope. He had no clue.

Now you all remember the ‘Chicken Song’? Yup. You stand like an idiot, with your hands clasped together at chest height and flap your elbows in and out. To mime a turkey you have to do that and at the same time grasp your Adam’s apple with your left thumb and forefinger and go ‘oggle-oggle-oggle-oggle’. At this point the manager, either in desperation or in boredom, I was not sure which, asked: “Vous voulez acheter un dindon?”.

Being unaware of the French translation for ‘turkey’ this really did not help me much. I understood ‘You wish to buy a blank-blank?’. Help! At this point I had no option but to conclude that he had got my message, knew what I needed, that a ‘dindon’ was indeed a ‘turkey’. So I said ‘Oui’ in my very best French accent. He then said ‘Non’ and stamped away up the aisle in his arrogant, French way. I still did not know for sure whether we had communicated, but decided to give up anyway.

We elected, as a group, to give this up as a lost cause and approached the tills with our purchases – vast quantities of mineral water for the troops, vast quantities of Diet Coke for K5VT and a selection of crisps, biscuits and Pringles (pronounced in French ‘Prang-less’), whereupon we departed with our load in a creaking, squeaking taxi back to our hotel, managing to reach our destination just a few nano-seconds before the said mode of transportation disintegrated in a heap on the roadside.

The male/female bit (this sub-heading) is that turkeys in French have two words according to their sex. Blimey. A male turkey is a ‘dindon’ (pronounced ‘dandon’) and a female is a ‘dinde’ (pronounced ‘dand’). When I got back to my hotel room I was consumed with frustration and needed to check my dictionary. Of course, on reading the female ‘dinde’ I vaguely remembered it. But he had chosen to use the male version. Sod’s law.

To cut a long story short (though not very) we failed utterly and miserably to find a turkey in Ouagadougou and went empty-handed to Niamey. We explained to our host, Jim, that we had tried very hard, but failed. He was most gracious and set our minds at rest – he knew that this was a long-shot and was not surprised at our failure.

Chinese Instead

On the evening that he invited all eight of us to his home, a really generous act, we thoroughly enjoyed Oriental cooking from his Vietnamese XYL. The following evening (Thanksgiving) we all went for a very special meal in a Chinese restaurant across the road from our hotel. We did not see dinde or dindon on the menu and did not dare ask for it, but were very impressed indeed with their hot and sour soup, which massively blew many heads off. This was accompanied by a large number of toasts to our ex-colonials. Of course ‘Thanksgiving’ is when the Brits give thanks to God that the Americans finally decided to accept independence from Britain. Isn’t it?

The moral of the story – always take your pocket dictionary with you when shopping for turkeys in Africa. Alternative: turkeys should always take their dictionary with them when visiting the local clinic. But that is another story!

DXpeditioning is not all about operating radios!



DX Cluster Abuse

Roger Western, G3SXW

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While operating 5U5Z in the CQ WW CW contest in November we were connected to the DX Cluster, so we were monitoring spots. These were filtered for stations that were needed multipliers on our particular band. Several spots appeared for broken calls. HU5Z was a favourite.

On one occasion towards the end of the contest an ON4 station put out a spot for '5V5Z' on 40m. I swear I never sent my 5U call that way, so we will just have to assume that he could not read Morse. I am not too happy about DXers putting out wrong spots like this, but I am even less happy at the reaction of the DXer masses.

There was instantly a howling mass of callers on the frequency, all believing that they were calling a new multiplier in Togo – 5V5Z. I started trying to work them, but of course all the louder signals had already been worked on this band and were appearing on my screen as dupes. What to do?

I started transmitting my call continuously at 20 wpm, to hopefully disabuse these callers that they were not calling a new multiplier in Togo but a dupe in Niger. It did no good whatsoever. The howling mass just kept calling and calling and calling. After 3-4 minutes of this nonsense I just gave up and QSYed up the band.

This seemed to me symptomatic of a recent DXing trend. Firstly, to believe all that you read, in other words if it's on the Cluster just believe it. Don't switch your brain on and maybe think that '5V5Z' just might be a mistake for 5U5Z, a major multi-multi station with big signals on all bands all weekend that you have already worked - so this might not in

fact really be a very rare call that has suddenly appeared in the dying hours of the contest.

Secondly, to allow the software to QSY your rig to the frequency spotted on the Cluster and just to start calling without first listening is dangerous – it assumes that the spotter typed the call and the frequency correctly, eg he had no RIT shift. I could usually tell when the Cluster spot was 100 Hz off by the TX frequency of the callers.

Thirdly, and most critically, to just keep calling and calling and calling without bothering to listen for the DX station ruins it for everyone. On the calling end *please* please listen before calling. On the DX end, well – the idiot masses won't listen, so you'd best QSY right away. There's usually a spare frequency to be had somewhere up the band where you can start a new pile-up.

It's the old story. The tiny minority ruin it for the big majority. They may be only a few, but they make enough noise to cover up the frequency. And it might seem that many of them cannot copy Morse, apart possibly from their own callsign. Everything goes completely over their head except their own callsign, even at 20 wpm. This is a growing trend. It seems that this is becoming the rule rather than the exception these days.

Perhaps it's not a coincidence that this particular spot originated in Belgium. It must be said that ON DXers are amongst the worst culprits for continuous calling and poor DX operating technique. I'm finally starting to think, after decades of denying this, that a blacklist of the worst culprits may be a useful solution, including 'name and shame'.

Cook Islands 31 January – 5 March 2005

Tim Beaumont, M3SDE / ZK1SDE

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My plans to go back to ZK1 started in early 2004. I knew that by the time I had arrived in the Cook Islands the 11-year solar cycle was going to be very near the minimum, but I like a challenge and this was to be a huge one. The last activity I made from ZK1 was in October and November of 2002 and most of my DX was made on 10m and 15m, using a 10m monoband antenna and an autotuner, I was surprised how well this performed and with my one-man activation made 6,000 QSOs. This time, with the SFI being on the way down, I know that I would have to concentrate my next expedition on 15m, 17m and 20m - with some low band work added.

The dates were set and my flights all booked with my expedition travel guru Jed Berry. My licence was renewed after my last trip - and in fact doesn't expire until October 2005, so that was one job that I didn't have bother with. I was surprised how early I had to book the flights this time as in 2002 I booked my flight just weeks before my departure, but this time the pricing structure with Air New Zealand has changed and the later you book the more you pay. It was June 2004 and I was just able to get my seat on the plane for £893, although I did have to stay in Aitutaki Island for one week longer than planned to keep the cost down. Life's a beach!

My plan was to return to both Aitutaki Island, OC-083, in the South Cook Islands and also spend a week on Manihiki Atoll, OC-014, in the North Cook Islands. I decided that instead of begging for sponsors to get antennas it would be easier to have them made especially for the trip. I wanted high forward gain from monoband 15 and 20m yagis. I enlisted the help of our third team member Marti, M1DCV. He likes the challenge of building

his own equipment and he seemed to have some great ideas and agreed to take on this very important job for me. After some discussion about where we would get the aluminium from, we visited a company that Marti had bought some metal from before in Coventry. There we found Stu, full of enthusiasm and interested in our assignment – and he promptly gave us some samples to play with and telephoned around all his suppliers to get us the lightweight aluminium tubing that we needed.

I went away to discuss with some shipping companies how to get the boxes of antennas and masts out to Rarotonga Island in advance of our departure. I called several shipping companies with my enquiry for quotes to see who were the most helpful, reliable and trustworthy to deal with. One company was in London and when I received their e-mail I nearly fell off my chair laughing. I know that the Cook Islands are not your everyday destination for shipping goods, and most people say “Where is that?”, but the quote came back for routing the goods by *road* to Cork, in Ireland!! Needless to say I didn't follow up their quote.

The more I seemed to get involved with this trip, the more expensive it was turning out to be. My laptop was really on its last bytes after travelling around the world about 10 times over recent years, so I decided to invest in a new Pentium 4 laptop. That cost £735 and my wallet was starting to groan. Especially one day when I was surfing the web and stumbled (unintentionally, of course) on a digital camera warehouse. So I snapped up a Fuji Digi Cam for £445. That was really the reason I needed the laptop to download the images onto, as my old one did not have a CD writer.

30 July, 2004 – A few weeks ago I sent an e-mail to the managing director of Royal Mail, who I work for, asking for sponsorship for the expedition. Today I received a phone call from Royal Mail International saying that they were looking into the logistics of sending our freight to the Cook Islands free gratis, bingo!

September 2004 – This month I am pleased to announce and welcome new members to the team: Magnus Aronsson, SM6WET, and his girlfriend Anki, also Tomas Hansson, SM6XMY, and his girlfriend Pirjo. Magnus and Tomas are friends from several years and I am looking forward to joining up with the Swedish team as travel and expedition partners.

Mid-October 2004 - now over to Marti, M1DCV, for the next part of the story.

17 and 20m Monoband Antennas

At some point in 2004 my good friend Tim, ZK1SDE, approached me and asked if I would be interested in constructing the four monoband antennas for his trip to the Cook Islands, and without fully understanding what this entailed I accepted the challenge. Thinking that I had about 6 or 7 months to get this job done seemed more than enough time to allow for locating suppliers and designing the two antennas. Unknown to me at the time was the fact we only had a two- month time slot to get the antennas on the plane so they could start their trip to the Cooks.

At first I thought he was having a joke with me, pulling my leg, but not so. He was totally serious and, to make things just a little more fun, he then continued to explain what he needed the antennas to do and what compromises could be made and which ones could not. The antennas had to be strong but light, but also had to retain a good forward gain whilst retaining a fair F/B of about 18dB. Well, if you have ever constructed anything like this you will know how hard it is to find

good, lightweight aluminium and even harder to find tapered or telescoping sections suitable for antenna construction. As luck would have it I had made a good friend a while ago at a metal supplies wholesalers, without whom I don't think the project would have even made it off the drawing board. All of the aluminium was located from various places around the country and I started to construct the four monoband beams. The design was done using MMANA and QYAGI, both of which are free for amateur radio operators to use and can be found on the web without too much trouble and are both fairly user-friendly - QYAGI being the simplest. The design we ended up using has given us a good bandwidth of more than 150 kHz on 17m, with an SWR of 1.4:1, and interestingly only an SWR reading of about 2.8:1 on 15m - while still resonant on the band it was made for, which is 17m. Forward gain was quite good at 8.6dB, with a 23dB F/B ratio and a total beam weight of only 7kg for the 15m, and a forward gain of 8.2dB with a F/B ratio of 18.5dB and an all-up weight of just under 10kg for the 20m beam. So, with two months work now behind me of construction design and testing, the project goal has been achieved and all four antennas are ready to be flown and shipped to their final destinations. Good luck out there, lads! Marti, M1DCV

Well, thanks do not seem enough for the work that Marti has done for this expedition. It is really appreciated.

20 October 2004 - We now have 15 parcels weighing in at a total of 157kgs and containing antennas, masts, brackets and cables, dispatched to the Cook Islands and I have spoken to Glenn Hodson, who works for us at Parcel Force World Wide. This morning he confirmed that he had negotiated transit with Air New Zealand, also helping out in the sponsorship.

18 November 2004 – I have news that our cargo has now reached Rarotonga and will

now be shipped to the final destination by boat.

All flights have now been paid for and confirmed and thanks to some intervention from Queen Tutai Manarangi, our host on Aitutaki Island, Air Rarotonga have agreed to airlift us from Aitutaki on the way up to Manihiki on 17 February for the week-long activity of ZK1 North until 24 February.

Before returning to Aitutaki on 25 February I hope to meet up with Victor, ZK1CG, and Jim, ZK1JD, for a few beers on Rarotonga.

You can visit our website for the latest information on <http://www.zk1sde.co.uk>. Here you will find the itinerary of our trip, our band plan and further info on our team members.

We will be updating the proposed band plan nearer the time. There are several major DX-peditions at that same time and we do not wish to clash frequencies.

Please feel free to browse the site at any time, it will be updated during the expedition. Log books will also be uploaded there.

We will have four stations in operation: Tim, ZK1SDE, Jed, ZK1SDZ, Magnus, ZK1WET, and Tomas, ZK1XMY.

All stations on the North and South Cook Islands will be QSL via: *Tim Beaumont, PO Box 17, Kenilworth, Warwickshire CV8 1SF, UK.* or via the Bureau to M3SDE (I prefer direct. The Bureaux are not keen on my four-sided special QSL card)

From Manihiki Atoll, North Cook Islands, only Tim and Jed will be active as the Swedish team members will be flying back home.

On the webpage you can also see the story of our previous trips to ZK1 and some photographs of the Paradise Island. I do hope to work you all. Don't forget to say that you're a member of CDXC when you work me. There may be a special prize for you in the post!

73 de Tim and team

All's Well that Ends Well – a DX venture to the Bahamas

Randy Johnson, W6SJ *randyj@loan-wolf.com*

After my first successful DX venture to the Bahamas in February 2004, I got ambitious and thought about testing the limits of what I could fool the airlines into accepting as baggage and what I could manage from a logistical standpoint. We really loved the island and even though it had suffered some hurricane damage, we made plans to visit Grand Bahama Island again in November to participate in the CQ WW DX CW Contest.

On the last trip I took just a two vertical antennas and a dipole for 80m. These worked well during the ARRL DX contest, but all I had to do was contact US stations, no great test. With dreams of DX dancing like sugar plums in my head, I started making more adventuresome plans.

Working DX was a good bit harder and I tried to develop a good band plan. Carl, K9LA, was very helpful getting me started. I also

tried just about every propagation program I could find, to wit: W6ELProp, DXPROP, PropHF, HamCap, WinCap, and SpotPath. I also used the spreadsheets that come on the CD distributed with the ARRL Antenna Book. It was an interesting exercise, one that I will write about at some time in the future.

Finally, I developed a list of all of the announced DX operations, printed out maps of various areas, and put little stickers with their calls on as appropriate. I then spent hours developing a plan whereby I might contact as many of the rare entities and rare zones as I could.

Logistically, I had to limit myself to wire antennas and a maximum package length of 4'. And I wanted antennas that would have more gain than a dipole or a vertical. I had a successful experience with a Moxon antenna during Field Day, so I built one for 20m. At least I knew its potential.

I gathered some data on a double-extended zepp antenna for 15m, one that had several dB gain over a dipole. I built it, erected it at home, and my SGC-239 remote tuner was able to tune to less than 2:1 SWR.

I had great hopes for running a lot of contacts with Europe on 40m. I had signed up for the ARRL Antenna Modeling course and using EZNEC, designed a 40m Inverted Vee Beam with a theoretical gain of 6 dB. Finally, I built a 160m dipole a full 256' long for both 160 and 80m. I had my trusty Sigma 5 vertical for 10m and as back-up for the other bands.

My rig consisted of an Icom IC-706MkIIIG rig with an MFJ antenna tuner, Logikey keyer and a computer loaded with N3JFP's logging software. No Internet access was available due to hurricane damage, but that was OK.

We left on Thanksgiving Day and the next morning I started erecting antennas. I bought one of those aluminum masts that come in 4'

sections, and with a little help soon had my Moxon 28' up, theoretically its optimum height. With two sets of guy ropes, the mast survived over 48 hours of winds that exceeded 40 mph on occasions, although I lost internal guying in the Moxon which messed up its geometry.

The center of the driven element of the 40m Vee beam was hoisted on a pulley to the top of the Moxon tower and the ends were supported by 15' crappie poles. I had brought two 32' telescopic poles. One was erected 16' to the SW of the 40m driven element, holding the reflector and pointing the array to Europe.

The other pole was erected near the cottage, with the center of the 160m dipole at the apex, and a pulley at 24' to hold the center of the 15m zepp. Amazingly, I was able to erect the entire farm in one day, finishing at sundown, two hours before the contest started, so I had virtually no time for testing. Mistake!

By 1845, after a quick shower and dinner, I was ready to get things going, only to find that my computer screen was going black, a problem it had had six months before, but not since. I borrowed another laptop from my hosts and logged the first three hours of the contest on an Excel spreadsheet, not something I advise you to try.

Quite frankly I had trouble getting antennas to tune correctly and kept fiddling around with them, trying to get something to work. The 40m beam was giving me fits, not tuning consistently, so I switched to the 160m dipole - which didn't tune at all on 160, but did tune acceptably on 40 and 80m. Of course, at its modest height, the radiation pattern is virtually circular.

The Moxon worked great on 20m, tuning at <1.5:1 with an S9 + 10. I had good results with it - and my computer decided to wake up, so I started using my logging program, and finally got a good run going. Results with 40m

were not as good and I went to bed about midnight.

I got up early the next morning, hoping to work JAs on 40m with my beam, but heard few and only worked one. I fiddled around with 10m for a while, making a few contacts. 20m was a zoo and I decided to let it cool off and work on 15m for a while. The zepp was tuning at about 3:1 and my trusty Sigma 5 vertical was 1:1 with nice signal reports when I asked, 579 in Europe. I managed to get a good run going, well over 150 per hour, when all of a sudden, I could not hear a thing. The S-meter showed life, but no audio.

I fiddled round with my rig for a while, but the sad truth was that the audio amplifier in the IC-706 had blown. I thus discovered a little-known threat which all hams should guard against: LISTENING TOO HARD CAN RUIN YOUR AUDIO AMPLIFIER! I have never seen a warning about this on a radio, so was unaware of it before this. Perhaps someone should do some research on this seldom discussed hazard!

I did not have a spare rig, so I was out of business, finished, kaputt, QRT. I had put an enormous amount of planning and preparation into this trip, and was very hopeful of hanging up a credible score, but the lack of a solution meant my fate was sealed so completely that there just didn't seem to be any point in sulking about it.

You may remember the word *hubris*, a Greek concept where the gods punished people who got too presumptuous, who aimed too high. The gods always had the last word, knocking them down a few pegs. I don't think that I was presumptuous, but I do believe that I bit off more than was reasonable for a one-man operation. That said, I'd do the same thing again if I could take along a partner.

Is there room for more than just vertical antennas or dipoles on a solo DX venture

operation? Probably so, but I'd stick to one hot antenna, like a Moxon or a quad, and then do a multi-band vertical like the Sigma 5 or a multi-band wire like a G5RV for everything else - and just not worry about any shortfall. I'd also give serious thought into putting all the effort into a single-band effort. I left the Moxon there and maybe next year I'll do a 20m SOSB.

I am a big believer in redundancy. I had two keyers, two antenna tuners, and two antennas that could work acceptably on the popular bands. Truthfully, I thought that I had covered all of the basics. Not so, obviously. We assume that these modern, well-engineered transceivers are 99.99% reliable, but that's not 100%. I should have taken a back-up rig along too.

As Yogi Bear surely could have said, "You ought to take along some EXTRA redundancy".

What else did I gain from this? First, a delightful week in the Bahamas with my wife! Second, I had the opportunity to run at a rate in excess of 150 per hour, at least for a while. Third, I learned a lot about propagation. Fourth, I started learning how to build antennas and predict their performance. Fifth, I learned to know my limitations.

"Wait a minute," you ask, "Going to all that work and then having an abrupt QRT a quarter of the way into a contest sounds like a horrible conclusion, so what was this about All's Well That Ends Well?"

The answer is that the fishing was terrific! I managed to catch a couple of dozen bonefish, over half in the 3-5 pound class, and one over 7 pounds. We also saw and had a shot at several very respectable fish that were in the 10 to 12 pound class. They'll still be there when I go back, and I will! But this time I'll be sure to do a SOSR, that's Single Operator-Spare Radio!

The Icom IC-7800 Transceiver

reviewed by John Butcher, G3LAS

The year 2004 saw the announcement of two new 'flagship' HF transceivers: the Icom IC-7800 and the Yaesu FT-DX9000, although the latter was not expected to appear in the UK until December. Both claim, with some justification, to be a class above anything previously available for the amateur market. Certainly the price of either suggests that this should be true! I was very fortunate to be given the opportunity to try out the IC-7800 for a few days and this review presents my impressions. It is not a full-blown technical assessment, which would have taken much longer and which can, in any case, be found elsewhere [1, 2]. Instead it is an account, partly subjective, of the impact that this rig made on me as an operator and HF DX enthusiast.

What is it?

The IC-7800 is a 200W transceiver covering the ten 'normal' amateur bands from 1.8 to 50 MHz (additionally 5 MHz in the USA). It offers CW, SSB, RTTY, PSK, AM and FM modes. There are two identical receiver channels, designated 'main' and 'sub' receivers which cover from 30 kHz to 60 MHz. However, unlike most other rigs, the sub-receiver is in no way designed to a lower specification than the main one. There is a built-in mains power supply and an automatic antenna tuner.

To support the main functionality, there is, as one would expect, a wealth of facilities for tailoring the operational characteristics and providing the desired user interfaces. In fact, it would be difficult to think of anything which is missing, without going into the realms of the obscure or the ultra-specialist.

Given the functionality listed above, it is inevitable that the rig would be physically substantial. The front panel is 424 x 129mm and you would need to allow a depth, front-to-back, of at least 600mm on the operating desk. The weight, at about 25kg, will not encourage anyone to carry it far unaided. For comparison, the relevant numbers for its junior cousin, the IC-756ProII are 340 x 111 x 380mm with a weight of about 9.6kg – quite a difference!

Appearance

The front panel is dominated by a 15 x 9cm LCD colour display which carries the comprehensive metering and status indicators and also a multi-function band spectrum display. The content of this screen depends on the operating mode and can also be varied to suit the operator's preferences.

The rest of the front panel accommodates an imposing array of push buttons and knobs – I counted 114 but I could be wrong. It should be said that the design of the panel is excellent, paying attention to ergonomic and functional needs. Controls are grouped logically, knobs are of sensible sizes and there is no undue degree of multi-functionality which would require the user to memorise a litany of command alternatives.

Round the back you will find all the usual connection points, including four antenna sockets, CI-V control, transverter I/O, sound card signal I/O and, less commonly, connectors for an external keyboard, an RS232 port, an external display screen and the output of a number of metering signals for remote indication..

Software

In any modern rig there is a fair amount of software functionality and upgrading is important, especially when, as is apparently the case for the 7800, a product is intended to have a lifetime of up to 15 years. Icom's initial upgrade method was via an RJ-45 socket on the back of the 7800 which permits an Ethernet connection to a PC network. The update data file is downloaded from the Icom web site. Later the alternative of using a Compact Flash memory card which plugs into the front panel was introduced. The card can be sent to Icom for loading with an upgrade file or, if a card writer is available, it can be done 'at home' via a direct download from the Internet. The networking capability, together with the presence of an RS232 port should lead to a variety of new possibilities. In fact, equipment of this specification and quality cries out for software extensions and compatibility with the many excellent programmes and hardware add-ons, some of which are available now and more of which will no doubt appear in future.

Setting Up

Anyone who knows the IC-756Pro series of transceivers will recognise the heritage of the 7800. The basic human interface and control philosophy are the same and the control layout is similar, although not identical. This should be encouraging, because I have always found this family of rigs to be very easy to set up and operate with a relatively short learning curve. To aid this process there is a very comprehensive ring-bound manual running to nearly 200 pages, plus a set of circuit diagrams. The text of the manual is clear and logical with only a few relatively minor omissions and ambiguities, some of the latter possibly being attributable to the translation from the Japanese.

Most of the functions which you might wish to change or adjust while operating are

accessed by entering an appropriate menu which brings up the relevant screen for setting parameters. In general, a set-up mode is entered by pressing a button marked 'SET' or by holding down the relevant push button for one second – not too difficult to remember. The display then makes it obvious what you need to do to change a setting and save the result.

There is a second level of set-up functions which are likely to be needed infrequently. Many will simply be customising the rig to an individual operator's preferences. These settings are also accessed from a series of menus and again the process is painless, with no requirement for any codes or commands to be remembered or looked up in the manual – although of course, you can refer to this is you feel the need. It's all in there.

CF Memory Card

If you are the kind of person who often 'fiddles' with the set-up of a rig and then wants to get back to a 'normal' situation, you will appreciate the feature which allows many of the settings and memory contents to be saved to the Compact Flash card mentioned above. The manual is a little unclear as to exactly what can or cannot be saved in this way, but I am sure a little research and experimentation would bring enlightenment. If the back-up includes the relevant settings, this facility would obviously be very useful in a multi-operator environment such as contesting and DXpeditioning. Unfortunately, the manual does not say explicitly that this is the case.

Data Modes

I think it is worth spending a little time on the provision for data modes. I believe this is the first commercial transceiver to offer both receive decoding and a transmit capability for RTTY and PSK. The IC-756Pro has an RTTY decoder, but that is all. In the 7800, RTTY is implemented as FSK. Provision is made also

for AFSK on SSB, AM and FM using audio I/O to and from an external source, eg a PC sound card. This involves selection of the source and output and appropriate muting of the microphone I/P. SSTV can be accommodated with a scan converter etc. connected to the rear accessory socket.

The data mode decode screens are very informative. They include text areas for receive and transmit, simultaneous spectrum and waterfall tuning displays, a threshold setting indicator and a list of transmit macro contents. All this together with the basic TX/RX metering and even the band spectrum scope if you so wish. You might think this would leave the 15 x 9cm screen a little overcrowded, but in fact I did not find it a problem, even to my rather geriatric eyes. The text is very clear.

The performance of the decoder on RTTY is really excellent, as good as most outboard sound card systems I have seen, giving clear copy even of fairly weak signals. On PSK, earlier reviewers commented that it was necessary to be very precise with the tuning, perhaps using the 1 Hz step setting of the dial. However, AFC and Net functions were introduced, together with an FFT scope averaging function for data modes, when version 1.2 of the software was issued in August 2004. Using the AFC, which pulls in signals from 15 Hz or so, tuning PSK now is not difficult. I got virtually 100% copy for long periods on signals at S3 or less with QSB and QRM using a filter width of 100 Hz. To transmit text 'off the cuff' on either mode, one needs to plug in a USB keyboard. However, in the absence of a keyboard, the pre-programmed macros, eight for each mode, can still be sent from the 7800 screen.

The Crunch – How does it perform and is it worth the money?

I hope many readers will understand what I mean when I say that one can tell within two

minutes of touching the controls that the IC-7800 is a class act. Such an impression is difficult to quantify, but it has to do with the smoothness of operation, the way buttons and knobs fall easily to hand, the ease in guessing as a novice how to do something and, of course, the auditory experience as one tunes across a crowded band, be it SSB or CW.

Further investigation involves the exercising of the various functions, first of which will probably be the selectivity. "Can I copy the weak station buried in a mass of QRM?" In this respect the 7800 has by far the best receiver I have ever used; in fact it has two of them. Whether it's a function of intermodulation, crossover distortion or simply an adjacent signal, there were very few, if any, times when I couldn't copy a station which I thought I should. Often, the ability to 'lose' an unwanted signal was quite dramatic. This might, for example, be accomplished with the notch filter, the audio peak filter, the reverse-CW setting or the IF band pass tuning. There is also a switchable IF 'roofing filter' and a so-called 'digital selector' which adjusts the centre frequency of the automatic RF preselector. On CW it was possible to use the IF passband tuning to squeeze the bandwidth down to 50 Hz with no detectable loss of clarity or signal strength. One can only hope the stability of the transmitter at the other end is as good.

I was particularly impressed with the performance of the digital passband tuning, whereby the IF response can be adjusted in width and shifted to discriminate between adjacent signals. For some reason I had never had much success with this feature on the 756Pro and ProII, but on the 7800 it works just fine! I don't know if this was due to my inherent skill or because there has been a change in the IF circuitry, but it was very noticeable.

For CW enthusiasts there is a novel facility called Autotune. A touch of a button will tune

accurately and automatically to the nearest signal. Of course, in a crowded band this may occasionally not be the signal you wanted to listen to. I had to think for a bit to come up with a good reason for using this trick, but it does mean that if you switch from CW to CW-R, ie go to the other side of the CW signal to escape QRM, the resulting sound pitch of the signal you want does not change, while all the others do, which is nice.

The residual noise level and sensitivity were similarly impressive. A couple of years ago, the IC-756ProII showed a significant improvement over the previous model in this respect and the 7800 is at least as good. It may be better, but under on-air conditions it is difficult to find a time when the external noise is low enough for a meaningful test. Although I was set up to switch instantly between the 7800 and a 756ProII, one would also have to spend time setting up and matching the audio responses and the speaker or headphones to form a reliable subjective impression.

The same applies to the noise reduction features, which comprise a clever and effective digital noise reducer for extracting signals from noise and also a sophisticated pulse noise blanker. These have been further developed since the ProII, but one would have to try the new rig for a longer time in various conditions to assess fully the end result.

One thing which caused me a little bother was the DRIVE control. This is the gain control for the TX driver stage. The manual is very confusing, not to say wrong on this adjustment. I consulted Icom for an explanation and discovered that in fact the main purpose of it is to set up the speech compression. However, it has to be set also for the other modes. Since the DRIVE, MIC and COMP controls are all adjusted while looking at the ALC meter, I was still left more confused than I would like. I needed more time to sort this out and, having understood what to do, would like then to have checked

whether the drive needs to be adjusted once only or whether it is affected by changes in frequency, band or mode.

Another omission on my part due to lack of time was a check on the effectiveness of the memory of the automatic ATU settings. It would be inconvenient if one often had to wait while this re-tuned itself. I must add that I have no reason to suppose that there is a problem. Certainly there is not in the case of the 756Pro.

Those readers who wonder about other features which I have not had the time or space to mention can be assured that all or most of what you might want are there. A list includes programmable and memory scanning, channel memories (101), data and voice recording and playback, repeater tones, timer functions etc. The transverter I/O socket can be used to achieve operation on other frequency bands, including perhaps 136 kHz. The latter possibility is specifically mentioned in the manual, implying that a low level CW transmitter output at 135.7-137.8 kHz is available at this socket.

If you read the in-depth technical reviews, you will see that the measured performance figures of the transceiver are excellent and in line with the manufacturer's claims. Add to this the full range of advanced operating features and there is no doubt that this is a superb rig, taking the state of the art a stage further than the level of its predecessors. Of course, it is correspondingly expensive. When the topic comes up in conversation, many people will say, "I don't need it. It won't gain me any more new countries and it won't get me higher up the results table of my favourite contests". This may well be true, at least to a first approximation. It could, however, shorten the time spent waiting in pile-ups and slightly reduce one's blood pressure in those contests. One could say something similar about a Mercedes or a Ferrari as a vehicle for commuting to work. Nevertheless, few would

pass up an opportunity to enjoy the extra comfort and sheer fun of driving the top-of-the-range model and occasionally there will be a situation in which the humble Mini or Fiesta just doesn't cut the mustard.

Quibble time

No matter how 'ultimate' a piece of equipment may be, it must always be possible to find something which could be improved. In the case of the 7800 this is not easy. It would be unfair to pick on anything which is really esoteric or which falls outside the already broad application range of the rig. In the five days of my test I could not fault the electrical performance, the user-friendliness or the functionality in any significant respect. Some deficiencies which were observed in the transceiver when it was originally released have already been addressed in updates. I am therefore forced to fall back on relatively trivial quibbles.

Perhaps the most annoying is the fact that there are only four memories in the cw keyer. This is not enough, especially for contest operating. Curiously there are eight such memories available for RTTY and PSK transmission.

The width limitation of 500 kHz in the band spectrum display is irritating on 10m and, to a lesser extent, on 6m. It would be nice to have more than one segment available in these bands.

The above points do not seem to involve major design or construction issues. It is therefore surprising that they have arisen in such an otherwise excellent rig. Hopefully they could be the subject of future software updates.

It would be useful to be able to output a steady CW carrier, perhaps at a variable power level, for tuning purposes, eg with a non-Icom linear or an external ATU, from any mode setting by

a single button press. At present it might be necessary to switch to CW, perhaps press the Transmit button and then the key. After tuning, the reverse process would be needed to take you back whence you came.

The display screen is slightly unfortunate in that if it is viewed from a point above the horizontal, which would normally be the case, the contrast is degraded. The black background acquires a bluish-grey tint. Curiously, if the screen is above eye level this does not happen. One can only wonder if it would be possible to install the screen the other way up.

Finally, since I have been unable to come up with any further significant criticisms, I can only add that, although the manual is pretty good, it could be better. There are a few omissions and in places one has to struggle to understand the phraseology.

Summing Up

Summing up is easy. If you need a 200W, 'one box' transceiver with two super receivers which covers the HF bands and 6m on at least SSB, CW, FM, RTTY and PSK, look no further. If you also enjoy operating a quality piece of equipment which has been designed and engineered with very close regard for the needs of the user, you will want an IC-7800. If you can't afford it, you will just feel so envious of those who can. The transceiver is priced currently at £6,400 from, inter alia, Martin Lynch & Sons. Try guessing and adding up the cost of separate comparable component systems and see what it might come to.

References

1. Peter Hart, G3SJX, RSGB RadCom, August 2004, pp 18-22
2. Various authors, QST, August 2004, pp 64-70

Acknowledgements

It is a pleasure to thank Icom UK Ltd and Martin Lynch for the loan of the transceiver for this review. It is less of a pleasure to give it back. It would have been fun to spend much longer looking for a few more adverse criticisms.



The Kenwood TS-480 Transceiver

reviewed by John Butcher, G3LAS

First Impressions

When I took the TS-480 out of its box I was surprised to find that it looked as if it was designed primarily as a mobile rig. I must admit that, having seen only some of the advertisements, I was expecting a fixed station transceiver.

It comes as two units, a small control panel connected by a cable to the main TX/RX unit. Two cables are provided, one 4m long and the other 20cm. The two units cannot be intimately docked together, but there is a one-piece mounting bracket provided to which they can be bolted, leaving a gap of about 4-5cm. The bracket has a carrying handle. In this configuration the control unit can be tilted back by about 45 degrees. The microphone and key are connected to the main unit, which might cause a problem in some remote installations. For operating in fixed station mode, a smaller, desktop mounting plate is provided for the control unit. In this way the main box can be hidden away and the total desktop foot print is then only about 18 x 10cm, slightly less than that of my 50-year old Vibroplex bug key.

There are two versions of the TS-480. The SAT model has a built-in automatic antenna tuner and gives 100W output on SSB, CW, FSK and FM reducing to 25W on AM. The HX version has no ATU, but gives 200W on SSB, CW, FSK and FM (100W on 6m) with 50W on AM (25W on 6m). Both models require a 13.8V DC input. The version reviewed was the TS-480SAT, which included as options the narrow SSB and CW filters together with the digital voice recording module and a high-stability TCXO.

A scan of the excellent manual reveals that the TS-480 has a very high specification and is full of advanced features, much more like a full-blown fixed station rig than a mobile. The question arises, therefore, as to whether it is appropriate for either market or whether it falls unfortunately between the two. As a mobile, the small size and high spec are obviously positive features. However, with sophistication often comes complexity in operation. For a fixed station, small size can be desirable, but more often a user is looking for an advanced specification combined with an efficient and ergonomic human interface. This review attempts to throw some light on the seeming dichotomy.

TS-480 Features

No attempt has been made to check the claimed performance figures of this radio. Relevant measurements have been made by others [1, 2]. Suffice it to say that both the reviewers were satisfied with the figures, rating it as good as or better than other rigs in a similar category and in some respects comparable to more expensive equipment. In both cases, the main, slight reservation concerned the ability of the TS-480 receiver to discriminate against strong, close-in (5 kHz) interfering signals.

The present review is more concerned with the 'operability' of the rig and the degree to which it might meet the needs of the user. Most amateur operators would not be satisfied with even the ultimate in performance if it came at the expense of difficulty in setting up, changing mode or frequency and adapting quickly to a change in the on-air situation. It should also be remembered that no two operators have identical requirements, whether it be mobiling, rag chewing, contesting or DX chasing.

As mentioned above, the TS-480 is packed with modern and advanced features. Apart from those 'normal' functions which you would expect to find, there is: audio DSP filtering including specific provision for data modes, an electronic memory keyer (albeit with only three memories), FM repeater operation (including CTCSS), a 100-channel memory and quick (temporary) memories, frequency scanning, automatic sub-band mode memory, transverter offset frequency display, frequency/mode data transfer to compatible (Kenwood) transceivers, full software control from an external computer or network and a speech recorder (optional extra). Cross-band repeater operation and a DX cluster interface are possible using a link to a Kenwood TM-D700 VHF/UHF transceiver.

In short, the TS-480 is a full-featured base station transceiver with a number of advanced features, disguised physically as a typical mobile rig.

Operating the TS-480

I can dispose of the performance aspects of operating this rig fairly quickly. It is technically very good in both receiving and transmitting and bears out fully the findings of the detailed reviews. As such I have no serious adverse criticisms.

It is, perhaps, worth mentioning that the rig comes with 2.4 kHz (CW and SSB) and 6 kHz (AM) IF filters as standard. One or two additional narrow IF filters can be installed, reducing the bandwidth to 1.8 kHz, 500 Hz or 270 Hz. In the absence of the optional filters, the ultimate selectivity can still be varied with the audio DSP circuitry which introduces a narrow passband, the width of which can be adjusted from the front panel. The DSP is used also to implement a notch filter, noise reduction circuitry and a pulse noise blanker.

Any debate as to the perceived characteristics of the TS-480 will probably centre on its physical configuration and, in particular, on the restrictions imposed by its front panel area of only 17 x 7cm.

Obviously there is room for only a limited number of controls. I counted 40, which might sound a lot, but my Icom IC-7800 has 114! OK, the two rigs are not strictly comparable, but it is clear that operating the TS-480 will involve a lot of remembering of multi-functional knobs and buttons.

Unfortunately, the labelling will not help much because space prohibits all but a minimum of lettering. Most buttons have two functions initiated by a quick press and a longer, one second press. Each action is, in most cases toggled by a second press. Where a button press calls up a variable parameter such

as a filter width or a power level, that value is adjusted either by successive button presses or by the use of a 'Multi-function' knob.

Behind the direct functions of the controls there is a menu system which permits the adjustment of no less than 60 parameters. These, generally speaking, need to be set less often than those with direct panel control. A neat touch is that there are actually two independent menu parameter sets, each of which can be configured to suit a particular operator or operating situation and the set required can be recalled instantaneously. It is also possible to simplify the system by defining a customised 'Quick Menu' which includes only the functions which are needed most frequently.

A necessary consequence of the limited panel space is that the value or setting of many of the parameters can be seen on the screen only while the adjustment is being made, although the most important ones are indicated by appropriate symbols in the display. This means that the operator may be unaware of many of the current settings without re-accessing the menu.

Clearly an elephantine memory would be a major asset, but I suspect that many people would need to do more button pushing and manual searching than they would like. I find it difficult to assess how much of this distraction might be overcome by an extended period of familiarisation with the rig.

One thing I hope is that mobile operators would remember to pull over and stop before attempting some of the more complex control manoeuvres.

Actually performing the control procedures is not a major problem. The buttons are of a reasonable size, given the space limitation, and I found myself pressing two at once only infrequently. Nevertheless, long finger nails might be inadvisable. At first I was rather put

off by the stiffness of the tuning knob, thinking it would be very difficult to tune quickly over a band. There is a torque adjustment but I found this did not make much difference in the review transceiver. However, I then discovered that the very versatile multifunction knob also acts as an incremental tuning knob with steps variable from 500 Hz to 1 MHz, depending on the chosen mode and this does enable a rapid QSY.

The optional digital voice module has a useful feature in that it can be configured to recording the last 30 seconds of audio received on a rolling basis. This enables a check to be made on call signs etc. which might have been missed first time around.

Software Control

In common with most modern transceivers, the TS-480 is designed with a considerable amount of software interface possibilities. For example, it can be linked with other compatible (Kenwood) rigs for exchange of frequency and mode data – useful for multi-station contests and expeditions. It can also link to the TM-D700 VHF/UHF transceiver which has a built-in DX cluster TNC. Spots received on the D700 can then be selected to shift the TS-480 to the required frequency.

Perhaps the most significant software interface is the (free) ARCP-480 downloadable package which enables the transceiver to be controlled by a PC via a serial port. A second package extends this to enable control over a network, opening up the possibility of further remote operation, although due regard would need to be paid to licensing and legal restrictions.

I found that the ARCP-480 programme downloaded, installed and worked with no problems – once I had sorted out the wiring of my serial lead. As can be seen, the display shows a fairly conventional panel layout with a variety of real-time active 'buttons' and even a tuning 'knob'. The display is larger than the

control unit panel and makes much more information visible. It may well be that some operators would find this method of controlling the TS-480 easier than using the physical front panel. Of course, there would still be quite a learning curve and one would have to get used to working via a mouse rather than with real knobs and buttons.

The simulated tuning knob, for example, can be operated by clicking and holding with the mouse and moving it either clockwise or anti-clockwise. The transceiver frequency and the readout on the computer follow the movement smoothly and without any discernable delay.

I should add that I was using a fast processor and cannot say what would happen in other cases. The 'Multi' virtual button brings up a sub-panel of 14 adjustments with drop-down lists for setting such parameters as vox gain, speech processor levels, keyer speed, etc. The RF, AF and squelch gain controls are sliders, again operated by the mouse or by using the menu bar to select the control and the arrow keys to move it. Most of the functions have key strokes as an alternative to mouse selection. The computer Function Keys can also be assigned to the operations as desired.

It seems to me that the computer control interface may well be rather easier to learn and less of a memory strain than using the physical panel.

However, it does, of course, rather offset the advantage of having a very small footprint when using the TS-480 panel remote from its main unit.

If a computer logging programme is used, there may be scope for simultaneous display of the logger and the rig control screens, but I suspect one would then need either two monitors or one very large one.

Summary

The main conclusion is that the TS-480 is a high specification, modern transceiver with a number of advanced features squeezed miraculously into a box measuring 28 x 18 x 5cm. It would serve as an excellent mobile rig, although some might feel that many of its capabilities represent a degree of overkill for mobile operation. It is small and lightweight, seemingly ideal for portable use but in contests and DXpeditions one would have to raise questions about the ease and flexibility of operation, especially by anyone who had not served a reasonably long apprenticeship at the controls. As a fixed station rig it does seem to suffer from the consequences of its small size which might not be seen to offer significant advantage in itself and which, again, results in undesirable operational complexity. However, it does lend itself to a very compact desktop layout, whether or not the software control mode is used.

The TS-480 sells currently at about £950 - £1000, depending on the model etc. It might be difficult to find another transceiver with a comparable technical specification at that price, but against that must be set any questions about the user-friendliness in operation. As always, fitness for purpose and cost-effectiveness will be the factors dictating a purchasing decision.

Acknowledgement

I am happy to thank Kenwood Electronics UK Ltd for the loan of the review equipment.

References

1. Peter Hart, G3SJX, RSGB RadCom, March 2004, p. 33
2. Rick Lindquist, N1RL, ARRL QST, June 2004, p. 66

The Ten-Tec Orion – a User Impression

Stan Rudcenko, GØKBL

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My best ever short wave receiver when I started as OK1-579 in about 1960 was a pre-WWII family Telefunken superhet, magic eye and all. I put a piece of coax as close to the IF coils as possible without detuning the radio, and the other end was connected to a German EL (L meaning long wave) tank (or was it aircraft) receiver which you could get for a song. Tuning the superhet onto a spot on 15m band (it had a bandspread function, so finding the amateur band was easy), the EL was then used to tune around 20 kHz each way within the IF.

It must have been close to solar maximum then, seeing as the band was full of old colonial African stations at S9+ on both CW and AM and I was in heaven. I will never forget the joy of tuning through the noise, with stations coming all of a sudden up and disappearing just as quickly. The EL itself had a narrow filter which made this set-up so wonderfully selective that it seemed like the band was empty, and of course what I was doing was a primitive double conversion, which is standard now. I used this set-up for quite some time, despite family complaints that I was doing something terrible to the big radio. Why am I saying this? Well, I remembered all this when I turned on my new Orion – tuning on an empty band with stations just popping up like jack in a box. This was the selectivity I remembered.

Selectivity on the Orion really is pure magic. With the 250 CW roofing filter switched in, the S9+ station really drops off if you move 250 Hz away. During the CW contest it was no problem picking up a weak VK2 station on 7017.85 MHz despite the presence of a station on 7017.20 at S9+40 on the meter. A

weak JA station on 7017.89 was also 100% readable. Using PBT, which works much better than my Icom (though the graphics are not as nice), it was possible to obliterate most residual clicks from the strong station. I tried a S9++ station on 80m; on 3510.8 MHz, the signal could not be heard on 3511.8 with the 250 CW/or 500 CW roofing filter, but could clearly be heard on the 1 kHz roofing filter even with PBT down to 100 Hz. The 250 CW filter seems to work better than the 500 CW filter, which are both optional. This has something to do with the 12dB preamp switched in when you engage 500/250 Hz filters which is too much for the 500 Hz, but right for the 250 Hz one. I installed a 600 Hz INRAD filter (replacing the 1 kHz filter fitted as standard) which does not have a preamp switched in, and this seems to improve things.

Since INRAD also does 250 Hz and 400 Hz filters at no higher cost than the optional ones available, it may be worth putting in those to start with, or just the 600 Hz and 250 Hz filters. The filters do make a such a big difference that it makes me wonder why even the best Icom 7800 uses just 6 kHz and offers 15 kHz for the new Icom Pro III update. The answer seems to be that the first IF on Icom is so high that a narrow roofing filter would be unstable. As things are, there is no question at all that selectivity is noticeably better than the Icom PRO, but again, things may have improved with the later versions, and with the 7800.

What the Orion also has, and the Icom 756Pro has not, is a highly effective, if idiosyncratic, NR. This can be adjusted and really improves the signal-to-noise ratio perceptibly, as well as getting rid of some of the noise. I believe the

Icom 756ProII has improved, but the original PRO just cannot do anything like this. The trick seems to be turning it off and on so that the algorithm works on the signal you want, but this may be just my imagination. QSK/Break-in system also seems to work much better, but I have not really explored the Icom as I do not use QSK. The second receiver, which the Icom does not have, also seems as good as the main one.

The Orion definitely beats my Icom in terms of performance for CW DXing purposes by a significant margin. But ease of use is not so straightforward and Orion does not always score over the Icom. To a large extent the difference seems to be in the underlying set-up. If the Icom is still a radio with computer bits added mainly at the audio end, the Ten-Tec definitely seems a computer first and radio second. There is some disagreement on the Ten-Tec reflector whether the Orion really is a proper Software Defined Radio, but this seems more to do with semantics. If you do not like computers, or find them intimidating, then this is probably not for you.

The only control which is not defined by software is the on-off switch, I think. It shows in three ways: there are some functions which follow computer logic rather than user logic and are more cumbersome than dedicated hardware, which is simply switched on or off. Second, the CW can have a distinctly synthetic sound at times on receive. Finally, it is possible to make the whole thing crash without knowing exactly why, but switching it off and on again works.

As for the computer versus user logic, RIT/XIT buttons are a perfect example. If you move RIT, XIT does not automatically follow when you press the XIT button. If you want to have both move in the same direction and at the same pace, both RIT/XIT must be switched on, with RIT switched on and off. But half of the time, RIT/XIT end up on different frequencies, which is practically

useless in a pile-up, unless you remember to follow the precise sequence. You can of course use the second receiver, but you have to follow a sequence again. If you are in the stereo mode, you have to press audio button first, then press the stereo button, then turn the multi (menu) knob then press a left headphone button, turn the knob to say you want it to be main receiver, or both, then do the same with the left headphone button, then adjust receiver volume. That's potentially eight operations, all perfectly logical but cumbersome and time consuming. These are just two examples, and there are quite a few more where the computer logic is not exactly synonymous with user logic. Just like your average computer programme, in fact.

The beauty of the Orion is that if enough people complain, the firmware will be adjusted and updating is really easy via the Internet. There is a third or fourth firmware update already, ironing out many of these little irritations and problems. But potentially an even more interesting development is the ease with which the Orion can be not only computer controlled, but your own computer can take over some of the functions of the radio and improve on them. (see <http://www.ralabs.com/n4py/> for one such programme). If I understand this correctly, then it should be in principle possible to use all my desktop computer power to run the system and make the DSP, or NR, or anything else far more sophisticated than it is already without ever having to change the hardware, or buying an Icom 7800 which cost more than twice as much. All Tentec needs to do is release the source code.

Other operational pluses of the Orion include continuous bandwidth reduction which is much easier to use certainly seems much better than my Icom PRO, where 100 Hz width is difficult to listen to, unlike Orion, where it works perfectly. The CW keyer memories are also much less cumbersome to set up, just press memory, record and key in

whatever you want directly. But as the third memory button is next to a Reset button, don't get too excited as hitting that button resets the radio to a default state and you have lost all the unsaved information on what you were doing before hitting the button. Again, even I can see a software remedy for this, and I am sure it will be fixed sooner or later.

Overall, the Orion provides a significant improvement in CW performance and for all I

know, SSB as well, compared with the Icom 756Pro. The final bonus is that for gadget freaks like myself, it effectively offers two gadgets for the price of one – a computer and a radio in the same package and at a reasonable price, given what the competition has to offer.

www.eham.net/reviews/detail/2128?page=1
http://lists.contesting.com/_tentec/
<http://www.k3bu.us/settings.htm>

QSO and QSLing statistics for 2004

Nigel Cawthorne, G3TXF

The year-end is always a good time to catch up with the statistics. For G3TXF the key figures for any year are always QSOs and QSLs. 2004 has been a good year for both.

The QSO total for the year 2004 was 36,000. 29,800 of these were on overseas trips (two trips with Roger G3SXW: TJ3G and P29, and a couple of solo trips as CU4/G3TXF and VP9/G3TXF). The 6,200 QSOs made from home as G3TXF were primarily in the CQ WW CW Contest (2,000), the IOTA Contest (1,400) plus CW DX chasing and several small entries in various contests.

The 2004 QSO total brings the all-time QSO total to 381,300 (180,500 made on overseas trips and 200,800 made from home as G3TXF). Passing through the '200,000' barrier as G3TXF from home was definitely the 'QSO highlight' of the year.

However, the callsign G3TXF will be 40 years old in early 2005. The average QSO total from home therefore works out at just 5,000 per year. This becomes an average of 9,500 QSOs per year when own-callsign DX operations are included. ['Own-callsign' operation means

that any QSOs made during NFD as GMØAAA/P or the 2,000 QSOs made during a visit to the ZA1DX Convention in June 2004, are not included in these QSO totals.]

The 2004 QSO total (36,000) was slightly less than the best ever year for QSOs (2000), when 37,500 were made, 32,900 of which were overseas – mostly on various CW trips with G3SXW: FH, FW and S79.

2004 QSLing Statistics

G3TXF's enthusiasm for both sending and receiving QSLs is no less diminished than it was on 5 February 1965 when the original foolscap format G3TXF licence was first issued.

However the technology used to manage QSLing has changed dramatically. Today G3TXF's DX trip QSLing relies on a purpose-built database which tracks not only the quantity of QSLs sent and received, but also the way they are dispatched (Bureau, e-mail requested or Direct) and the exact dates when cards are mailed out.

During 2004 QSL cards for 37,200 QSOs were dispatched. QSLs for 16,000 QSOs were mailed direct and 18,600 were sent through the Bureau in response to incoming Bureau cards. A further 2,600 QSLs were sent in response to e-mailed requests for Bureau cards.

The vast majority of Bureau QSLs for overseas stations are sent directly to the overseas Bureau and not to the RSGB. This both speeds up delivery of Bureau QSLs and avoids putting an unreasonable load on the

UK bureau. The RSGB's QSL Bureau is, of course, used for all incoming Bureau cards – and thanks are always due to Pat, G3GMC, the hard working Bureau sub-manager for G3R-S-T series, who patiently looks after several high-volume QSLers including G3SWH, G3SXW, G3TBK and G3TXF.

The total weight of parcels shipped directly to QSL Bureaux around the world during 2004 was 100kg. Shipments were made to 63 different QSL Bureaux. The top ten Bureaux destinations by weight were:

Bureau	Weight	Bureau	Weight
DL	16.5 kg	OK	4.6kg
USA (*)	15.4 kg	UR	4.4kg
RA (Box 88)	10.3 kg	JA	4.2kg
RSGB	5.8 kg	F	2.7kg
SP	5.6 kg	I	2.6kg

(*) the 'USA' figure is the sum of packages shipped to the eleven different USA Bureaux.

Another technique used to speed up the delivery of Bureau QSLs is to use the QSO/QSL Database in a pro-active way. For example if a Bureau card arrives from someone for TJ3G (which was in March 04), and that station is also in the log for any subsequent DXpedition (eg P29XF in October 04), then that station will also automatically be sent a Bureau card for the other QSOs in the database.

This is on the basis that the same station is likely to be QSLing the subsequent DXpedition QSOs via the Bureau, but we are able to speed up the delivery of the Bureau QSL by sending it out well before the incoming QSL have even arrived. This is subtly different from, and much more efficient than, blanket QSLing. However it does

depend on having a good QSO/QSL database. QSLs dispatched in 2004 include not only G3TXF's own DX trips and home operation, but also QSLs for two calls for which G3TXF is handling the cards purely as 'QSL manager' rather than as operator: GB5HQ (2003, 2004) and MW5A.

G3TXF's Database is also used to drive the QSO/QSL section of the website. Bands worked (QSOs) and the QSL status can all be checked online just by punching in your callsign. See www.G3TXF.com/search.html.

With the annual QSO/QSL statistics now out of the way for 2004, the main target for G3TXF will be to pass through the '400,000' all-time QSO barrier some time in 2005!

IOTA News

Roger Balister, G3KMA

Update of data in IOTA Directory – 40th Anniversary Edition

New IOTA reference numbers issued

AF-095 TJ Cameroon group
(Cameroon)
AS-170/Pr RØI Shelikhova Bay group
(Russian Federation - Asia)
OC-267 VK9 Coral Sea Islands
Territory North (Australia)

Operations which have provided acceptable validation material

AF-037 9L1MS/P Banana Islands
(December 2004)
AF-095 TJ3MC/P Mondoleh Island
(April 2004)
AS-124 A61AV/P Sirat Al Khawr
Island (December 2004)
OC-017 T3ØT Tarawa Island
(October/November 2004)
OC-028 V7/K7ZZ Kwajalein Atoll,
Ralik Chain (October/November 2004)
OC-029 V7/K7ZZ Majuro Atoll,
Ratak Chain (October 2004)
OC-052 FO/I1SNW Hereheretue
Island, Duke of Gloucester Is (September
2004)
OC-052 FO/IT9EJW Hereheretue
Island, Duke of Gloucester Is (September
2004)
OC-052 FO/IT9YRE Hereheretue
Island, Duke of Gloucester Is (September
2004)
OC-155 V6O Pulap Island, West
Chuuk group (October 2004)
OC-185 VK4WWI/8 Bremer Island
(November 2004)

OC-198 VK4WWI/8 North Island
(October 2004)
OC-227 VK4WWI Sweers Island
(November 2004)
OC-227 VK4SWE Sweers Island
(resident)
OC-267 VK4WWI/P Marion Reef,
Coral Sea Islands Territory (November 2004)

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 2004

AS-021 A61Q/P Siniyah Island
(December 2004)
AS-059 RZØIWZ/P ????? (July 2004)
AS-170/Pr RIØIMA Matykil' Island
(June/July 2004)
OC-223 VI2MI Montague Island
(August 2004)

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

Annual update

Final notice. The last date for mailing applications or updates to checkpoints for inclusion in the 2005 Honour Roll and other performance tables is 1 February 2005. If postmarked after that date, they will be processed in the normal way but the scores

will be held over to the following year. Listing in the tables is restricted to those members who have updated their scores at least once in the previous five years. In the case of the 2005 tables this means since the 2000 annual listings. If you wish to remain listed, check to see that you qualify and, if not, make a submission on or before 1 February 2005. The tables will appear on the RSGB IOTA website in the Spring.

Roger Balister, G3KMA

RSGB IOTA Manager

20 December 2004

Email: IOTA.HQ@rsgb.org.uk

<http://www.g3kma.dsl.pipex.com>

Don't forget. Shortly after compiling the 2005 tables the IOTA Committee will implement the second part of the Conversion Exercise schedule drawn up at the time of the major island listings revision in year 2000 and withdraw credit for contacts with a small number of islands that have been found not to meet IOTA qualification criteria. If you have not done so already, check your records for the IOTA groups concerned - these have been listed in an annex in the IOTA Directory since 2002 - to see if you need to resubmit, or send replacement, cards to your checkpoint.

Visit the website for the latest IOTA information.



Internet Translations

from G3SXW

If you ever send a message via an Internet translation robot, please allow that it might come out looking as incomprehensible as this e-mail from a JA DXer:

How are you
A wonderful QSL cards (P29XF, P29SX, OC-240) received today.
It is very glad to have waited.
We wish to express our gretitude as you are kind.
There are a lot of uncommunication region.
Please support it in the fuyure.
It prays for your health and activity,

Best 73

The RTTY Column

Phil Cooper, GUØSUP *pcooper@guernsey.net*

By the time you get to read this, Santa will have been and gone, hangovers should have cleared, and you will be enjoying that IC-7800 or FT-9000 that the fairies and elves of the North Pole bought you! No? I'm sure each of us put one or the other on our lists? I know I was looking forward to using an IC-7800, but I guess there must have been too high a demand for them and we are having to wait. Well, you can dream, can't you?

Did you work the VU4 team? I've been trying for them on PSK31, as it looks as though they are not going to use RTTY, but up to the time of writing this, they have been too weak to work, or the pile-up has been silly.

At the HF Convention this year I submitted a batch of cards for my DXCC tally, and it was intimated that if I did an LoTW submission once I got home, it would greatly speed up the process.

This was easy enough and just required a simple comment on the form about including the cards submitted at the RSGB HFC.

In the past, submitting cards at the HFC usually meant I got the paperwork back sometime in late January or early February.

This time, I had the paperwork back by the end of November! I now have 234 countries verified out of 249 worked, which I am quite pleased about.

It was great to meet many of you at the HFC this year, and there were some excellent lectures to attend. My only possible gripes were that there seemed to be a shortage of coffee available, especially when the bar wasn't open, and that breakfast on the Sunday

morning was a little chaotic. I guess this hotel just hadn't bargained for a few hundred hungry DXers all wanting to eat at the same time! Apart from that, the location was good, with easy access from Gatwick.

The bands didn't seem to be in great shape for the last weeks of 2004 and during the weekdays the bands seemed almost devoid of any RTTY signals.

I did find a few early evening openings on 10m to the States, which surprised me, but they only lasted for 3 or 4 contacts. However, this does go to show that if you get home from work and find the bands dead, it may be worth putting out a CQ call!

And don't forget to try the WARC bands either. They often appear quiet, but once you start, the ball gets rolling quite quickly, and those that called you go on to call CQ themselves. It only takes one or two spots on the cluster to get things started and these bands can produce some nice DX from time to time.

30m is well worth trying on RTTY, as you can expect to work anywhere from Europe to Stateside.

Just in case you aren't sure where to find RTTY on these bands, look around 10.135 – 10.140, 18.100 - 18.105 and 24.920 - 24.920. This is where the RTTY activity usually takes place.

Earlier this year, I came across a piece of software that decodes most of the data modes, with the exception of Pactor, and is surprisingly good. It is called MultiPSK, and is by F6CTE.

You can find the program at http://members.aol.com/f6cte/index_anglais.htm and there is a link to a description of what it can do on that page. It can decode PSK31, QPSK31, PSK63 and a few other variants of these modes, CW, coherent CW, MFSK (including the small SSTV pictures), Throb, ASCII, Amtor, Sitor, Navtex, Packet, Hell, MT63, HF Fax, SSTV, not to mention RTTY as well.

In PSK, you can also get a 'panoramic' reception of up to 23 simultaneous signals.

The basic software is free, but if you pay a small fee you can get a few extra facilities, although they probably aren't worth having anyway.

When you first run the program, you will notice that it makes use of as many colours as possible, which – in my view – makes it a little hard to look at, but it works extremely well. Even the CW decoder works quite well with hand-sent Morse, but it is very good with machine-generated CW.

If you are wandering around the digital portions of the bands and want to quickly switch between modes to see what is around, then this is an excellent piece of software.

Contest dates for 2005:

BARTG Sprint	Jan 29-30	www.bartg.demon.co.uk
XE RTTY	Feb 5-6	www.geocities.com/fmre_ac/INICIO.htm
CQ/RJ WPX	Feb 12-13	www.cq-amateur-radio.com

Please do check the dates on the websites, as at the time of writing I had to 'guess-timate'

DX to look for:

Jan 8 – 18 Easter Island - 3GØ by an LA team. Look for 3GØYM (CW/Digital) and 3GØYP (SSB).

I've used it for a few of the modes, but as yet I haven't been able to get it to transmit CW. The help files aren't too clear on whether it will transmit CW, but the implication is there.

If you have often wondered what some of those data signals are, then try this piece of software, and see what you can decode.

All in all, 2004 wasn't a bad year for me, with quite a few new ones, some of which were very pleasing.

I worked just over 130 entities in the year, which is probably less than other years, but not bad.

There have been a few memorable contacts, such as an 80m contact with W and VE on my modest inverted L. This was very pleasing for me, as the horizontal part of the L is quite low. I also logged R1MVI on 80m, which was a new band-slot for me.

The lack of decent openings on 10m was very apparent, and it was a struggle to log even a dozen or so contacts in most contests.

Some of the all-time new ones in 2004 were: 3B9, 3W, 5W, 7P, S7, V5, V7, plus VP8/South Shetland.

the dates. The BARTG Sprint and the WPX contests are both very popular contests, and you can often find some good DX around.

Jan 18 – 25 Guantanamo Bay – KG4 by N4BAA as KG4SB and N4SIA as KG4AS, on CW and RTTY.
 Jan 21 – Feb 05 Peter 1 - 3YØX. This will be a big one and the pile-ups will be silly!
 Jan 31 – Feb 17 South Cooks - ZK1, with SM6WET and others. Mostly SSB, but some RTTY/CW.
 Feb 03 – 17 Somalia - 6OØ by I2YSB and others.
 Feb 17 – 24 North Cooks – ZK1, SM6WET etc.

Good luck with the DX, and let us see what 2005 brings in terms of DX!

73 de Phil GUØSUP

The V6O Story

Lanny Phillips, W5BOS

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The IOTA DXPedition to Pulap Island, Federated States of Micronesia was 3 years in the making. The trip started from Dallas, Texas via Hawaii, Guam and Chuuk (aka Truk) to the final destination of Pulap Island. The total flight time (each way) was 17 hours, and the length of the full trip was 12 days.

I was scheduled to spend one night in Weno (Truk), but a Typhoon passed close by and delayed the boat departure by two days. Finally, the boat (Fuun Mataw) left Weno en route to Pulap Island with rough seas. My accommodations were not first class to say the least. The boat trip, which was supposed to be a 16 hour voyage, took 25 hours due to the weather.

When we finally arrived at Pulap, the people were very kind and helpful. They live a very simple life just as they did 50 years ago – with no electricity or running water. They provided me with 2 small huts: one for the radio and one for sleeping. The huts were only 25 feet from the water's edge. I had access to a bath

house where water is funneled from the roof when it is raining into a large plastic holding tank. The water was so cold it would take your breath away. The hut for sleeping had a piece of plywood and a mat (no mattress) for the bed. I am still sore from sleeping on the boat deck and that plywood!

The antenna was placed close to the water's edge where I had an open shot to Japan and Europe. The path to North America was poor. A total of 2,200 contacts in 66 countries were made. Something happened that I do consider remarkable: in 2003, operating from uninhabited Summit Island, Alaska NA121, my first contact was SM3CXS.

Fifteen months later, on remote Pulap Island, I call CQ and the first stationed logged was SM3CXS! Congratulations to him. Until next time...good island hunting.

73,

Lanny, W5BOS

Contest

Lee Volante, GØMTN

Welcome to this month's 'Contest', which can almost be dubbed a 'CQ WW Special'. I was very pleased to receive an account from Dave, G4BUO, of his very different multi-operator entries in last year's CQ WW SSB and CW contests with the G1A and GJ2A groups. The SSB event enjoyed much better propagation than we expected for this part of the solar cycle, whilst many found the CW contest conditions disappointing. Elsewhere in the Digest you will probably have already spotted Roger, G3SXW's account of the VooDoo Contest Group's 5U expedition for the CW contest. For me, Roger's article shows that problems can still befall any group, no matter how much careful preparation is done beforehand and how much experience you have, but it's down to that same preparation and experience that the problems were solved and the expedition was successful.

Two As in CQ Worldwide

by Dave Lawley, G4BUO

g4buo@compuserve.com

Most UK contesters will have heard of the Three As Contest Group, GØAAA. As it happens, I operated G1A in CQ Worldwide Phone this year, and by coincidence GJ2A in the CW contest a month later. This is the story of the two As.

In September Mark, MØDXR, got in touch to ask if I could help with a location that his newly formed contest club, UK Young Contesters, could operate from in CQ WW. While my station is reasonably competitive in CW contests, it is not really up to the mark for

phone, and there is little or no room in the house to mount a multi-operator effort, so I suggested instead that we use the QTH of a friend about three miles from my place, which the Cray Valley club had previously used in the WPX Phone contest.

My friend's Cushcraft A4S with 40m extension had not been used for a while and the first task was to renew the very rusty cables on the 60' crank-up tower, before a disaster occurred. There followed a lot of antenna work, including a repair to the Cushcraft beam (see later) and by the start of the contest we were ready with a reasonable selection of antennas: TET HB33SP tribander up at 50', used on 10 and 20m; A4S + 40 extension up at 60', used on 15 and 40m; 40m bobtail curtain; 80m delta loop; 160m dipole at 50'; 290' beverage; Butternut for receive.

Meanwhile Mark had defected to the G6PZ team, but his colleague in UK Young Contesters, Simon, MØCLW, was the licence holder and arranged for us to operate as G1A - nice call! Our other young operator was also a Simon, M3CVN, from the Treacher clan. The team was completed by Ralph, 2EØATY, and myself, which raised the average age considerably. Ralph brought his FT-1000MP Mark V and Quadra amp. We also used a Kenwood TL-922 and my FT-1000MP, and an IC-735 which did duty with the Butternut as a mult search station.

Right up to the team meal on Friday before the contest there was a debate about which section we should enter. Based on about 20 hours' operation in WPX, the Cray Valley contingent wanted to enter multi-2. The other Simon was undecided, but felt M-2 would be fun, while my strong recommendation was that with a

smallish station and limited number of operators, we should enter multi-single. We operated multi-single. Part of the reasoning was that it would be especially hard at the start of the contest to find two bands on which we could run; 40m is always a zoo in the phone contest, especially at the start, and without a beam we would be swamped. As it turned out we made fifty per cent more QSOs on 80m than on 40m. The bobtail was oriented to fire 300 degrees and was pretty good into the States, but probably not worth the effort expended to put it up. There's no substitute for a rotatable beam up high.

Once daylight came and the HF bands opened, our QSO rate started to improve. I had emphasised that although you need to pick up as many packet spots as possible, the real value comes from spotting mults on the Icom that haven't yet been trampled on by the packet hordes. We're pretty pleased with our multiplier totals, but this is an area that needs further improvement. I remember calling ZD8I on 20m for a double multiplier and getting a QRZ G1 but being unable to get through, so it was especially galling to hear G6PZ call in the pile-up and go straight through.

The daylight hours were the time for running, but our best hour only yielded 181 QSOs. Good, but not spectacular and we had to remind ourselves that by European standards ours was a very small multi-single station. We made just 236 QSOs on 10m on Saturday, and early on Sunday morning it was frustrating to see dozens of packet spots on the band, but the few stations that we could hear were all going back to eastern Europeans. Fortunately the band opened fully after another hour or so and we were able to take our turn with YI9KT, BNØF, XX9C, VK9XD and others for a final country total on 10m of 135, not bad for this stage of the sunspot cycle.

Earlier on Sunday morning as daylight approached and there were multipliers

potentially available on all six bands, I found myself alone in the operating room with the other three all asleep. I went and shook Simon, M3CVN, and told him there were mults to be worked. Nothing more was said about the wish to have entered multi-2!

Visits from Murphy were few. We used Writelog on a wireless network and it worked well. I had made up two interface boxes containing isolation transformers, and after a little hassle getting things set up they gave us a very welcome DVK capability. Simon, MØCLW, had worked hard to build a local spider cluster, which made multiplier spotting much easier - a necessity because of the daft way Writelog handles spots. The only problem we had was that whenever we transmitted on Top Band we lost our ADSL connection to the Internet. The solution was to put a line over a distant tree on Saturday afternoon and move the dipole further from the house.

Overall we had a great time in the contest and were pleased with our performance, although for a really good score we would have needed to generate more fast runs. We were clearly outgunned by G6PZ, who had bigger antennas and were better placed for running the States, but we did manage to beat the M4A team in Cambridge. Final totals were 4,090 QSOs, 154 zones, 618 countries for a claimed score of 6.9M points.

Part II – The GJ2A story

At the HF convention at Gatwick a week before the phone contest, as well as discussing final plans for G1A, I was looking for possibilities for a multi-op in the CW contest.

I have made second place in Europe four times on CW single op, but I have never been able to equal GIØKOW or G3FXB's first place. The CT8T mega-station operated by OH1NOA has now wiped out any realistic chance of being able to win from plain old G.

I was standing at the Convention with my good friend Gary, G4IFB, talking with Rich, K2WR, who has operated many contests from Jersey, but he said he was unlikely to do CQ WW CW from there this year because of the amount of antenna repair work that would need to be done beforehand. I immediately turned to Gary and asked "Are you thinking what I am?" - and in no time the three of us started making plans for a multi-op from Jersey. We were joined by Ed, G3SQX, and although the team was no bigger than G1A, the combination of the fact that it was CW, we're all very experienced and Jersey is getting pretty rare, decided us to enter the multi-2 section.

The Jersey club, GJ3DVC, has an excellent clubhouse built into a former German signal station located above a south-facing cliff near Corbiere, the south-west tip of the island. The club contest call is GJ2A and Rich, as a club member, was able to make the arrangements to operate. The large concrete bunker is surrounded by impenetrable gorse and the possibilities for antennas other than those mounted on the roof are limited, but we made plans to travel over on Tuesday, which would give us three clear days to see what we could get up. My much-travelled TET tribander, used at G1A, had in fact started life in a Three As operation from Corbiere over twenty years earlier, so it was coming home. I also brought a homebrew 10/15m quad which Cray Valley had last used from M8C on the Isles of Scilly.

Wednesday was incredibly mild, T-shirt weather, and after a quick side-trip to the TV transmitting site at the north of the island which was the scene of two GJ6UW multi-single operations in the 1980s, we went to Corbiere to grapple with the much more limited antenna opportunities. After clearing some gorse we managed to get the quad up on 40' of scaffold in a tiny car park area next to the clubhouse, and then set to work to renovate the club beam, a Cushcraft A3S, which was showing poor SWR on 15m. We

had similar difficulties with the G1A Cushcraft, and I first saw this problem with G3NUG's A3WS when we used it at M2000A. It's just poor mechanical design: the self-tapping screws holding the trap pieces together shake loose over time, and the connection goes intermittent and eventually open-circuit. In the case of the Jersey beam we made a fix using jubilee clips and lengths of braid. We also found one of the 10m traps on the director needed similar treatment, but the other ten traps tested OK with an ohmmeter.

As in the phone contest, we knew 40m would be difficult and it would be a challenge to erect antennas with any gain. I had hoped to put up a two-element wire delta loop towards the States, but the gorse made this impossible. We also tried a sloper, which was rubbish, and we had to settle for a dipole with its centre barely 35' above the ground. The club A3S on the small roof tower was cranked to its maximum height of about 45' and the Top Band and 80m dipoles were just a bit lower. There was also a Cushcraft R6000 vertical which Rich had donated to the club a few years earlier, mounted on the corner of the roof. The SWR was all over the place, so Ed and I took it down and found that each aluminium tubing joint was heavily covered with a black oxide, no doubt brought on by the salt sea conditions. Some of the trap connections had also failed. We cleaned and repaired the joints as best we could, and the antenna came back on resonance.

As in the phone contest, we used Dunestar filters and a set of coax stubs (22' is the magic length) to reduce inter-station interference. On Friday we started doing tests at full power to check for interference problems, of which there were none, but we immediately found that the beam SWR had gone rather high on 10 and 15m. More trap problems. With not much time left we unpacked my trusty TET beam, assembled it on the roof, removed the club's beam and replaced it with mine. A 290'

Beverage and Butternut for receive (familiar?) completed antenna operations just before dark.

The bands had been lively in the days before the contest, but by Friday it was clear there had been some sort of disturbance. Preparations had been put behind schedule by the beam problem and we had reserved Friday evening so we could chat with club members at their regular club night. A number of the members came by and wished us luck in the contest. Phil, GJ4CBQ, did sterling work helping to get the PC network set up. We found that wireless networking between the club shack in one room and the main club room next door where the mult spotter was located was unreliable because of the thick reinforced concrete. A combination of wired networking and careful placing of the wireless router gave us a working set-up, but Phil worked long into the night getting a computer that would network with our logging PCs reliably.

The left-hand run station was the club's FT-1000MP Mark V Field, with just the stock filters installed. This was to be used with Rich's Emtron amplifier, but we quickly found on tune-up that the fan wasn't running, so we changed to use the club's amplifier. The right-hand station was my FT-1000MP and Ed's Alpha 87A. Ed's TS-930 was used for mult spotting, a bit of a waste of a better receiver, but the dual receive of the Yaesu was needed for picking up in-band mults.

Logging was again with Writelog. An old Toshiba borrowed from GØFDZ keyed flawlessly, but my Thinkpad of similar vintage gave jittery keying after a few thousand Qs were in the log. Neither machine had DMA set, but only one had a problem. I'd be grateful if anyone could shed light on this.

Conditions were so poor at the start that we kicked off with one station on Top Band and the other on 80m. Just like on SSB, we immediately lost our packet connection. In

this case it was dial-up and we didn't have the option of moving antennas, but by moving the cluster PC to a downstairs telephone socket we were able to maintain the connection for the rest of the contest.

I never found the pile-ups to be excessive; indeed after so many years as a plain old G it was a joy to be called by more than two people at once. It was interesting to compare the two MPs. The AGC on the newer mark V Field is nowhere near as awful as on my original MP, but I still found that when I had several callers it was best to back the RF gain right off and turn off the AGC. Band changes were relatively infrequent, especially on the first day, and we were never in danger of exceeding the eight band changes that are allowed per. hour. I am left wondering how other multi-2s manage to work mults on other bands while maintaining their runs. QSYing for in-band multipliers is, as always, a skill that needs to be developed further.

After heavy rain overnight, on Sunday morning the 15m quad went high-SWR. We ran 15m for a while on the Cushcraft vertical, while Gary and I dropped the mast and changed the feedpoint, which had shorted. For most of the time we used the vertical on 40m, where at times it outperformed the dipole. I was pleased to be called by 5U5Z and some JAs while running on the vertical; of course the GJ prefix helps.

Unlike the phone contest, 10m was never any good. 439 Qs and 92 countries is pretty fair given the conditions, but we made nearly double that number of QSOs on Top Band. Our points/QSO ratio is below 2:1 on all bands apart from 15m, reflecting the fact that a lot of the time when we were running, we were working Europeans.

On 10m we worked only 27 Ws and incredibly, no VEs. By the time we realised VE was needed on Sunday, conditions had gone. This was a bad miss.

Phil, GJ4CBQ, did great work searching for mults, and also found the fault on the Emtron, which was eventually traced to a contact on a Molex connector not being pushed all the way home. The amplifier then performed well, although its protection circuits were perhaps too sensitive, as it would shut down when we transmitted on Top Band on the other station, due to proximity of antennas. Phil was also there to help us take down on Monday and restore the club's beam to its position on the tower. The SWR appeared to have recovered.

Our original QSO target had been 8,000, but in the event the final tally of 6,926 was very good given the conditions, and with 155 Zones and a not terribly good 578 countries, the claimed score is 8.2M points.

We are very grateful to the Jersey club for the use of their excellent club building and for allowing us to change all the antennas and completely alter the layout of the shack. QSL is via K2WR.

7 MHz expansion

The big event that will make life much easier for DXers and testers alike was the expansion of the 40m band halfway through the SSB contest. Many thanks to the team that made this possible.

Up to now 40m SSB contest QSO totals have always been bandwidth-limited foremost, and propagation-limited second. I've heard many reports already of the extra space being really useful during the contest, and no doubt this will further improve as more countries get access to it in the future. I was curious to see if I would hear any UK testers claiming to be listening up above .200, down below .100, and their own frequency all at the same time – I didn't this time!

CQ WW log statistics

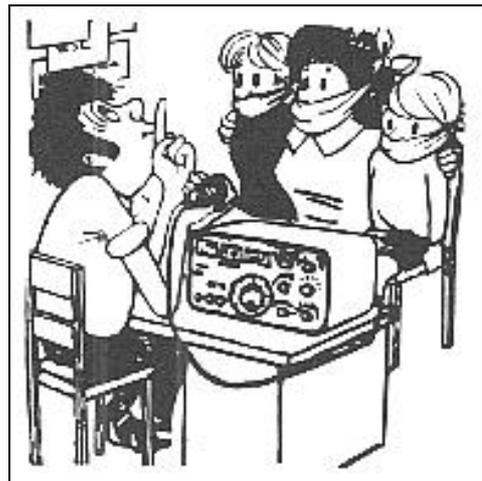
Roger, G3SXW, sent me the following news snippet:

"As at 15 December CQ WW has now received 2,798 CW logs and 4,015 SSB. In fact over 2,000 logs were received within the first week after the contest. A sign of things to come? Maybe the dream of some folks is coming true - a 24-hour dead-line!"

It's pleasing to see statistics like these showing the growth in the number of overall entries, and electronic entries at that. Log preparation and submission must also now be very simple for most people, considering how quickly the logs are sent off.

I hope those constant reminders for you to send in logs, large or small, are getting through. I've run out of room for this issue, but I'll return to contest result turnaround times, and the issue of on-line scoreboards next time.

73 de Lee, GØMTN



MØC – CQ WW Revisited

Shaun Jarvis, MØBJL *m0bjl@btinternet.com*

Some of you may recall I wrote an article for the November 2002 Digest with an account of my entry in the CQ WW SSB Contest of 2002. The article went into my observations of band openings, closures, signal paths and various other findings. The outcome of the contest resulted in me breaking the G record for the Single Operator, Single Band High Power entry. This was done thanks to Neville, G3NUG, who kindly allowed me to use his station for the weekend. You may remember the picture of Neville's antenna array with the element tips being parallel to the boom due to the destructive 80mph winds we endured that October.

Neville kindly invited me back to his station for last year's CQ WW as it would be my last chance before he moved QTH. I asked Neville if I could use the CDXC call of MØC for a Single Operator, Single Band Assisted entry in the SSB contest, to which he agreed. I felt that this would encourage other CDXC members to use the callsign in the future and with the QSL card being sent to all stations worked in the contest, it would be a good advertisement for the group.

I planned to use the same antenna as last year, Neville's C31XR from Force 12, but instead of 15m I opted to work 20m. The C31XR has three active full-size elements on this band at a height of around 110'. The rest of the station was the same, an FT-1000 Mk V, a VL 1000 amplifier and a Heil headset. In the previous contest I brought my own laptop PC complete with CT for logging, but this year I decided to use EI5DI's Super Duper logging software, which worked faultlessly. Thanks, Paul.

As 0000 UTC arrived I started calling with the antenna beaming West. As I had found in my

15m entry, South American stations and a few West Indian stations were clearly audible. Again these proved very hard to break due to the North American stations that were benefiting from their North/South path openings, but by 0030 PJ7, KP2, V2 and P4 were logged. I found a clear frequency and started calling and found some very nice backscatter signals from some Western EU stations which would have been inaudible when the band was fully open, so this was ideal to get those multipliers out of the way early.

On turning the beam to the East I noted that, as with the South American/West Indian stations, it was tough to break through to the odd Middle Eastern station that I could hear working eastern Europe and Japan, so instead of wasting time on these I swung the antenna to the South and found a few African countries working North Americans. These, due our North/South path, were easy to break and I had logged a number of stations from CN to 5Z in no time at all. These conditions went on for about three hours before the Middle East started to make themselves heard with the usual Cyprus, Kuwait and Israel CQ WW entries booming in from the East!

After working these, I was aware that that the long path Pacific opening would soon be there, so with the antenna beaming SW I started calling and was inundated with JA stations filling the log. I noted that their signals weren't as solid on the long path as those I'd found in the previous year with 15m. This could of course be due to the sunspot cycle being on the decline, but it was notable that the VK and ZL stations were very strong on the long path. The bonus of course with this path is that one of the skip distance makes

it possible to work South American stations and I was able to work quite a few countries in that continent during the early hours of the contest.

By 0700 the opening to JA was fully open. It was very nice to be called by the Marianas, Marshall and Guam Islands during the long path opening. Neville occasionally visited me in the shack to gauge my progress, often setting me challenges/goals to work towards which encouraged me to work harder on these occasions, Neville would often put on the spare set of Heil headphones and listen in.

On one particular occasion I had just turned the antenna to the NE, mainly to work Europe. After a barrage of EU stations I heard a much weaker signal call me, but with the usual splatter from local EU stations I had to call QRZ again, but the station came through nice and clearly from Vanuatu, a very nice country to work. Neville and I looked at each other and laughed, this was fun.

During the Saturday afternoon I did my usual tried and tested method of beaming East, when most other people are beaming West working North America.

The method behind the madness here is that there are still lots of Asian stations beaming Europe, so I was able to work most of Asia with XW, XV, 9M2/6 and a few HSØs which might have been missed had I joined the majority and battled it out for NA stations. It's often worth trying different approaches like this during a contest, I've often found some really rare and nice multipliers this way.

Another time that Neville listened in was on the Sunday evening, I had been steadily working North American stations, but I really needed Zone 1. I hadn't heard any Alaskan stations at all, even with the beam biased in

that direction for some considerable time! Then at 1716 I was called by KH7X in Hawaii, who complimented me on my signal - and I joked that if he came across a KL7 to send him in my direction. After the contact I was immediately called by KL7HBK, who stated that he had been listening to me for ages but didn't realise I needed Zone 1. Coincidentally some five minutes later I was called by two more KL7s, so word had obviously got round.

So how did I do? Well, my score for the contest was as follows:

Total QSOs	2106
Total Countries	132
Total Zones	38/40
Total Score	<u>706,010</u>

My final score, following checks, resulted in me once again breaking the G record, but more importantly I was placed 5th in Europe.

1.	SO2R	1,031,940
2.	DJ7EO	829,738
3.	YP3A	728,160
4.	OMØM	696,756
5.	MØC	619,650

Once again I'd like to convey my appreciation to Neville, G3NUG, for allowing me to use his amazing station, and to his lovely wife, Trish, for making me so welcome. Neville has now moved QTH, but I'm sure that he'll be QRV very soon with an even bigger and better station, should that be possible.

The callsign MØC is available to all CDXC members and can be applied for by contacting Neville.

73 Shaun, MØBJL

G6PZ – Contesters Beware!

Mark Haynes, MØDXR *mark.haynes@raytheon.co.uk*

At the beginning of the year I was fortunate enough to be invited to operate from the newly formed G6PZ Contest Group near Weston-Super-Mare in Somerset, along with my good friend Simon, MØCLW. Both Simon and I are avid HF contest operators and we aim at putting serious entries in as many contests as possible throughout the year. We had previously been active as GX6UT from the Harlow and District Amateur Radio Society but, although it's quite an impressive station, we had hopes of a grander winning set-up.

CQ WPX SSB 2004 was our first visit to the station of Paul Beecham, G6PZ. Both he and we didn't really know what to expect. It's a call I had heard on the air before, but I was unaware of any details. On arrival we were introduced to Paul's wife, Jo, and the four dogs named Morse, Code, Dash, and Packet. The family were very friendly and we had a lovely cooked meal prepared by Jo.

Shortly afterwards it was time to get to know the station. There was an FT-1000MP MkV driving an Acom 2000, with an FT-920 driving a small amp. Antennas were an Inverted-L (90' vertical, 450' horizontal) and a Cushcraft X7 7-element tribander at about 70'. The inverted-L worked like a bomb! I remember working 3B9C without difficulty on 160 and 80m – and it gave much the same performance as the yagi on the higher bands (it just proves that wires with height really do work!).

We then found out that these antennas had recently been fully restored as a freak storm in January had brought down the tower. This resulted in thousands of pounds worth of

damage, but the eagerness of the contest team to get back on the air as quickly as possible expedited the action of repair.

The contest itself was great fun and we had some fantastic runs to JA and NA. Working VK/ZL was a doddle. Being very far south and close to the sea really does make a huge difference. Signals were big, and it didn't take long for me to realise that this station had potential.

Paul owns an electrical installations company and so has a good knowledge of electronics and RF. The shack is very well equipped and everything is installed to perfection. The switching of the bandpass filters and antenna selection is fully automated. Paul owns about 5 acres, so there is lots of antenna space. TVI and EMC are not an issue.

I had a chat with Paul during the contest and he made his intentions clear that he wanted to expand the station to be competitive in the Multi-Single category of contests - and could I help. Of course I was very excited and said that the most important asset to any contest group is good operators. Then of course antennas, equipment, and living conditions. It was now my mission to find good operators, in order for G6PZ to start appearing at the top of the tables.

G6PZ was approached to operate in the IARU HF Championship in July on 10 and 15m SSB as GB5HQ. The SteppIR and X7 antennas were used and the contest was very successful.

The group already had a number of hot operators including G4OJH, GØWMW, G3TJE, GØJQN, GØCAC and G4DRS. So, I began calling around looking for operators for

CQ WW SSB/CW. I managed to grab a few who weren't otherwise occupied and we welcomed Shaun, MØBJL, and Sergei, MØSDX, to the team.

By this time (end of summer) Paul had upgraded the station. A new tower had been installed to house the X7 for the multiplier station and the main HF antenna was now a 4-element SteppIR. So the full antenna farm was now the SteppIR up at 80', a 2-element 'shorty forty' yagi for 40m at 100', an X7 at 90', a delta loop for 80m and a full-size loop for 160m (*big!*). In the shack the run station now boasts a Ten-Tec Orion with an Acom 2000, with the mult station being an FT-1000MP MkV with another Acom 2000. All filters, keyers, and PCs were installed. The station was now looking really professional and was an absolute pleasure to use.

The two CQ WWs were great fun. In the SSB leg we have a claimed score of 9,318,604 and a CW claimed score of 6,934,400. The team are very pleased with the results, especially as

the whole station and team has been established in just about 12 months.

Today, Paul is busy assembling the new Titanex vertical for LF DX. This will be used alongside Beverage receiving antennas to help work those more tricky mults on Top Band and 80m.

Looking ahead, 2005 will be an active year for the G6PZ Contest Group, with the prospects of being active in CQ WW WPX, ARRL, IOTA, IARU and CQWW. There is even talk of possibly modifying the station to become a competitor in the Multi-Two category.

If anyone would like to be considered for operating at the new G6PZ Contest Group station, please get in touch!

Website: www.cqtest.co.uk

Email: G6PZ – paul@prolectric.co.uk

MØDXR – mark.haynes@raytheon.co.uk

Mark Haynes, MØDXR

Notice Board

from G3SWH

Phil, G3SWH, Jim, G3RTE and Jean, ON8RA, will be active from Nuachachott, Mauritania, on CW only on all bands 160 to 10m as 5TØCW between 24 February and 4 March 2005. Nicolas, 5T5SN, will no doubt be on hand to assist.

Propagation permitting, we plan to have at least one station on the air on a 24 hours a day basis. QSL via G3SWH either direct with SAE and return postage, via e-mail for a bureau reply or via the bureau.

from G3SWH

I am delighted to announce that with immediate effect I have been appointed as QSL Manager for Bill Luo, BX3AC. Cards will be accepted and replied to either direct with return postage and SAE, via the bureau or via e-mail with a reply via the bureau.

from G4WFQ

Callsign: C6AWF
Operator: G4WFQ
Dates: 15 – 29 April 2005

Location: Treasure Cay, Abaco Is.
IOTA: NA-080
Modes: Mostly CW, RTTY, some SSB
Bands: 80 – 10m, incl. WARC bands

only. Please do not send any further QSLs via the bureau or direct.

from GW3UOF (/HI3)

QSL via G3SWH. Online Logs and log upload to LOTW after operation. Web:

www.g4wfg.btinternet.co.uk

I have a series of photos at

<http://www.hi3.org/GW3UOF.htm> and some info on the main page www.hi3.org.

from ZC4CW

Geoff, ZC4CW/ZC4T, will from the 1st of January 2005 QSL via Logbook of the World

73 Mike, GW3UOF

CDXC Goods

The following CDXC goods are available from the Secretary.

PAPERWEIGHT

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

KEY FOB

This is an imitation black leather fob fitted with an enamel CDXC logo.

RUBBER STAMP

This is a rubber hand-stamp with the CDXC logo. Use for all your amateur radio correspondence.

REPLACEMENT MEMBERSHIP BADGE

Replacement membership badges can be provided on request in the event of loss or change of call sign. As the engraving of badges is normally undertaken in batches, delivery may extend to a number of weeks.

PRICING

Paperweight:	£2.50	not available mail order
Key Fob:	£1.50	including post/packing to UK (see note)
Rubber Stamp:	£6.00	including post/packing to UK
Replacement Badge:	£2.50	including post/packing to UK

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:

Peter Hart, G3SJX, The Willows, Paice Lane, Medstead, Alton, Hants GU34 5PR

Not the GB2RS News

DXpeditions to ZK1 are advised that the success of the operation could be jeopardised if they go for an over-large number of team members – or attempt to operate from every single island in the group. After all, you know what they say about “too many Cooks...”.

Hungary. After HG05HNY celebrating the New Year, listen out for HG050401SUN celebrating sunrise on the 1st of April 2005.

It has been announced that in future all UK amateur radio callsigns will be allocated by auction to the highest bidder. All callsigns in the G, M and 2 series will be up for grabs, even if long since issued to another person. Fully in line with the new policy of on-air self-regulation, duplicate callsign holders will then be left to fight it out on the bands amongst themselves.

In a controversial move designed to make amateur radio more accessible, the licensing authorities in one southern European country have announced that they will shortly be signing a lucrative deal with a leading breakfast cereal company, after which an amateur radio licence will be found *FREE!* at the bottom of every tenth packet of cornflakes.

The Hogwarts Amateur Radio Society, M2WIZ, recently made its first ever contact with Middle-earth and the Hobbiton Amateur Radio Society, ME1HOB. Somewhat predictably this contact was during an allegro ma non troppo opening on 6 metres, the ‘magic’ band.

The Plain English Society has strongly criticised certain newer UK amateur radio operators for using expressions such as “My personal would be...”. Some operators on 80 metres in particular are also criticised for ending almost every sentence with the word

‘there’, as in “My personal would be Martyn, there.” Not to mention the use of the word ‘handle’ instead of ‘name’. Yes, indeed: what *was* the famous composer Georg Friedrich Handel’s handle? Georg Friedrich, of course.

Solution to IOTA 2004 Crossword

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

Solution to Digest Prize Crossword 7

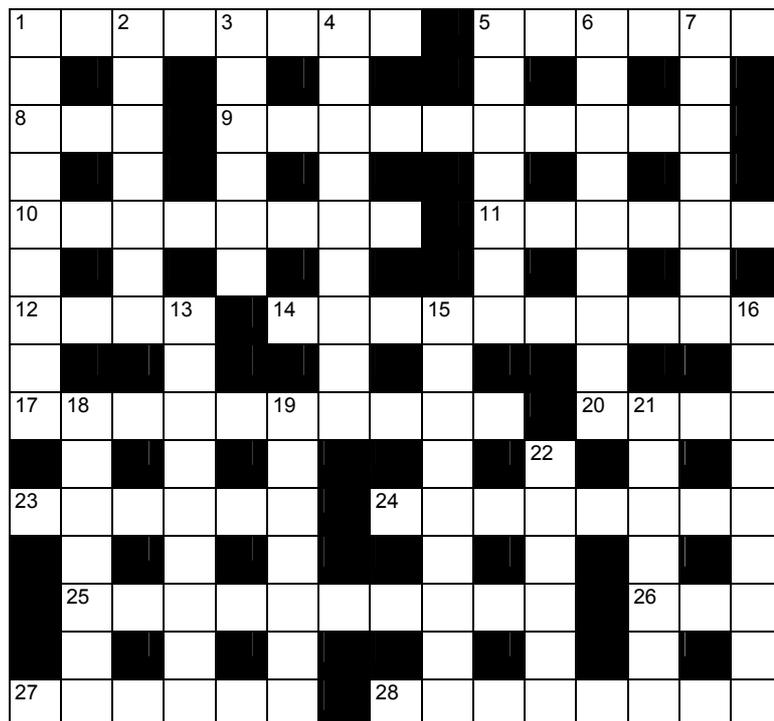
A	N	T	O	N	I	A		I	N	H	A	B	I	T
C		O		U		B		L		E		R		O
C	H	A	R	T	W	E	L	L		S	K	I	M	P
E		S		R		R				S		T		B
P	U	T	T	I		R	E	F	L	E	C	T	O	R
T		E		M		A		A				E		A
	A	D	V	E	R	T	I	S	E	M	E	N	T	S
R				N		I		H		U				S
E	L	E	C	T	R	O	N	I	C	M	A	I	L	
C		N				N		O		M		D		A
O	F	F	S	E	A	S	O	N		I	C	O	N	S
R		I		N				A		F		L		S
D	U	E	L	S			S	U	B	S	I	D	I	S
E		L		U		O		L		E		S		S
R	E	D	R	E	S	S		E	N	D	L	E	S	S

Digest Prize Crossword 8 by RFX

Sorry about the missing '16' Down in the grid last time round (no, you can't get the staff these days...). Not that this fooled any of you expert solvers. Anyway, a bumper crop of entries - not only from G-land, but also EI, VE3 and VK4.

Re 25 Across, SUBSIDISE: I prefer the -ise ending, but it could indeed have been -ize here. Unlike 19 Down, IDOLISE. Otherwise, of course, the anagram won't work.

Deadline for entries for this Crossword: 20 February. The winner of Prize Crossword 7, November 2004: Pete Ball, EI7CC, Dun Laoghaire, Co. Dublin (via e-mail).



ACROSS

- 1 Pleasant activity mostly, extremely important working in Shire village (8)
- 5 Mathematician taking bad European operator round the centre of Runcorn (6)
- 8 Order doctor to take 19 briefly (1,1,1)
- 9 'Barkers', providing quick coaching in the US? (10)
- 10 Mushroom to enhance growth (8)
- 11 Liftin' dried fruit (6)
- 12 Drinks served in most east African countries (4)
- 14 Top audio devices (10)
- 17 Harry's Head of Spelling? (10)
- 20 Old people unknown in Massachusetts area (4)
- 23 One vehicle useless for the high-flyer (6)
- 24 Old rulers given hearing in the islands (8)
- 25 Seduce poor Lady East RA (4,6)
- 26 Droop caused by eating spinach in an Indian restaurant? (3)
- 27 Month in which duke joins cricket side for 24 hours (6)
- 28 GM islands where the wives-to-be are male? (8)

DOWN

- 1 Clumsy, like all amateur radio CW operators? (3-6)
- 2 First-class Central European turning up in Italian city (7)
- 3 Spanish English for 'fireplaces' (6)
- 4 Exceed the budget - a series of deliveries hang in the balance (9)
- 5 Outing on which one blows oneself up? (3-4)
- 6 Type of writing EU confirm in translation (9)
- 7 Fire in part of a church (7)
- 13 Major Barker, always in passable condition? (2,7)
- 15 Unenlightened Arab, maybe, whose motives are unclear? (4,5)
- 16 The Archer and *The Bull*, say, with celebrity potential? (4,4)
- 18 Painter's instrument found beneath University College (7)
- 19 Drug made from carbon and sulphur dipped in refined yeast (7)
- 21 Excited about a public highway crossing the river (7)
- 22 Chap featured in each divine address (6)

DX and Events Calendar

Compiled by G3XTT

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

till 31/01	HG05HNY: special call by HG4I
till 20/02	XU7POS and XU7AJV: Cambodia by ON6TZ and ON4AJT
till February	KC4/I0QHM: 'Mario Zucchelli' Base (I-01), Antarctica
till February	YI9KT and YI9GT: Iraq by SP8HKT and SP3GTS
till 05/03	8N0SON: Special Olympics World Winter Games
till 05/03	KC4/N3SIG: McMurdo Station (K-09), Antarctica
till 31/03	8J1ODA: Special event station
till 31/03	T98AQL: Bosnia-Herzegovina by IZ4AQL
till March	R1ANN & RU3HD/ANT: Novolazarevskaya (Antarctica UA-08)
till 30/04	KP2/KL7JR: US Virgin Islands (NA-106)
till May	6O0JT: Somalia by VA6JWT
till May	FH/F6AIG: Mayotte (AF-027)
till ??	KD4VMM/KC4: Palmer Station (K-10, AN-012), Antarctica
27/12-22/02	GB6BOB: special event station
2005	R1ANC: Vostok Base (UA-10) by UA1PAC
21/01-04/02	3Y0X: Peter 1 Island (AN-004)
21/01-06/02	KP2/G4RCG and KP2/KI7VR: US Virgin Islands (NA-106)
21/01-23/01	CCF and OHDXF Contest & DX Meeting
25/01-06/03	HF8IARU: special call by SP8MI
31/01-17/02	ZK1SDE, ZK1SDZ, ZK1WET, ZK1XMY Aitutaki (OC-083) South Cooks
January	5T: Banc d'Arguin (AF-050) by F6GDC, F6CQX and F5SSM
02/02-22/02	FR/F5TNI: Reunion Island (AF-016)
03/02-17/02	6O0G and 6O0CW: Somalia by I2YSB and others
03/02-13/02	9M6/PA0RRS: East Malaysia
04/02-07/02	S2: Bholu Island (AS-140) by S21AM and EI3IO
04/02-06/02	MDXC Members Trophy (http://www.mdxc.org) 7
06/02-13/02	6F1IHF: Ixtapa Island (NA-183) by XE1HPT and others
11/02-15/02	CE8A: Rennell Islands (SA-???) by CE6NE and others
13/02-26/02	9M6/PA0RRS/8: Sarawak (OC-088), East Malaysia
17/02-24/02	ZK1SDE and ZK1SDZ: Manihiki (OC-014) North Cooks
17/02-24/02	ZK1WET, ZK1XMY Aitutaki (OC-083) South Cooks
22/02-05/03	SM1TDE/OA4: Peru
24/02-04/03	5T0CW: Mauritania by G3SWH, G3RTE and ON8RA

25/02-03/03	ZK1SDE, ZK1SDZ, ZK1WET, ZK1XMY: Aitutaki (OC-083) South Cooks
27/02-19/03	9M6/PAØRRS/2: Penang Island (AS-015), West Malaysia
10/03-17/03	TO7C: Iles du Salut (SA-020) by Fs
15/03-02/04	FT/X: Kerguelen Islands (AF-048)

Letters to the Editor

from G3KZR

'Don't have ideas above your station!'

This old expression to keep the great unwashed in its place also applies to ham radio, as I discovered to my pain. I started writing this on 22 December and I began as follows:

"I approached the VU4 expedition with some trepidation, seeing as it was announced to be mostly SSB - and that is a mode I resort to only as a last gasp. I certainly lack the skills to cope with SSB pile-ups compared with handling RTTY and CW, and I reckon that the competitive level has a factor of at least three times higher than CW and maybe four or five times higher than RTTY.

However, with 322 current countries under my belt in mixed mode, I felt that in four weeks I had to bag a couple of band slots. I had not missed working a couple of band/mode slots from any DXpedition I needed over the last three years, so I was pretty confident that after a few days I would have that lovely new one in the bag.

Not so. After three weeks I found myself in the ludicrous situation of not managing *one* QSO at all! My enthusiasm for the chase had sagged considerably and it looked that, without a stroke of pure luck, I would draw a blank..."

Of course, the following morning, 23 December, following some Xmas victualling with the XYL, I listened to VU4NRO on 17m SSB developing into a better than usual signal. After 20 minutes or so I heard my call come back. I nearly failed to react, but got the confirmation and was mightily relieved.

In the following 15 minutes I was amused to see spots on the cluster from GØJHC: "Wkd on dipole, took 3 weeks"; G3OHN: "At last"; and G4SOF: "First call, 5 up". It seems that I was not alone and the propagation had suddenly favoured the UK. In fact the op then went to 17m BPSK and the signal peaked up to S8, but my software freaked out on me. Time to QRT for Christmas activities.

On Boxing Day I was saddened to hear that the Andamans had been hit by the tsunami and a whole series of large earthquakes. As I write this - and the enormity of the tragedy sinks in - it is clear that the VU4 gang, mercifully all intact, have higher priorities than satisfying my greed for more bands or modes.

In any event I feel I have a lot to ponder upon following my experience with the expedition and how the G3KZR DXing machine had nearly crashed out completely.

Well, there is no doubt that for the first 10 days the operating techniques of the inexperienced operators biased results heavily in favour of the big guns because:

- 1) They worked much of the time either simplex or QSX on a spot frequency 5 kHz up. This means that the loudest nearly always won – although I am sure one or two lucky guys with 100W and a G5RV did sneak one in from time to time.

Even after this period there remained a tendency to concentrate on a spot frequency, despite their requests for us to spread out and ‘find a clear frequency to call’. It is clear they have never been one of the mob in the middle of an EU/NA/JA pile up! It was galling to call 15 kHz up and find they were still pulling the stuff out of the first few kHz. As quoted above, G4SOF got them 5 up when we had just been specifically asked to spread out and not to call 5 kHz up!

- 2) They used two different callsigns, which means that a lot of the big guns wanted to work them both ‘because they could’.
- 3) They ultimately decided to work some CW after two weeks, which meant that the big guns then moved down to the CW end and monopolised them all over again.
- 4) They were prone to flitting and tended to quit the HF bands before they fully opened to NW EU (a common problem).

If they had used one callsign, really spread the QSX and started up earlier with CW they would have thinned the demand quicker.

From the G3KZR station point of view it just goes to show that my little 2-element Hexbeam at 35’ may be very good for a compact beam, but it must still be 2 S-points

down on the full-size multi-element arrays at 60’ or so.

Additionally my linear also maxes out at about 500W PEP, so again having a KW linear with ‘a bit in hand’ probably adds another S-point on SSB, even within the UK’s licensing regulations. As for the EU competitors: it is clear that a KW or more is now quite normal anyway.

So I am somewhat humbled and I now ‘know my station’ better in both senses of the phrase!

That said, we must applaud the initiative of the operators concerned in persuading the authorities to relax their ban and in responding quickly to the opportunity offered.

Their ability to provide emergency communications in the aftermath of the tsunami and ensuing earthquakes may sadly also prove of assistance in opening future opportunities for amateur radio. They should be congratulated on their effort.

Now, when’s that expedition to 3Y?

73 Ian Davies, G3KZR

IanSDavies@aol.com

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