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Club News and Views

Editorial

Martyn Phillips, G3RFX

Before we go any further, here's wishing you all a very Happy New Year. I also hope you got everything you wanted for Christmas. On my wish list was a 100' mast with a 7-element HF beam on top – but not much chance of that, dammit, if you live in a Grade II listed building and a Conservation Area to boot.

So instead I had to console myself with a whole host of classical music CDs ranging from Delius ('A Mass of Life') to Shostakovich (Symphonies No. 2, 7 and 15), not forgetting two string quartets by Sir Malcolm Arnold. Well, whatever turns you on, I suppose. In there too: a ticket for a session at the famous Bath Spa, where I look forward to reclining in the natural thermal waters. How warm will the waters be, I wonder? Perhaps I'll take along a 'therm'ometer and find out.

But what of this month's 68-page *Digest*? Well, for starters it could have easily been 80 pages, bearing in mind all the long overdue DXpedition reports which were clamouring to be included. Indeed as Chairman John, G3LAS, commented: "An 80-page *Digest* would really be something to remember. I'm not surprised that you have to hold some items over until March. At that rate we'll soon have to print it on rice paper or suffer a hernia from carrying it around." Quite.

Needless to say, the easiest way to find out what's inside this time round – as indeed each time round - is to have a look at the 'Contents' page. It's all in there. And we kick off with a touch of the brass monkeys in the shape of Nigel/G3TXF's recent trip to OX. Admittedly, not everybody's obvious holiday destination, especially in November.

Or if that one doesn't grab you (which I'm sure it will...), we then have John/G4IRN religiously reporting on his brief, but cardinal appearance on the bands from HVØA, the Vatican City club station.

Somewhere I wouldn't particularly like to be, at least at the time of typing this [January 2nd], is E4-land. And somehow you can't help thinking that there must be far more important things to worry about in such places other than amateur radio. Be that as it may, our intrepid reporter on this one is Stefan Horecky, OM3JW. After which it's another late report safely gathered in, this time all about that 2007 DXpedition to Scarborough Reef*. You know, the one where we had the operators perched rather precariously Heath Robinson-style on those unsuspecting bits of rock in the South China Sea. The things one does for amateur radio.

At which point my faithful assistants here in the CDXC Tower, the Mini-skirted Maidens, have just returned from a spot of retail therapy down at Bristol's excellent new shopping centre, Cabot Circus. Originally they were going to call it 'Merchants Quarter', but this reminded certain people of the city's part in the slave trade, so they binned it.

Either way the Mini-skirted Maidens have returned fully laden after having bought up what looks like half of Harvey Nichols. They also tell me that they couldn't resist a slap-up lunch at the 'Brasserie Blanc', Raymond Blanc's new restaurant there. And they put it all on the CDXC credit card. Oh dear, it's going to be an interesting next CDXC Committee meeting on 15 February.

73 Martyn, G3RFX

Chairman's Chat

John Butcher, G3LAS

I wished you all a Happy Christmas when I wrote my November 'Chairman's Chat' a couple of months ago, so this time it's a Happy New Year. If you're in a fit state when this hits the doormats, you'll probably be looking forward to the Desecheo expedition which, as I write, is still firmly on the blocks and in the diaries. As I have said before (many times!) I won't be around for that, so I'm gritting my teeth as I wish everyone good luck with this welcome return of a much-awaited DXCC entity. Let's hope it's a great success and that the US wildlife authorities will be encouraged to relax their restrictions on future visits to both KP5 and KP1. Let's also pray that the Desecheo team manage to avoid stepping on any of the miscellaneous ordnance which the military have apparently left lying about on the island. I can only assume that the odd bomb and land mine aren't deemed hazardous to the wildlife.

As always the success of the expedition will depend on propagation. There are few signs yet of a new solar cycle but, fortunately for the UK, the Caribbean is not so critically dependent on this as are some DX locations. It seems that our greatest problem is the existence of a big lump of land between us and the operating site(s). However, the team is well-experienced and well equipped, so I'm sure they will overcome such obstacles.

Talking of propagation and looking at my log, it's interesting to speculate on what may be happening to our higher frequency bands. From 21 MHz upwards it has been far too long since we enjoyed really good conditions. No doubt there are many people around now who don't remember the time when we were working all round the world on 10m – all day and (almost) every day. Of course it was only about eight or ten years ago, but my memory always goes back to about 1960 when I was running 50W to a

vertical in my Dad's small garden at the bottom of a hill in Cambridgeshire – yes, there are a few hills in that county and I had the misfortune to live under one of them. Anyway, I can well remember working all round the Pacific quite frequently with 50W - often AM as well as CW.

Elsewhere in this *Digest* you can read of Mark, MØDXR, and his epic battle in the October CQ WW CW contest from my QTH. This was great fun for both of us in many ways (me as a spectator, of course), but he only managed to work four stations on 10m in the whole 48 hours. Contrast that with my little dabble on that band in the ARRL 28 MHz contest a few weeks later when I picked up nearly 40 QSOs in about three hours without really trying. There's nowt so strange as conditions!

Of course that wasn't in any way a foretaste of a continuing upturn on the higher bands. Those contacts were almost all around Europe, although Mark would have managed to boost his score with a few more multipliers if he had enjoyed similar conditions. I suspect his 15m tally would have been significantly better as well.

Not so many years ago we used to muse "Remember when the solar flux rarely rose above 100?" From today's perspective, an SFI of 100 seems to be a million miles away – well, 93 million miles, to be more precise. I'd be happy with a fraction of that at the moment. At least we have the low bands, though. Have you all heard the huge signal on 160m coming from TF4M recently? It just shows what a few rhombics can do. Thor's website is worth a look.

A quick word about what has come to be known as DQ – deliberate QRM. You will no doubt remember that the RSGB and specifically CDXC member John, G3WKL,

have been making great efforts to establish a methodology for identifying and combating DQers. Sadly, just when they seemed to be making progress on a technical front, the project seems to have bitten the dust as a result of a lack of interest from the other European national societies. Full details are in John's article elsewhere in this issue. At least we should be thankful that the RSGB cannot be accused of not attempting to do something about this menace, although that is small consolation to those who suffer from it.

I must apologise that I will not be able to make my usual contribution to the *March Digest* – “Thank heaven”, I hear you say. No doubt our Editor will be able to fill the space with another, more thrilling piece. I

can't bring myself to wish you a Happy Easter in December, so I will just finish with my best wishes for good health and good DX in 2009.

Meanwhile CU later, hopefully at the Annual Dinner on 21 March, details of which are on the CDXC website. We are lucky to have engaged Bob Barden, MDØCCE/N2BB to give the talk which will be on 'Living on IOTAs and other Miscellaneous Musings'. It will be another great day for CDXC, so book early. With a record membership of about 720, places will no doubt be much in demand.

73 es gud DX

John, G3LAS

President's Patter

Neville Cheadle, G3NUG

A big welcome to all our new members. Our recent marketing initiatives have really paid off and we now have around 725 members, an excellent result given that we had a significant number of resignations and lapses at 30 June, the end of the membership year. We usually lose about 5% of our members each year, so we have to work quite hard to keep the numbers up. We are now one of the largest DX clubs in the world, although not as wealthy as NCDXF.

SEANET proved to be a very interesting experience and was quite different to any amateur radio convention that I have attended previously. It was very much a social event, with many wives and partners attending. We were met at Kota Kinabalu airport by Steve, 9M6DXX, and other members of the Borneo Amateur Radio Club and transferred quickly to the convention hotel. There was a fellowship dinner at the Kinabalu Yacht Club, where we met fellow CDXC members Kazu/

JA1RJU, Taizo/JA3AER, Bob/MDØCCE - and Steve and Eva, of course.

Many SEANET enthusiasts come back year after year from all over the Far East – we noted many long-term friendships.

The next day, Friday/21 November, the group photo was scheduled for 0830. It actually took place at around 0930 – silly me, I had forgotten about Sabah time! After this we went on a coach trip to Lok Kawi Wildlife Park and then on to the Klias Proboscis Resort for 'hi-tea' and to see the proboscis monkeys with their long pendulous red noses. Here the fun really started.

To start with, Trish went to the fish spa. This was an incredible experience as tiny fish eat all the dry skin off your legs and feet. When Trish put her feet into the water the fish deserted the other 10 customers and made for her! But... the result was

wonderful – she came out with feet like a baby’s bum!

After this, we went on a river cruise for a sunset view and to see the monkeys. Trish was on one side of the boat and Bob was on the other. Steve and I wisely sat in the middle (some said for ballast!). However, it then rained – a real tropical downpour, and Trish and Bob got soaked. At least the rain was warm and we did see the monkeys.

On Saturday there was a city tour and a free afternoon followed by the gala dinner. It was at a dry hotel, but eventually some Scotch appeared. A representative from each country made a short presentation. The meal was a little disappointing – the third course was apparently a delicacy of fish guts – we just hoped that these were not the fish from the fish spa!

The plenary meeting took place on the Sunday morning and Steve kicked off with the 3B7C video – what else! Contenders for future SEANET conventions then made presentations. The plan is for Seoul in 2009, Shanghai in 2010 and Brunei in 2011. I was really impressed with the Organising Chairperson, Do Sook Chae, HL1KDW, of the Korea Ladies Amateur Radio Club, organisers of the 2009 SEANET Convention. This was a very interesting presentation, with promises of a trip to Mount Sorak in Gangwon province in the autumn and to the DMZ between HL and P5. My conclusion about SEANET: great fun and very different to any other radio conventions.

We then holidayed in Sabah and Penang for 20 days and saw the orang utans. Fantastic weather averaging 32°C. We had quite a shock when we arrived back in Manchester at 0530, when the temperature was minus 5° C.

Our next main social event is the Annual Dinner on Saturday, 21 March. Bob, MDØCCE / N2BB has kindly agreed to talk to us. Bob has called his talk ‘Living on

IOTAs and Other Miscellaneous Musings’. Bob plans to talk briefly about his time in New York (NA-026), England (EU-005), Japan (AS-007), the Isle of Man (EU-116) and to make some comments about 3B7C and 9M6/N2BB.

Here is an extract from Bob’s entry on QRZ.com. Calls: 9M6/N2BB, MØCCE, N2BB, N2BB/1, ex-WA2RJZ. Participant and/or operator at: 3B7C, G6M, GD4IOM/P, MDØC, MD4K. DXCC, ARRL Life Member, RSGB Member, CDXC, QCWA, OOTC. QRV 160m through 6m.

Bob’s stations include: Collins S-Line, Collins KWM-2, Collins 75A4, FTDX-9000D, Quadra, 2 x FT-2000 and 2 x Quadra for contests, Flex 5000. Bob comments, “Both stations are fun to operate but ‘feel’ very different!” Sounds like fun.

Bob has a distinguished professional background as well as many other hobbies. Just ask him about the Inverted Jenny, the Ford Mustang and very old vintage port!

By the time you read this the Christmas and New Year festivities will be over. I hope all our members had a great time and I wish you all a very Happy and Prosperous 2009.

73

Neville

New Members

CDXC offers a warm welcome to the following new members:

<i>Call</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Location</i>
2WØMTD	Mark Davies	Bodorgan
GØDEZ	Dez Watson	Biggleswade
GØECJ	Harry Hughes	Deerhurst
G1IMS	Ian Stewart	Hertford
G2BKZ	Rob Tait	Stevenage
G3BFP	John Headland	Coulsdon
G3LAA	Tony Sedman	Weston-s-Mare
G3LIV	John Melvin	Newcastle/Tyne
G3LLK	John Gale	Thatcham
G3LNC	Jack Batham	Dunstable
G3PGC	Ralph Armstrong	North Shields
G3ROO	Ian Keyser	Dover
G3UJE	Brian Gale	Great Warford
G3VUS	Dave Latimer	Barrow-in-Furness
G4BQJ	Allan Hill	Warrington
G4BZP	Larry Partington	Loughborough
G4ERU	Jim Taylor	Bournemouth
G4LMW	Rob Thomson	Thatcham
G4PEF	Winston Ingram	London
G6TUH	Mike Morrissey	Maresfield
GM4SSA	Hans Hassel	Eshanness
GWØRYT	Rob Pitman	Risca
GW3RXD	Gareth Llewelyn	Amlwch
MØAID	Kelvin Marsh	Taunton
MØBYA	Rob Swannell	Kettering
MØDLL	Dave Gray	Twickenham
MØGAE	Graham Errington	Whitley Bay
MØMJA	Bob Saunders	Exeter
MØNOV	Eddie Lane	Lincoln
M5TXJ	Dave Shaw	Appleby
MMØXDG	David Goodenough	Edinburgh

Chiltern DX Club - Aims and Objectives

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

Membership Full details are available from the Secretary.

Subscription £18.00 for UK members, £24.00 for overseas members (US\$48 or 40 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/>

In Committee

Chris Duckling, G3SVL

The most recent CDXC Committee meeting was held in November at Gordon/G3USR's QTH in Rutland.

As usual we ran through the actions outstanding from the last (August in this case) meeting, the majority of which had been completed. We had received a request from *PW* Magazine to produce a piece for their 'In Focus' pages and Gordon, G3USR, and Chris, G3SVL, have submitted it for publication. So look out for that in an early 2009 edition of *PW*.

Jim, MØZAK, proposed that CDXC source and make available to members 'nested envelopes' for direct QSLs. The idea is that you put your outgoing card and IRCs/US\$\$s inside your return envelope and then put all this inside an outer envelope – both envelopes being 'airmail' weight. This saves potential damage to the return envelope and adds another layer of protection for prying eyes. The Committee very much liked the concept and asked Jim to obtain quotes.

Neville, G3NUG, reported on the availability of the new Club rigs (FT-450s) and the Committee agreed to purchase waterproof transit cases for each of them. Don't forget these rigs are available for all members to borrow for DXpeditioning.

The CDXC stand at HFC was considered a great success, with over 100 members dropping by and signing in. The stand at Donington was likewise a success. The arrangements for the Annual Dinner were discussed (see elsewhere in this *Digest*) and we confirmed our intention to be at the Kempton Rally in April 2009.

John, G3LAS, reported that a list of members and their callsigns is now

available on a 'members only' page of the CDXC website.

As usual we reviewed membership, finances and DXpedition sponsorship. As at the time of writing, we have agreed to sponsor eleven DXpeditions so far this financial year and, with our donation to IREF, that represents £2,750 of support. Look for them on the air, the CDXC logo on their QSL cards and their write up in this and forthcoming *Digests*.

The next Committee meeting will be held in February 2009.

73 Chris, G3SVL *Secretary CDXC*

CDXC
CHILTERN DX CLUB
The UK DX Foundation

CDXC Annual Dinner 2009

21 March 2009 at 7:30pm
Wyboston Lakes, Bedfordshire

After-dinner talk by
Bob Barden, MDØCCE / N2BB
'Living on IOTAs and Other Miscellaneous Musings'

The CDXC 2009 Annual Dinner returns to Wyboston Lakes, the venue that received such high praise from those who attended last year. We will have the same private room for dinner and this year we'll be entertained afterwards by Bob, MDØCCE, who is going to talk about his time living and operating in New York (NA-026), England (EU-005), Japan (AS-007) and the Isle of Man (EU-116), with some thoughts from St Brandon (AF-015) and his recent operation as 9M2/N2BB. It'll be worth going just to hear Bob's talk!

The Dinner is 7pm for 7:30pm, but last year a number of members arrived during the afternoon and met in the coffee area and in the bar. So why not come along any time from 3pm and do some socialising before the main event? Tea and coffee are available all day and the bar is open from noon until midnight. The Annual Dinner is one of the two main social events in the CDXC calendar and certainly not to be missed. So book early to avoid disappointment.

How to book:

Complete the form in this *Digest* and return it to Chris, G3SVL, with your cheque for £33 per person. Or if you prefer to book electronically and pay by BACS transfer, e-mail Chris at sec@cdxc.org.uk.

Location:

The dinner will be held at The Waterfront Centre, Wyboston Lakes, Great North Road, Wyboston, Bedfordshire, MK44 3AL (as last year and the HFC). It is located at the junction of the A1 and the A428.

Overnight accommodation at Wyboston:

Book direct on (0845) 230 0666 and quote 'CDXC'. The rate is £62 per room, breakfast is £11 extra.

Overnight accommodation at Premier Inn:

Located across the road from the Wyboston Centre main entrance. The current rate is £51 per room, breakfast £5.15 or £7.35 extra. Book direct on (0870) 990 6314 or online at www.premierinn.com and select 'St Neots (A1/Wyboston)'.

Overnight accommodation at Travel Lodge:

Located 2 miles south on the A1. Currently on offer at £29 per room, breakfast extra (Little Chef). Book direct on (0871) 984 6010 or online at: www.travelodge.co.uk and select 'Bedford Wyboston'.

Any other questions: Contact Chris, G3SVL, at sec@CDXC.org.uk or by phone on (01424) 845384.

DX an' all that

Don Field, G3XTT don@g3xtt.com

Firstly, a Happy New Year to one and all. 2008 turned out to be quite a productive year on the HF bands, even if the high bands were somewhat quiet for most of the time. We started with Clipperton and Ducie, and many other notable DXpeditions followed. Quite brave of all those expeditioners to plan and execute what, in many cases, were quite costly operations, in the knowledge that QSO numbers would be constrained by propagation.

But what they failed to achieve on the high bands, many of them made up for in spades on the low bands, VP6DX and VK9DWX probably being the two classic examples, certainly from a UK perspective, but there were plenty of others. Who, for example, might have imaged hearing both VU4 and VU7 active at the same time on Top Band? Indeed 160m really came up trumps towards the end of the year with DX such as XW, HS, VU4, VU7, TN, BY, VK9W, TO5, 9M6 etc., all perfectly workable from the UK (though generally when I was out of the country!).

Indeed, when I said I would join the 3X5A team for CQ WW CW this year, Roger/G3SXW promised me that, as a Top Band enthusiast, I would end up like *un cochon dans la merde* (in this case I won't provide a translation!) and he was quite correct – the band was buzzing from down there in a way that I haven't experienced on previous Voodoo trips. It will be interesting to see the end of year statistics in respect of just how many entities were active during the year, but I suspect the numbers were quite respectable, with some high totals being achieved from the UK, especially on 20, 30 and 40m.

Hopefully Santa brought you something useful for the shack. In my case my wife

bought me a copy of 'Whatever Happened to Tanganyika' by Harry Campbell. Quite fascinating, with tales of forgotten spots like British Heligoland, Neutral Moresnet, Skildar (known nowadays as St Kilda), Leopoldville etc.

I particularly enjoyed being reminded of the island group of San Serriffe, first brought to the world's attention by an April article in the Guardian some years ago. For some reason I can't track down their IOTA reference! We radio amateurs do end up with a headful of obscure geographical facts – we'd probably do well on certain TV quiz programmes! During the festivities, after playing various games of Risk and similar, my daughter challenged me to write down the names of all 50 US states – apparently the challenge featured on an episode of 'Friends' and the characters were supposed to have got stuck at 48. Interestingly, I managed it (by working through the call areas!), my last one being Tennessee – funny how the brain works, recalling the obscure ones, but passing over some of the easier ones.

Radios for DX

My remarks in an earlier column about the choice of a radio for DXing elicited this response from Jim, G3RTE, for which many thanks:

About two years ago I purchased an FT-2000 to replace my very good but ageing TS-930. Living close to Brookmans Park MW transmitting station with its five transmitters blasting out mostly rubbish, you can imagine the problems I get here on 80m and even on 40m. Imagine my surprise when I switched on the new rig to find that both 80 and 40m were considerably cleaner than before. Still one or two sproggies.

For my type of operating I find the FT-2000 very good. I can't say what the rig is like at the other end of the pile-up. One or two ops from your last trip don't seem to have been very impressed with it. Anyway, to get round to answering your question. The best feature by far is the ability to listen to the two receivers whilst working DX. It still amazes me when in big pile-ups people don't seem to bother to track where the DX is listening. Long may it remain this way as we can pick it off quickly. The second feature which has been useful is the Contour control set for receiving CW. It's certainly helped to pull out a few weak ones for me.

Like you Don I haven't bothered to find out what the rest of the features do. Makes me wonder if I should have stuck with the TS-930!

Top 5 QSL managers

You might remember that a list of these, courtesy of K1XN of the GoList, appeared in the November 2008 CDXC *Digest*. The majority of the voters were from Europe with just a few DXers from the USA expressing their choices. The Top 5 ranked by voter choice were: 1. W3HMK, 2. G3SWH, 3. IT9DAA, 4. IZ8CCW and 5. NI5DX.

Well done, Phil [G3SWH]. It's interesting that the majority of votes were from Europe. Does this mean that US DXers are now focusing more on LoTW confirmations, or is there another reason? The FSDXA QSL team have certainly not noticed a falling-off in 'traditional' QSL requests following our last two expeditions, even though LoTW is now well established, and I believe Phil/G3SWH, Nigel/G3TXF and other UK-based managers would say much the same.

Those OH8X antennas

There has been quite a lively thread on the CDXC Reflector about the three-element Top Band Yagi at OH8X, with some taking the view that this isn't in the spirit of

amateur radio. There's nothing new about big antennas, of course – W6AM's rhombics go back several decades, and there have been plenty of other instances – I mentioned in an earlier column working a KHØ expedition on 40m that was 'borrowing' a commercial broadcast station's curtain array for the contest weekend.

In practice most of us enjoy reading about such antennas and, where appropriate, benefiting from the opportunity to work these stations when we might not have succeeded in working a more modestly-equipped station at the far end. I well recall, back in the 70s, hearing W2HCW on 160m when he had strung a 160m quad from his 3-element 80m Yagi – he was the only US station audible on the band at the time, with a solid S7 signal on SSB. But I believe the quad failed to survive the next big storm. Frankly, though, our antenna experts would probably point out that the Finns are wasting their time. A 4-square for 160 would probably have very similar low-angle gain, be easier to keep in the air and instantly switchable in direction. But, of course, it wouldn't look half as impressive!

So what will 2009 bring us on the HF bands? At the time of writing very few DXpeditions have been publicised, although it does look as though Desecheo will finally surface, probably in February. As I have that on all bands and modes I shall, of course, be hoping there is some last-minute hiccup (no, I'm not really that mean...).

I have heard rumours of another rare one due up quite early in the year, but have yet to see an official announcement. Our very own GØOPB is off to TS7C (Kerkennah Islands, AF-073) in January, while Phil/G3SWH and team will be in FH in February - and you will see from the latest DX and Events Calendar that there are plenty more semi-rare trips lined up, but we probably need a few VP6DX-like operations to help while away the time. Certainly we won't be spending too much time outdoors if the

long-range weather forecasts are to be believed – it must be that global warming again!

For many years I set an annual target of working 10% of my remaining band countries on HF and found that was quite realistic. In the last few years it has been well-nigh impossible. Not, I suspect, so much to do with propagation, but more to do with the fact that the ones I still need are getting progressively harder to work, even assuming they appear on the bands. After all, if I haven't worked them in 40 years on the air (I was licensed in September 1968), there must be some reason why they are missing from my log, either by dint of being

an almost impossible path (much of the Pacific on 160m, for example) or for political reasons - eg Yemen, which has been consistently tough, although I well recall hearing John, G3PQA, signing 4W1AE from Aden in the late 60s, but back then my Codar AT-5 and bent 100ft or so of wire wasn't quite up to the task!

But I do wish each of you well in achieving whatever goals you have set yourselves for the year. The nice thing about DXing, as against contesting, is that there is no time limit – if you miss it this year, it will probably be back before too long.

73 Don, G3XTT

YL-only operation to VP8

A YL-only operation on 80m through to 10m will take place from the Falkland Islands between 17-31 January 2009. The YLs will have individual callsigns in the series VP8YLA, VP8YLB etc. VP8YLC is reserved for the Young Ladies Club in the Falklands and will be activated by local YLs. There is a website at

www.radioclubs.net/aa_vp8yl_/

and information will be updated on there from time to time.

Nicky, M5YLO

SV9 rental

In September 2008 my XYL, Judy, and I had a walking holiday on SV9, Crete. We stayed at a great location called Footscapes that would be perfect for a 'holiday-style DXpedition'. We rented one of three small apartments in a rural environment on top of a hill above Rethymnon. There was plenty of room for aerials (even for 160m), and after listening to me harp on about ham radio the very helpful English owners, Paul and Liz, said they'd be more than happy to welcome any radio amateurs who wish to operate ham radio whilst staying there. For more information check out the website at www.footscapesofcrete.com/

Phil, G4OBK

Borneo Bulletin

Steve Telenius-Lowe, 9M6DXX

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My previous *Borneo Bulletin* was written just before I travelled to Miri, Sarawak, for the CQ WW DX phone contest in October, from where I operated as 9M8Z. That seems like a long time ago now, as I write this shortly before Christmas. The contest, though, was great fun and my best ever single-op contest entry, despite mediocre conditions.

I am extremely fortunate in having access to a very good station in 9M8, at least for the high bands. I was using an Optibeam OB-17-4, with 3 elements on 40m, 4 elements on 20m and 15m and 6 elements on 10m, making a total of 17 monoband elements (no traps) on an 11.9m (39ft) boom. Unfortunately there was no antenna for 80/160m, so we temporarily put up a B & W wide-band dipole as a sloper, with the high end just under the Optibeam at about 70ft and the low end probably about 25ft up. This worked, but did not exactly set the bands alight as the Optibeam did on the higher bands.

It is interesting to speculate whether relatively poor band conditions are, in fact, a disadvantage or not when one has what might be described as a 'commanding' signal on the bands. I suspect that relatively speaking I will do better with this set-up when conditions are poor. When conditions are good, the bands are full of strong signals from all over, but although conditions were marginal I was still workable and one of the few DX stations audible on the band, so more people called me. This was particularly noticeable during the contest on 15m. I felt that conditions were much better than I had been anticipating, yet reading the comments on 3830 afterwards suggests that most people found conditions poor on 15m. In retrospect I now recall that after the

initial flurry of S9+ signals the vast majority of my QSOs on 15m were with stations who were S1 or S2 at best, but they kept on coming – hour after hour of S1 signals! This is hard on the ears, but it does indicate that I was getting out really well and I suspect that if I had been using a typical trapped tribander or even, say, a 3-element monobander at 40ft, I would not have been able to work more than a small fraction of these stations.

Thanks, therefore, go to the following UK stations who all made it into the 9M8Z log on 15m:

GØBNR, GØCGL, GØRAH, GØVVE, GØVXE, G1MIE, G2F, G3B, G3FPQ, G3GAF, G3NAE, G3UUV, G3VKW, G3WBN, G3XMM, G3YBT, G3ZSS, G4CUS, G4EZR, G4Ezt, G4RRA, G4TNB, G4YRU, G5W, G6H, G6MC, G6TW, GI3OQR, GI4SNA, GMØB, GM2T, GM3POI, GM7TUD, GM7V, GW4OH, GZØF, MØCUS, MØGHQ, MØILT, MØITY, MØKSJ, MØURX, MØXXT, M1DDD, M4A, M5MDH/M, M6T, MDØCCE, MIØBPB, MIØJZZ and MWØCVT.

Lots of familiar calls there!

A similar number of UK stations were worked on 20m – perhaps less of a surprise on that band given present conditions - and I was pleased to get a 'clean sweep' of all possible UK multipliers on 20m, from GJ4CBQ and MUØFAL in the Channel Islands, through MDØCCE on the Isle of Man up to GZØF in Shetland.

My final band breakdown and claimed score is:

Band	QSOs	QSO pts	Points/QSO	Zones	Countries
160	2	6	3.00	2	2
80	75	192	2.56	14	20
40	573	1622	2.83	33	77
20	1620	4724	2.92	33	109
15	1652	4841	2.93	29	100
10	192	539	2.81	14	19

Totals	4114	11924	2.90	125	327 => 5,389,648

SEANET Convention

This took place in Kota Kinabalu at the end of November, with around 200 delegates, including wives and partners, taking part. It was a pleasure to see Neville, G3NUG, and Trish Cheadle, and Bob, MDØCCE, make the long journey all the way from the British Isles. Two of CDXC's Japanese members, our old friends Taizo/JA3AER and Kazu/JA1RJU also came, making for a good CDXC photo opportunity.

SEANET is mainly a social event and sightseeing trips laid on for visitors included a city tour of Kota Kinabalu, taking in one of the city's main mosques, a Chinese temple and the State museum which, despite having lived here for three and a half years now, I had not visited before. It's well worth a visit too, with a fascinating collection of photographs of Jesselton (as Kota Kinabalu was called then) from the turn of the century up to independence.

Another full day-trip took in the newly opened Lok Kawi wildlife centre close to my home on the outskirts of the city and then on to the Klias Wetlands, where proboscis monkeys, unique to Borneo, can be seen in their natural habitat. 'Wetlands' turned out to be a highly appropriate name for, boy, was it wet! Sadly for the visitors this meant that the river trip in a tropical deluge with thunder rolling all about was less pleasant an experience than it should have been, and what's more the monkeys, not being daft, spent their time sheltering as

best they could from the rain, so were only glimpsed at a distance.

The Gala Dinner took place on the Saturday night in a teetotal Chinese restaurant (I had not realised that such a thing existed in Kota Kinabalu – it must surely be unique!), where the delegates were encouraged to wear either formal dress or national costume. Kimonos were well in evidence from our Japanese guests, while the large Bruneian delegation looked particularly spectacular in their national costume. Bob, MDØCCE, made an impression too with his white dinner jacket which the Sabahans immediately called his James Bond jacket.

At the Gala Dinner I presented certificates to the winners of the various sections of the 2008 SEANET Contest. The SEANET Region multi-operator winner was the Borneo Amateur Radio Club's special event call, 9M4SAB, while the single operator winner was Don Street, HSØZEE (also G3VFU and formerly well known as A92BE for many years). Don was there, so was able to pick up the certificate in person. The winner of the Rest of the World single operator section was CDXC member Alan Jubb, 5B4AHJ, and his certificate was collected for him by Neville, G3NUG, wearing his CDXC Presidential hat.

The only strictly amateur radio content to the Convention took place at the 'Plenary Session' on the Sunday morning. I showed the 3B7C DVD and afterwards several people asked for copies, indicating that

there is a lot of interest in DXing, even among those who are normally considered more 'casual' operators. Presentations were also made by the delegates from Korea, Shanghai and Brunei and it was decided that the 2009 Convention would take place in Seoul (to be organised by the Korean YL radio club), while the 2010 Convention would be in Shanghai. It is likely that Brunei will get their turn in 2011.

After the official part of the proceedings were over, a small group of us took the USA FCC examinations which were kindly organised by Volunteer Examiners Kazu/JA1RJU, Tac/JA1BRK and chief examiner Eddie/DU1EV. I had done no prior study for the exams and must admit to finding many of the Amateur Extra technical questions fairly daunting, not to mention the purely American regulatory questions (eg 'What is the maximum permissible duration of a remotely controlled station's transmissions if its control link malfunctions?')

- A. 30 seconds
- B. 3 minutes
- C. 5 minutes
- D. 10 minutes'

The answer is, apparently, 'B', 3 minutes, but to me any of the four answers could have been equally possible, and there were many such questions where I will freely admit I was just taking a 1-in-4 shot.

The result, not surprisingly, is that I failed the Amateur Extra exam, but passed the Technician and General (these days there are now only three US licence classes) and I am now the proud owner of the callsign KHØUN. Not a bad callsign, even without having to go through the vanity call system, partially as a result of utilising a US mailing address in Saipan. Well, I have no mailing address in mainland USA and I figured that from here I am more likely to operate from KHØ or KH2 than I am from California or New York!

Post-SEANET Activity

After the SEANET Convention John/9M6XRO and I went over to Labuan island with some of the SEANET delegates for a mini-IOTA DXpedition (Labuan counts as OC-133). Once again we stayed at the Manikar Beach Resort, which is a superb location for radio, with a perfect sea take-off from south-west to north-east via north. We set up a Butternut HF6V right on the high-tide mark and this worked extremely well. I worked around 200 stations on 80m SSB, mainly in Europe and North America, including several UK stations. This was the first time that either of us had operated from this location during the northern hemisphere winter months, and results on the low bands were so much better than during our previous visits in May and July.

John wanted to try 160m CW, so we also put up an inverted-L with about 65ft of almost vertical section, using a fibre-glass fishing rod attached to a top floor balcony at the hotel. After some experimentation, this also worked well and John was able to put many Europeans and North Americans in the log on 160m.

Meanwhile, Bob, MDØCCE, had checked in to the Langkah Syabas Beach Resort on the mainland, where there is a guest station. He operated for a week mainly on 160m, also with considerable success, followed by an entry in the CQ WW DX CW contest, where he set a new East Malaysia Single-Operator Assisted section score.

Neville and Trish went on to the Shangri-La Rasa Ria resort north of Kota Kinabalu for some R & R, followed by a stay at their favourite hotel in Malaysia, the Rasa Sayang on Penang island in West Malaysia.

Eva and I met up with Bob, Neville and Trish at the @mosphere (pronounced 'Atmosphere', geddit?) revolving restaurant on the 18th floor of the Sabah Foundation building, overlooking the South China Sea and some of the OC-133 islands, the day

before Bob flew home. The following day we drove up to visit Neville and Trish at the Rasa Ria resort and had another excellent dinner there.

It was a real pleasure to have Neville, Trish and Bob visiting Sabah and we look forward to meeting more CDXC members out here in 2009. Here's wishing all CDXC members a Happy and Prosperous (what, in the present financial climate?) 2009!

DXing in the Freezer: the OX5AA story

Nigel Cawthorne, G3TXF

It all started with a chance question to CDXC Member Finn, OZ7YY, at Friedrichshafen last June: "Do you know anything about operating in Greenland?" I asked. Finn was quite specific and detailed with his answer. The place to go was the club station in Kangerlussuaq and the people to contact were Jesper, OX3KQ, and Holger, OX3HI. Finn himself had operated from Greenland only last year and was familiar with the place.

It wasn't until several months later that Finn/OZ7YY's useful leads were followed up. Greenland seemed like an ideal place to go for a mini-DXpedition, particularly if there was a ready-made club station. A short trip was therefore planned to coincide with the WAE-RTTY Contest in early November. Interest in RTTY contesting is growing like wildfire. G3TXF is an eager novice in this fascinating part of our hobby.

Kangerlussuaq

Located on the west coast of Greenland, Kangerlussuaq (Greenlandic for 'big fjord') is by any definition an odd sort of place. In Greenland there are no roads between the towns, villages and settlements. All communication is either by sea or air. Air Greenland's flights from Denmark arrive at Kangerlussuaq airport. Most passengers then immediately transit onto one of the many internal flights on smaller planes to

other locations around this vast country, including the capital Nuuk.

The airport at Kangerlussuaq is thus mainly a transit airport. Hardly anybody stays there. The airfield was originally built by the Americans during WWII as a transatlantic stopover point. Today there is a small settlement which is home to some 600 people housed in a series of prefabricated buildings huddled around one end of the runway. There are just two radio amateurs in Kangerlussuaq: Jesper, OX3KQ, and Holger, OX3HI.

The recce trip

The four-day visit to Greenland in early November was split into two parts. The first day or so was spent running CW pile-ups as OX/G3TXF. The second part was operating in the WAE-RTTY Contest over the weekend. In the CW and SSB versions of the WAE Contest 'Europe works the rest of the world'. However, in the RTTY contest QSOs are allowed between stations located anywhere, but QTCs can only be exchanged between different continents. Although there is some local RTTY activity in Greenland, it was pleasing to read 'first OX on RTTY' on several of the incoming QSLs. Some 1,700 QSOs were made during this trip.

The Kangerlussuaq club station is located in a well-heated cabin on a hilltop some 6 km by road from the airport settlement. Jesper, OX3KQ, is the leading light at the station and has built numerous antennas. In particular there is a full-sized 80m vertical with an extensive radial mat. On 40m there are switchable crossed dipoles. Jesper was also working on a new triband yagi for 20m.

During the early November trip to Greenland the thought occurred that the Kangerlussuaq location would be ideal for the CQ WW CW Contest at the end of the month. Jesper had been active using the club station call OX2A during CQWW SSB in October. Although not a CW op himself, Jesper was keen on the idea of using the club station for CQ WW CW. Subject only to a couple of seemingly small changes, the antenna layout and station configuration would well suit a small two-man Multi-Two operation.

Ian, G3WVG, gets set for CQ WW CW

Ian, G3WVG, has a liking for operating the CQ WW CW Contest from climatically-challenged locations. For the past two years Ian has operated CQ WW CW from the Eshaness lighthouse in Shetland. This is arguably one of the most 'extreme' locations within the UK. The November gales which constantly pound against the Eshaness lighthouse perched on a cliff top some 60m immediately above the Atlantic can be ferocious. Having operated successfully from gale-swept Shetland as MZ5A in 2006 and as MZ5B in 2007, the cold Arctic climate of Greenland seemed like an excellent choice for CQ WW CW 2008!

Preparing for the CQ WW CW trip

Once the decision had been made to go back to Greenland for CQ WW CW there was some planning required. Ideally having a special call would be nice. Most currently active Greenland stations have the prefix OX3. The club station is OX2A. On our

behalf Jesper, OX3KQ, contacted the licensing authority and was able to obtain the callsign OX5AA. The OX5 prefix, although not unique, is pretty rare. Also the callsign OX5AA sounds nice to the ear on CW.

Flight tickets and accommodation were booked. Although everything in Greenland is, as you would probably expect, fiendishly expensive, one welcome surprise was to find that Air Greenland offers a 50% discount to any passenger over 60 years old. With both G3WVG and G3TXF having recently passed that milestone, we now definitely rate Air Greenland as an 'Old-Timer-friendly airline'!

Although the antenna configuration at the club station was fine for a single-operator entry, there were a few changes that needed to be made before the CQ WW CW Contest. Jesper, OX3KQ, worked hard on completing a 3-el 20m yagi. This was to be mounted on a crank-up tower some 150m away from the other antennas. Despite the short days and cold weather Jesper had this antenna completed before we arrived.

Getting to Greenland

There are no direct flights to Greenland from the UK. In winter the trip has to be via Copenhagen, where only Air Greenland has flights on four days per week. However, in the summer (when most tourists visit Greenland) there are more frequent flights and there are other ways of getting there, including on SAS.

The early departure and late arrival of the flights to and from Greenland dictate that an overnight stay in Copenhagen is necessary in both directions. This makes what would otherwise be quite a short journey more complicated and costly. G3TXF and G3WVG left London on the Wednesday afternoon before the CQ WW CW weekend. We stayed overnight close to Copenhagen airport and we were up early to catch the flight to Greenland. The Air Greenland fleet

consists of two big aircraft (one Airbus 330 and one Boeing 757) plus numerous smaller aircraft for the internal flights around Greenland. Our plane both ways was their Airbus 330, which was less than half full on each flight.

The flight time is about four hours. The time difference with GMT is three hours. The flight from Denmark left Copenhagen soon after 9am. But because it flew north it was soon into greyline with the morning sun disappearing back below the horizon. It was only after arriving in Greenland that we saw the same dawn for the second time.

Days in Greenland are short at the end of November. Kangerlussuaq is located at 67°N just above the Arctic Circle. Sunrise during our visit was at about 10.30am local, and the sun had set again just three hours later, by about 1.30pm. Although the days were brief, the greyline lasted for ages.

Getting set up at the station

We were met at the airport by Jesper, OX3KQ. Jesper works with the department that maintains radio communications in Greenland, including the HF air traffic receiver and transmitter stations. Jesper's office is at the airport. Our lodgings (the Polar Inn) were just by the main airport building. Nowhere is far away from anywhere in the small settlement of Kangerlussuaq!

In order to have some back-up gear we had brought a spare rig and linear. Our five items of luggage were the only items to appear on the tiny carousel at Kangerlussuaq airport. Everyone else on our flight from Denmark was transiting to an internal flight to somewhere else in Greenland.

The temperature when we arrived on Thursday morning was around -20°C. We checked into the Polar Inn guest house and then Jesper drove us up to the station. We knew that they were a few things that

needed to be done before the contest started at 9pm local time on the Friday, but at that point we had no idea how long they would take and how difficult it would be working outside in the low temperatures.

Jesper had been working on a second 20m beam. This had to be mounted on a platform located next to the operating cabin. By the time we started doing this it was already pitch dark outside. The whole operation took much longer than expected. However, the most important antenna work that needed to be done was the 160m antenna. OX is much sought after on 160m and we were determined to get something to work on that band.

160m Inverted-L

Jesper, OX3KQ, had already prepared a ground mat under a 15m tower that was going to be part of the 160m inverted-L antenna. But an extension pole had to be fitted to the mast. The mast was steel. Holes had to be drilled into the top of the mast in order to fit clamps that would hold the vertical extension.

Ian, G3WVG, climbed the mast and spent a long time in the freezing cold conditions clinging on to the mast and drilling the necessary holes to hold the clamps. Eventually the vertical extension pole was fitted. It was about 20m high in total. A horizontal wire was then run to a platform tower to provide the horizontal part of the 160m Inverted-L.

Jesper, OX3KQ, then spent time adjusting the length of the 160m antenna so that it tuned nicely. There were a few other details that had to be sorted. For instance the 80m vertical had to have an extension added to make it resonate at the CW end of the band. The 80m vertical was located over 500m from the shack. Being both cold and dark we drove over to the 80m antenna to make the adjustments. In my experience it is not often that you have a site that is so large (or

the weather so bad) that you have to drive to an antenna!

The original plan was to finish the antenna work and setting up the station by early on the Friday afternoon in order to have a few hours sleep before the start of the contest at 9pm local. This never happened. Work was continuing on sorting out antennas in the dark and cold to within an hour or so of the start of the contest. By which time it was too late to return to the lodgings for a pre-contest snooze.

CQ WW Multi-Two

For a two-man team the Multi-Two category in CQ WW fills the gap nicely between a full-blown Multi-Multi entry which requires parallel operation on all bands at the same time and a Multi-Single entry where one of the two operators has to be the multiplier hunting station. Being restricted to multi-hunting is not much fun if you are in a rare location. It's much better if both operators can be fully occupied. The Multi-Two category allows both operators to run at the same time.

This suited us perfectly at OX5AA, where we had only four bands operational: 160m, 80m, 40m and 20m. The large distances between the antennas meant that there was no inter-station QRM. Each operator had two bands. Ian, G3WVG, operated on 80m and 20m, while Nigel, G3TXF, operated on 160m and 40m. Although the terms 'night-time' and 'daytime' don't quite have the same meaning in Greenland at the end of November as they do in other parts of the world, we both had, in effect, one daytime and one nighttime band. Even though daytime was not more than a few hours long!

Contest operating

Inside the shack it was warm. There was an oil stove belching out heat. However, with the -20°C outside, the cabin door did not have to be open for long for the shack to

cool down. Both operators kept going for as long as possible. There was a couch in the shack and we were both able to snatch a few short snoozes. But any hopes of having a full sleep session never happened.

The operating plan was easy enough. Ian, G3WVG, spent as much time as possible on 80m, and during the short daylight hours concentrated on 20m. Similarly G3TXF worked hard on 160m whenever there was anything workable, otherwise was QRV on 40m. We were lucky with LF conditions. Aurora can be a major problem in Greenland, where the Auroral zone can be directly overhead. On the evening before the contest we were treated to a magnificent overhead display of the shimmering greens of the Northern Lights in the clear night sky. This did not augur well for the contest. But in the event the K-Index was low for much of the time. However, LF conditions did constantly change. One moment the band would be open, but just a few minutes later all would go quiet. Both the 80m vertical and the 160m inverted-L worked well. Just over 700 QSOs were made on 160m. Many of these are probably a 'new one' on Top Band.

In total we made just over 5,000 QSOs as OX5AA during the contest. By the time the contest finished at 9pm local time on the Sunday both operators were totally exhausted. The plan was to get back to the Polar Inn guest house, have a good night's sleep and leave for home on the flight back to Copenhagen early the following morning. It didn't quite work out like that.

Return journey – a slight QRX

We had been told that it is only on a handful of days each year that the incoming flight from Copenhagen cannot land because of the weather in Kangerlussuaq. The Monday after CQ WW CW was to be just one of those days! Although we had checked in for the flight, ominously there was no sign of the incoming aircraft. It was eventually announced that the aircraft would be

returning (having circled over the airport for as long as it could) to stopover for the night in Iceland. Our stay in OX was therefore to be one day longer than planned.

The delayed passengers were billeted in local hotels. However, we were able to put our time to good use. Although it had been cold so far during our stay, there had been no wind. But by now there was a strong gale blowing, and Jesper was anxious about the tower with the new 20m beam. So we returned up the mountain to the club station to help Jesper tie the guys on the tower with the 20m beam. Snow was piled high along

the road up to the station (only accessible in a four-wheel drive). We got back down from the station OK and the delayed flight finally departed from Greenland, just one day late.

However, when we got home we heard from Jesper that the road up to the station had become completely blocked by snow drifts and that he wasn't able to get up there. Yes, despite the one-day delay on the return trip and the freezing temperatures during our stay, we had in fact been lucky with the weather for our CQ WW CW 2008 trip to Greenland!

48 Hours in the Life of a Contester – My First SOAB in CQ WW

Mark Haynes, MØDXR *Mark.Haynes@selex-comms.com*

Contesting is an element of our hobby that has appealed to me as far back in my ham radio career as I can remember. My father, Keith/G3WRO, got me hooked as we'd spend a couple of hours in the shack working some stations in the HF contests, and I remember the stations we worked all had extremely high serial numbers, which got me thinking. The fact that you cannot only communicate around the world with lots of DX, which is great fun in itself, but also introduce a competitive sport-like element into it as well is the perfect combination.

Up to this year I have been contesting with teams such as GB3RS (with G4JVG, now 9M6DXX, and GØWAT) from the previous RSGB headquarters, G6PZ (the G6PZ Icom UK Contest Group), and K3LR (the super station in Pennsylvania, USA). CQ WW CW is usually my annual K3LR experience, but due to circumstances this year I was unable to attend. So I decided to try something I hadn't done seriously before: a Single Operator, All Band entry. The

obvious person to approach was our John, G3LAS, who is not only a super guy, but he has a great station, plus is local to me, being close to my home town, Harlow in Essex. I recall a conversation I had with John. It went something like this:

MØDXR: So, what have you got planned for CQ WW CW this year, John?

G3LAS: CQ WW? Err... I'm afraid I don't really see the point of that contest.

MØDXR: Oh, really? ...thinking: "Aha, an opportunity!"

So shortly after that I popped the question to him and happily he agreed. We started to talk about antennas, station configuration, etc. John explained that he had his new 3-element SteppIR yagi with added 40m dipole, an Inverted-V for 80m and a sloping vertical for 160m. The equipment is an IC-7800 and PW-1 amplifier. All sounded great! Some years back Simon, MØCLW, and myself established a club called the

'UK Young Contesters' and obtained the club call MØUKC and contest call G1A. Thanks to Simon for doing all the necessary admin to get this call renewed, and to Justin, G4TSH, for speeding up the process in time for the contest!

On the Friday before kick-off I turned up in the early afternoon to help crank the tower and put the 80m antenna up. Thankfully it all went up in about an hour and the SWRs on all bands were perfect. Then we set up the PC and got the WinTest logging software ready. It took us a while to get the CI-V interface working properly, but this was only because we were unfamiliar with how to set the radio address up for the different radio type.

It was then dinner time, and Rachael, John's XYL, is a fantastic cook! I planned to get a few hours sleep before the start of the contest, but you know what it's like... I was way too excited for such things, so it was just a lie-down whilst anxiously watching the clock. At 2300 I made my way back to the shack and went on the air to get an impression of propagation and to determine where to start.

Then midnight arrived and it was GO! I started on 40m, working a mixture of Europe and USA. I remember being called in the first hour by 5X1NH, which was a great surprise. During the night I toggled between 40m and 80m – I decided not to touch 160m until the second night. I managed to maintain a rate of at least 100/hr all night, which I was particularly pleased with. At first light I made my way to 20m, and the band was of course packed with stations. The band was open to the Far East, so I managed to log many Asian multipliers. Then it was running these guys with Europe until the first sign of the band opening to North America to run the outside Europe 3-point/QSO-guys, which of course are more valuable than the 1-point European contacts.

Then breakfast arrived! John presented me with a much-needed coffee and some homemade marmalade on toast.

North America started to come in at midday, and it was a mixture between working these guys with the various multipliers that would pop up on 15 and 10m. As rates were good on 20m, and 15m/10m were somewhat quiet, I decided to continue running on 20m. It was always worth taking a look at 40m to see if there were any close-in multipliers, which are likely not to have been workable during the night.

Ten metres was disappointing. I only managed four QSOs on the band throughout the entire contest. I tried to grab the mults when they came up on the cluster, but much of the time they were not workable. I do remember working 5R8FU, who was extremely loud, for a double mult on the band.

By Saturday evening I was starting to feel tired, so I decided to take two hours sleep just after 20m closed to the USA (I figured I wouldn't work too much outside Europe at this time). My second two-hour sleep came at 2am on the Sunday morning, and this would be the last of my time off the radio for the rest of the contest. When I returned to the radio I recall managing to work our Nigel, G3TXF, and Ian, G3WVG, in Greenland, as OX5AA on 160m. They were a great signal. I was quite surprised with this as they were so far north and within the auroral zone, but they certainly made the trip, no problem.

It was on the Sunday morning that it got even more interesting. 40m was truly amazing – I was running to the USA, Far East/Japan at lunchtime, and these stations were LOUD! Then the inevitable – I was spotted wrongly as GJ2A, which gave me a huge pile-up. Nice? Well, not really, as they were probably logging me incorrectly. Many duplicate QSOs at this time, and when I sent, "QSO before", they would reply, "No, pse QSO". I tried to send my

call very clearly: “de G1A G1A G1A Test”, but the pile-up of dupes continued. It’s a shame that so many stations seem to rely on the cluster without listening to the station on frequency, but such is contesting.

The Sunday seemed to present me with better propagation to the USA on all bands. 20m stayed open much later than on the Saturday, and there was a good opening to the West Coast. This continued on 40m to the end of the contest, and at 2359 on the Sunday I was called by AL7A for a double multiplier – lovely!

After an exhausting 48 hours I ended up with a bottom line of 3,680 QSOs for 3.58 million points. Thank you to everyone who worked me. I felt very pleased with the result, and I thank John and his wife, Rachael, for their wonderful hospitality.

The plan is to go for another single op entry in the 2009 WPX CW Contest. I’m looking forward to rejoining the K3LR team for 2009 CQ WW CW next year.

Footnote de G3LAS:

If anyone hasn’t seen a zombie with two poached eggs for eyes, poking a computer keyboard and Morse paddle with a determined but glazed expression on its face, I would suggest you lend your station to someone like Mark for a CQ WW contest. How he kept going for 48 hours I can’t begin to guess. I used to find great difficulty with 24-hour contests, even when I was young enough to survive such events.

Seriously, I have nothing but admiration for Mark’s attitude, skill and persistence. He certainly has slightly altered my opinion of these blockbuster contests. What he is too modest to mention is that he thinks his score of 3.5M+ points may come close to the 9-year old G record for the single op assisted category of CQ WW CW, subject to the log-checking process. Congratulations, and we’ll be ready with the intravenous coffee again next time!

G4IRN visits Vatican City club station HVØA

John Warburton, G4IRN g4irn@dxdx.co.uk

On 3 October 2008 John operated the Vatican City club station, HVØA. Here is his story of his flying visit.

The Invitation

Back in June 2008 I was at the Friedrichshafen Ham Fest in Germany. This year I actually persuaded my wife, Janet, to come along with me. We had a great weekend and if nothing else it was nice to have some sunny weather! My wife didn’t really appreciate the radio aspects too much, but many of the national societies offer samples of their local produce, much of it derived from grapes, that she seemed to

quite like! Plus, of course, there was the good company of many new and old friends.

As usual we planned to fly back to London on the Sunday afternoon. This gave a few hours in the morning to have a final look around the show and say our goodbyes before catching a taxi to the airport. As might be expected, there were a crowd of people awaiting a taxi to the airport, so when a people carrier arrived, the cab filled up very quickly.

On the way to the airport I found myself sitting in front of Bob, IKØPRG, from Rome. I had been briefly introduced to him

the previous day and as one does, Bob and I got chatting. I was telling him about our visit to Rome last year and chatting about London. We arrived at the airport quite quickly and were about to disembark from the taxi when Bob said to me out of the blue, “John, you and Janet are welcome to come and visit Rome and stay with me sometime”. What an offer! Thinking of all the possibilities, I was aware of previous activities from HVØA and wondered if there was a chance for me to operate from this rare spot during my visit. Although Bob wasn’t in a position to offer this opportunity, he assured me that he would take it up with Francesco, IKØFVC, the station manager of HVØA.

Preparing to Travel

Over the following months several e-mails passed between me and Bob. At first Janet and I planned on staying in Rome for a weekend and Bob very kindly offered to put us up and act as our guide. Once I started to look at the timings, costs, and Janet’s wish so have some ‘shopping time’, I realised that a weekend trip would not give real value for money, particularly with the weakness of the British Pound. Meanwhile, Francesco had invited me to operate from HVØA, hence Plan B was put into action.

I booked a one-day return flight to Rome from London with Alitalia. The fare was surprisingly cheap, but I thought nothing of it at the time. It wasn’t until a few weeks after that I realised why it was probably so cheap. I watched the Alitalia fiasco closely on the news – was it or wasn’t it going to survive? As a safeguard I booked a British Airways ticket using airmiles – at least I could cancel that flight with a minimum penalty should Alitalia go out of business. In the event I cancelled my BA flight and all was well at Alitalia.

Onward to Rome

I left my home at 0430 on Friday, 3 October. Janet very kindly got up early too

and gave me a lift to London’s Heathrow airport. Once in Rome, Bob was waiting for me at the airport.

It was great to catch up with Bob and re-acquaint ourselves with each other. We drove into Rome’s EUR business quarter, parked up (almost impossible!) and had a stroll around whilst chatting, window shopping and admiring the scenery. Come midday it was time for an aperitif as a warm-up before lunch. Obviously I was there to operate HVØA, but when in Rome I was enjoying doing what the Romans do!

It was then time to go and meet Bob’s pal Marco/IKØDWN for lunch. We headed to a local trattoria and had a very enjoyable pasta meal washed down with a bottle of wine. Bob speaks good English, but Marco speaks almost perfect English, so Bob was happy to rest his vocal chords and let Marco and I natter away over lunch. I had my laptop with me and had a chance over lunch to show a couple of presentations: 3X5A from CQ WW last year and GB7HQ from more recently. The guys were very interested and had lots of questions.

Vatican City

After parting company with Marco, Bob and I headed over to the North American College, the home of club station HVØA. I don’t know why I was surprised, but the inside of the building was very much like a college or university. The college was largely quiet; a football match going on outside (good to see the North Americans playing ‘proper’ football!) and the odd priest wandering the corridors. The shack is on the top floor of the building, so we took the lift up and Bob unlocked the shack door, allowing me to see the HVØA club station for the first time.

It wasn’t long before I had unpacked my keyer and headphones and was sitting in the operating position. Although not large, the shack is nicely laid out with a couple of positions with radios and amps; the logging

software is CT, which is quite familiar to me. The radio in front of me was an Icom – I'm not familiar with these radios, but Bob gave me a quick description of the controls and I was in business. A quick tune around 17m told me the band was dead. However, I tried a CQ to see if anyone came back.

The 'Dead Band' Syndrome

It is often said that if hams want to keep their frequency allocations, then they should use them more often. This occasion was a superb example of how under-utilised the bands are, particularly during the working week. A few CW CQs on a 'dead' 17m soon had a huge pile-up going. And it wasn't just single hop propagation: I was beaming North West and soliciting replies from as far out as the WØ call area.

Operating

I continued working on 17m for nearly two hours, listening out particularly for any weak stations, especially Italian stations - I was acutely aware that HV is a very difficult DXCC entity for many Italians on 17m and I wanted to be in their good books! Of course being from the UK I found it difficult not to tune into any G or M (and the odd 2) prefix calls that I heard. But many other countries were also worked and the buzz that operating a huge pile-up causes brought a big smile to my face. Some of the signals coming in from the States were huge.

The early start to the day and the very nice lunch were beginning to take their toll, but fortunately I had armed myself with a couple of cans of 'Red Bull' to keep me going. For the last 30 or 40 minutes at HVØA I moved over to 20m CW. Again the pile-up was big, but propagation was more far reaching than on 17m, with several W6 and W7 stations being logged. Bob was patiently sitting beside me throughout my 2½-hour operation and come 1730 it was really time to call it a day and head off towards the airport and my return flight.

When I stopped operating, all of a sudden I felt exhausted. I had hoped to do some SSB in addition to the CW, but I was having so much fun on the key, I just didn't get round to it. After a mostly continuous 2½-hour session 383 stations were in the log from the two bands.

On the Roof and Onwards

Before leaving the site Bob took me on the roof of the North American College and I was able to see why the pile-ups were so huge (apart from the rare prefix, of course!). The beam is on the top of the college, which itself is six floors high, sitting on top of one of the highest hills in the City of Rome. The 360° panorama was fantastic and clearly a great site for radio. But time was pressing on and Bob and I headed back to the airport via a local bar for a quick beer. I arrived home at about midnight.

My Thanks

I had a fantastic day trip to Rome and felt very honoured and privileged to operate the Vatican club station, HVØA. I would like to offer my thanks to the station manager, Francesco/IKØFVC, for allowing me to operate, to Bob/IKØPRG for being a fantastic host and taking a day off work to show me around and to Marco/IKØDWN for being great company over lunch and for translating this article for the Italian DX magazine. Thanks, guys!

John Warburton, G4IRN



CHILTERN DX CLUB
The UK DX Foundation

E4/OM2DX

Stefan Horecky, OM3JW

It was in March 2007 when my son Michal, OM2DX, came to me with the idea of going somewhere for an expedition. Not a bad idea, but to be honest I was pretty sceptical because finding an interesting country which is affordable and at the same time at least a bit rare is almost impossible, but I didn't want to disappoint him. So we started browsing through the DXCC list. The Pacific was cancelled in the first round. In the second round we stopped thinking of South and North America. There were a few interesting destinations in Africa, but we didn't like it that much either. And we didn't even think about Europe.

So what was left? Asia; the continent with quite a few rare destinations. Sometimes, even with a few local hams who exist in those countries, but they haven't been visited often by expeditions (A4, A7, A9, AP etc.). "What about Palestine?" asked Michal. "Forget about it", I replied. But he didn't.

Palestine is an historical land in the Middle East near the Mediterranean Sea fully enclosed by Israel and also known as the Holy Land. It is a sacred land for Jews, Christians and Muslims and it became an independent territory in 1989. It consists of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip with a combined area of 6,600 square kilometers and 3 million inhabitants. The first elected leader and chief of the Palestine National Authority was Yasser Arafat, who was elected back in 1996. After his death in 2004 Mahmoud Abbas was elected. The last election was won by the Hamas movement which is listed by the EU as a terrorist organisation. Together with Fatah, they rule the country. By the beginning of 2007 the conflicts between the two movements had escalated into violent military conflicts. Palestine itself hasn't yet been approved as

an independent country and is still holding the status of an independent territory.

So how come this country became a DXCC entity? During the Yasser Arafat period he had to use an airplane, but this airplane didn't have any registration marks because Palestine didn't get a block of prefixes from ITU. On 1.2.1999, thanks to a strong Arabic lobby, Palestine got a block of prefixes from the ITU, E4A-E4Z, and from this moment Palestine became a new DXCC entity. Few hams got a licence in 1999 and 2000. There weren't any problems for groups and individuals to operate from Palestine. One of them was Zoli, HA1AG, who made a comment on Michal's website at www.om2dx.com. He wrote, "Why is it so difficult to get a licence in Palestine? I went to a ministry in Gaza and after two hours I left with the licence in my hand without paying anything and I even had a cup of tea with the minister. What has changed since then?" He added. The main thing that has changed since then is the political situation and that is the main reason why nobody has got a licence from 2000 till now.

The first step we took was to get some telephone numbers of the Ministry of Telecommunications in Gaza. All the ministries were situated there. Michal got a few, but none of them worked. After some time he found out that the city code had changed and he started again. This time some of the numbers worked, but nobody picked up the phone. Suddenly, after three months of calling, a magic moment came: somebody picked up the phone. "I was so surprised I forgot what I wanted to ask!" Michal exclaimed. To his surprise the person who answered the phone spoke English. When Michal asked him if it was possible to get a licence he asked where Michal was from. Since we are from Slovakia and this is considered to be a

'Palestine-friendly' country, he replied that it was possible to get a licence. The first condition to get a licence is that you must come from a country which is 'Palestine-friendly'. Then he said he had to wait for his boss, who would be back in half an hour. After half an hour his boss was not there, not even an hour later. Two hours later, however, he picked up the phone. He said this magic sentence which you can hear everywhere in the Middle East, "No problem at all, mister". He told Michal to download an application form from their website, fill it in, send it to the ministry, pay an administration fee of about \$US 70 and wait.

The website was not working, so Michal made another phone call. 'The Boss' was still in the office and he promised to send the application by e-mail and a few hours later it arrived. According to the e-mail we should apply for the licence in Ramallah, which was safer than applying in Gaza. We should pay the fee in Ramallah and from there they would send it to Gaza to be signed and then it should arrive back in Ramallah, where we could pick up the licence.

As mentioned earlier, the crisis between the two factions (Fatah in Ramallah and Hamas in Gaza) made it impossible to follow this planned procedure. So we had to start from the beginning, but this time we were forced to arrange all the paperwork in Ramallah without sending anything to Gaza.

Then in June 2007 Michal went on a business trip to Tel Aviv. Before going there he had contacted David, OK1DTP, who had been working for the Czech Embassy in Ramallah back in 2000 and had useful information about people who might be able to help us in Palestine. One of them was Mrs Lenka, a Czech-born woman married to a Palestinian man, and who was also working for the Czech Embassy in Ramallah. We asked her to please help us with the licence and to check if the Palestinian authorities were working on

issuing the licence. After a few days she told us some rather unpleasant news. The officer who was in charge of Michal's license thought that Michal was just renewing his old licence and didn't understand the fact that he was applying for a new one. A new application form had to be filled in with lots of detailed information. The licence fee had been raised to \$US 350 and after been given many promises we were still kept waiting.

At the beginning of August an e-mail arrived telling us that the licence had been prepared and was ready to be signed by the minister. Lenka sent her husband to the ministry to check when the licence could be signed and he returned with the licence in his hand. She sent a copy by fax to Michal and in a few days the original copy arrived. It was only when we arrived in Palestine in December that we found out the minister and Lenka's husband were close friends.

The first part of the DX expedition was successful. We started to plan when to go there and how. The licence was valid for one year (until 15.8.2008). The first idea was that Michal would go there alone to check out the situation and based on his experience we would plan a big expedition. Then he realised that he wouldn't be able to do much there alone - and he would also have problems with excess luggage. It was necessary to ask somebody to accompany him.

The first person to reply was Miro, OM5RW. The first plan was to go there as soon as possible, but the situation got more complicated. Michal had one business trip after another and he was at home for at most two days at the time. Besides, he had to prepare for his university exams. So it looked like the expedition could only be arranged for the end of January or the beginning of February 2008 at the earliest. The breaking point happened in November, right before the Slovak hamfest in the High Tatras. Due to the many factors we put our heads together and decided that if we

wanted to organise this expedition as soon as possible it must be done from the 14th to the 22nd of December 2007. Miro agreed and soon we convinced another member – Rudy, OM3PC - to join us. Both of them have rich experience with expeditions to Mauritius and they promised to provide all the technical support.

When they roughly weighed all the equipment needed they realised that it would be difficult for a group of three people to carry all the excess luggage (1kg of extra luggage cost 20 Euros). So they needed one more member. They decided to ask me to be the fourth member.

Miro and Rudo prepared all the essential equipment: LP5 beam, verticals for 30, 40, 80 and 160m, a Kenwood TS-450SAT and Elecraft K2 transceiver, two AL-811 power amplifiers, microkeyers, Dunestar filters, a few coax cables of different lengths and many other things.

Brani, OM2FY, lent us another LP5 beam and a Yaesu FT-857 transceiver. Con, DF4SA, from Spiderbeam, sent us 18m-long telescopic rods and a Spiderbeam for the WARC bands. Unfortunately we were not able to take the beam with us due to its length (12m) and we didn't know if there would be enough space on the roof of the hotel for it. One day before the expedition we started packing and weighing the luggage as a whole. It was simple maths: 20kg per person plus 5kg of hand luggage. All together 100kg. But Michal's suitcases which contained transceivers and accessories that he was able to take as hand luggage were 30kg! Michal had a few advantages, thanks to his frequent flyer cards. One of the benefits was that he could exceed his luggage limit by 20kg. That saved 400 Euros one way. We checked in the luggage at Vienna Schwechat airport without any problems and three and a half hours later we landed at Ben Gurion airport in Tel Aviv. It was 4pm. We were welcomed by Michal's close friend Zolo from the Slovak embassy. Without his help

our expedition would probably have ended before it begun.

To get a licence was not an easy task, but to get to Palestine was even harder. It was harder still with all the equipment we had. Palestine (West Bank) is totally isolated and unreachable by sea, air and land. There wasn't any mean of transportation to get to Palestine and it is separated from Israel by a concrete wall. The only way is to get a cab at Ben Gurion airport and ask to be dropped off at the last checkpoint, then cross the border by foot and get a a different cab on the Palestinian side to drive you to Bethlehem. With our luggage and equipment it was impossible, of course, and so we asked Zolo to drive us there in his SUV. Thanks to the CD licence plates on Zolo's car we got to Bethlehem without any problems at the checkpoints.

The St Joseph Home Hotel was our QTH for 9 days. It is situated right next to a main road. We were a bit worried by this. The city of Bethlehem is beautifully spread out, with a height difference of about 150m. Our hotel was situated almost on the top of a hill, with three terraces each on a different level. We couldn't imagine a better QTH than this one.

We then met Lenka, whose flat was about 100m from the hotel. She showed us the most important shops, which were very close to the hotel, and we went to a restaurant to have a meal. But our goal was to be on the air as soon as possible. Our rooms were on the highest floor of the hotel and right above the rooms was the lowest terrace. Miro prepared the equipment and power amplifiers and Michal with Rudo prepared verticals for 40m and 80m in total darkness. We had two rooms, so we decided to set up one radio in each room. Rudo and Miro had the K2 with an AL-811 and Michal and I had the TS-450 with and AL-811. Later we added a third radio to Rudo's room, an FT-857.

The first contact under the E4/OM2DX callsign was made by Miro with Gitka, OM5MF, on 40m CW at 20:17z (2217 local time). When we turned on the power amplifier in Miro's room the circuit breakers on our floor short-circuited and we were in darkness.

When the operation could start again, our first CQ was on 40m, 7.003 MHz. It failed the first time, as did the second CQ. On the third CQ we made a contact. Right after that we appeared in the cluster and what happened after that was indescribable. You will need to experience it for yourself. The pile-up was amazing and we continued simultaneously on 40m and 80m till the morning. Right after sunrise Miro and Rudo set up the first LP5 and placed it on the highest terrace of the hotel. Around noon we set up the vertical for 30m and in the afternoon the second LP5 beam on the lowest terrace.

Non-stop operation continued and we added around 4,000 contacts each day. The bad thing was that the expedition was held during the worst conditions of the past months, but we couldn't do anything about that. We tried to check 12m and 10m a few times each day, but we made only 55 contacts on 12m on the 17th and 18th.

We also received many requests to operate RTTY. We paid attention to this mode for two days on 20m and made more than 1,000 QSOs. We got more and more tired. We slept only about 4-5 hours a day and our best friends were Red Bull and coffee.

During the expedition we went out into the streets only in groups of two, usually to get some food or to visit the Internet café and read the comments on our website and upload the logs.

It would be a sin to be in Bethlehem and not visit the famous historical places. And so one morning we did a little sightseeing of the place where 2008 years ago Jesus was born. You don't need to be religious to feel a

little shivering sensation caused by those places. The whole of Bethlehem, whose official name is Beit Lahm (House of Bread) has 3,000 inhabitants and it just breaths history. Street vendors try to sell you everything, crying that their kids will starve if you don't buy something from them.

The end of the expedition was drawing near. On Friday the 21st we dismantled the lower beam and once 20m had closed we also dismantled the second one. On the last night we operated only on the lower bands and by sunrise we had also dismantled all the other antennas. We stopped the operation exactly at 0900 on 30m. We had logged 29,450 contacts.

To get from Israel to Palestine was pretty easy, but the thought of getting back to Israel worried us a lot. Once again thanks to Zolo, who solved this problem by 'smuggling' us back to Israel. Our flight from Tel Aviv was at 1600, but because of the heavy security checks we had to be there three hours before departure. Zolo came at 1000 and because we had some time to spare we visited part of Jerusalem and the tomb of the prophet Samuel..

Finally, thanks to our sponsors, clubs and associations: the Clipperton DX Club, Danish DX Group, European DX Foundation, German DX Foundation, International DX Association, Northern Illinois DX Association, Chiltern DX Club, Nippon DX Association, OK DX Foundation, Spiderbeam and to individuals: AA2ZS, DF7FC, IK8CNT, JA7CDV, JR1FVI, K1ESE, K4HGX, K5GH, K8IA, K9CT, N4AAV, N4XM, N6JZ, OM1KW, OM2AST, OM2FY, OM2XW, OM2ZZ, OM3LO, OM3PA, OM5AW, OM5DM, OM5ZW, SP3DOI, W5LE, W7/DL1UF and others.

Last but not least I would like to thank Michal, OM2DX, for arranging the licence and for planning the expedition down to the very last detail; to Rudy, OM3PC, and Miro,

OM5RW, for providing the equipment. It was an honour to be a member of this fantastic team.

Final statistics:

	SSB	CW	RTTY	All
160	39	2050	-	2089
80	-	4866	-	4866
40	493	6775	-	7268
30	-	3033	-	3033
20	3151	2220	1048	6419

17	2298	1365	-	3661
15	672	1385	-	2057
12	-	55	-	55
10	-	-	-	-
ALL	6653	21 749	1048	29450

Since we are still in DXpedition mood we have started to prepare another one. Where to? It's a surprise!

Translated by Michal, OM2DX

The 2007 DXpedition to Scarborough Reef

Paul Pescitelli, K4UJ, and Tom Harrell, N4XP

45,820 QSOs, chased by a Chinese fishing vessel, seasickness in the night, dynamite blasts, long days in the sun followed by great camaraderie, the GOOD, the BAD and the UGLY all in the span of five minutes at times, what an experience this was!

The 2007 effort to activate Scarborough Reef was born in 2002 by Paul Pai, BV4FH, and San Hutson, K5YY, while in the midst of an operation from Pratas Island. During the period 2002 to 2004 signs of possible approval were repeatedly received, but never materialized. BV4FH was able to get Chen Ping, BA1HAM, involved as the President of the Chinese Radio Sport Association and as the operation's point of contact with the Chinese government. Luckily the government never said "no", they just said maybe at a later date.

It wasn't until early 2005 when BA1HAM advised BV4FH that the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs was now involved and permission might be given for a date in October. BV4FH and K5YY decided to initiate more in-depth planning and other

preparations and asked Tom Harrell, N4XP, a veteran of many DXpeditions to join the 'team'. Bob Vallio, W6RGG (veteran of the 1997 BS7H team), and James Brooks, 9V1YC (another well known DXer), were next to be brought in along with Don Greenbaum, N1DG (another experienced DXer, webmaster and pilot). So far the team had two operators with previous on-site experience, backed by a support team with fundraising, logistics and IT experience.

It was during this time period that major sponsors were approached and support was lined up for radios, amplifiers and antennas; ICOM would provide radios, SteppIR would send verticals, Acom loaned its 1010 amplifiers, Butternut added low band antennas and Heil donated the headsets. Financial support was obtained from INDEXA, NCDXF, GDXF, CDXC and others who always help these types of operations. The next step was to add more operators: Mike Mraz, N6MZ, Joe Blackwell, AA4NN, Max Mucci, I8NHJ, Paul Pescitelli, K4UJ and Tom Berson,

ND2T, had joined the team. As time went on the CRSA added to the team the following: BA4RF, BA1RB, BA4RC, BA1AAX and DL3MBG. Chin-Ta Ko, BV6HJ, a construction engineer by trade, was also added to build and maintain the platforms designed by Johnson Wong, BV4DP, as well as keep all facilities running and operating properly. Later, Mike McGirr, K9AJ, joined the team as our onsite doctor.

However, 2005 would end without the promised approval from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and we moved into 2006. 2006 became 2007, but we kept applying and never gave up hope.

Finally, late in the evening on February 3rd while N4XP was talking to BV4FH on Skype, BV4FH received an e-mail from BA1HAM telling him that the Ministry had finally given permission for a spring operation. At that very moment there were no words to describe the feelings both experienced as they both realized that was only 90 days away. The team was notified and all the previous planning and preparation kicked into high gear. Transportation needed to be arranged, equipment from the sponsors needed to be shipped and a fundraising effort had to commence. At this point it was also decided to establish contact with the Philippine DX community and the Philippine Amateur Radio Association (PARA). On February 8th the first official announcement was made announcing the DXpedition with a date of late April, depending on transportation arrangements and weather. Needless to say, the DX world was excited...

Many actions started to kick into high gear. 9V1YC started a search for transportation; N4XP initiated a major fundraising effort, while N1DG activated the BS7H website.

By the middle of March 9V1YC had travelled to Hong Kong and secured transportation, a working vessel some 75 ft

in length named 'Deep Blue' with all the resources the team needed. More importantly 'Deep Blue' had travelled to Scarborough Reef many times and was familiar with the uniqueness of the area.

As April approached a major roadblock appeared that could have scuttled the entire operation then and there. Despite friendly and productive talks with PARA (DU9RG, DU1JMG, DU2JAK and DU1EV) word was received that the DXpedition would meet the same fate as the 1997 DXpedition. The operation needed help from someone who knew all parties involved including those in China and the Philippines. Enter Martti Laine, OH2BH. Clearly, at this point the future of the DXpedition was in question, but like a determined soldier Martti worked the telephones, e-mail and Skype around the clock and over the next week was able to overcome all expressed concerns and the DXpedition was back on track. In doing so not only was the fire put out, but the team gained another experienced operator, especially one with BS7H experience. Special thanks from the team go to those key players in the Philippines Amateur Radio Association as well as Tim, N4GN, for his assistance.

Because of the expected high costs to make an operation of this magnitude take place the major support received from INDEXA, NCDXF, ARRL Colvin Award, The Carolina DX Association and the German DX Foundation was proving to be instrumental in making the operation happen. Hundreds of individuals DXers also donated funds, showing the huge demand for BS7.

In late March N4XP, AA4NN and K4UJ would spend part of the weekend assembling and testing the equipment at the QTH of W6XA. In the second week of April N4XP and K4UJ carried the equipment to the freight forwarder to be crated at Atlanta airport in preparation for shipment to Hong Kong. The team assembled in Hong Kong the weekend of

April 21 to find that all the equipment had arrived safely and had already been loaded onto the 'Deep Blue' by 9V1YC, VR2BG and N6MZ.

Our initial plan was to depart as soon as possible, but we suffered several delays and potential cancellations due to additional political hurdles (The BAD), but the management team worked diligently to overcome those and was able to set sail on April 25th at 0600z.

During the three-day trip we experienced some rough seas, so Captain Desmond would carefully play 'mom' of the ship, coaching everyone through the day. At each meal time Desmond would slow the boat and change course to lessen the sway of the boat so we were all comfortable to eat, then back to full steam ahead. April 26th at 0800z we were intercepted by a Chinese fishing vessel; apparently we had charted a course right through the middle of their fishing territory, but after a slight change in course we were back on track for the reef.

Sleeping on the boat was a challenge due to the constant rocking side to side as well as fore to aft: fall too deep into sleep and you may roll out of your bunk! Then when everyone finally fell asleep we were quickly awake to see sick team mates in the middle of the night with barf buckets sliding around the sleeping quarters (The UGLY).

We finally arrived on the north side of the reef just before sunset on April 28th; our first sign of arrival was that of a Philippine outrigger trolling around the reef. It was a very surreal scene to be travelling along the open sea and BOOM out of nowhere are hundreds of tiny rocks sticking out of the water. Adrenalin was flowing in the whole team, and now we are supposed to sleep and wait for morning, yeah right. The conflict of adrenalin and peacefulness of the calm reef staring at us made for some strange emotions, kind of like one of those times when you feel you should be scared, but feel

really comfortable at the same time (The GOOD).

The next morning we continued towards the southern tip of the reef to locate the entrance so we could seek haven from any rough seas that may linger during the operation. Upon arrival we witnessed a new way to fish, DYNAMITE! We observed a huge splash near one of the fishing boats and could only surmise that they were using an explosive device to shock the fish before scooping them up (The UGLY).

Now the real work, both physical and mental, begins. It was readily apparent that the team was suffering from cultural differences and it would take an immense amount of coordination and nurturing to keep things running smoothly. James, 9V1YC, did an excellent job at managing the tasks in hand.

After spending most of the day scouting the rocks, gathering GPS coordinates and getting the first platform built (Rock #2) we would be pressed for time to get the first station on the air before nightfall. In a mad rush several operators loaded what they could into the small boat (water taxi) and basically dumped the equipment and two operators, AA4NN and I8NHJ, onto the platform at dusk and wished them luck! Struggling through darkness and a myriad of small technical hurdles they were able to get the first station on the air.

April 30th began with BV6HJ finishing the platform for Rock #4 and several hours later DL3MBG and K4UJ began assembling the equipment and we put that station on the air on 15m for several hours until regular shift operation could take over.

Shift duty

A word about operating shifts on the reef. Due to the time of the year, high tide and low tide changed quickly and also changed by as much as 25 minutes each day. The morning shift started about one hour past

sunrise and lasted till shortly after lunch time (5-6 hrs), then the afternoon shift would begin and last until just before sunset, then the long shift began. The graveyard shift would be on the rock for 12-13 hours as it was unsafe due to limited visibility and low tide to change operators in the middle of the night. Needless to say, the operators who were on the night shift were really worn out when the boat arrived the next morning.

The day began at about 0530 with the morning shower and breakfast. It was breakfast that was the surprise meal of the day. Our cook, 'Little Sister', would make up a big batch of fried eggs, and most mornings we had beans too: comfort food in the middle of the South China Sea. With some instant coffee we all felt great after breakfast and ready to either do our time on the day shift or tend to the chores that needed to be done. By 7am each morning the water taxi would start its rounds to each rock by dropping off a fresh operator and returning the tired operator to the 'mother ship'. This process repeated itself three times a day, morning, midday and late afternoon.

For the long nighttime shift one person was designated to stay up all night on the 'Deep Blue' and monitor the HF activity to ensure all stations were operational. This person would also monitor the 2m base station in case someone needed assistance with a setting on the radio. BA1HAM took this shift many nights, which allowed the other operators to get some much needed rest. May 1 quickly turned into a day of reckoning (the BAD). This day quickly reached a point where every aspect of setting up and becoming operational became a major roadblock with the limits of each operator stretched. As events unfolded 9V1YC, in an effort to move things along, turned to DL3MBG and K4UJ and asked "Can you two have that rock on the air in less than two hours?". Emphatically both answered YES and they were off! They quickly launched the water taxi with the

radio, antenna, amplifier and fuel for the generator and within two hours the station had been assembled and they were putting stations in the log on 15m.

There were now two stations on the air and the efforts to make Rock #1 operational were underway. Before it was over, this day would truly become the team's most difficult day mentally thus far (The UGLY).

Excitement looms

Whenever you find yourself in unfamiliar territory there is always a chance for something to go wrong. One afternoon while waiting for shift change, the 'help desk' received a call on the 2m radio from OH2BH. Two local fishermen had boarded his platform and he could not communicate with them. In a mad dash 9V1YC and K4UJ along with the boat captain and his first mate would hurriedly race to Rock #2 to scout the situation. After several minutes of attempting to communicate with the fishermen one of them jumped in the lagoon and speared an eel and offered it to us. We could only assume they were trying to barter for petrol, a much needed resource on Scarborough Reef.

It was then that they finally left, only they then decided to board the 'Deep Blue' (The BAD). Standing firm at the top of the deck was N6MZ and by his side was our cook, 'Little Sister' hiding her meat cleaver by her side. Those fishermen were not going to board the boat and she was there to make sure of it!

Operating titbits

As with most major DXpeditions there is the question of why did you do that? Why didn't you do this? Well, Scarborough Reef is no different. Did we work a lot of JAs? Yep, we sure did, they were right in our back yard – besides, who else are you going to work in the middle of the afternoon when the rest of the band is dead?

The night shift operators had the best of times and the worst of times. Remember their shift was often 13 hours long where they would sit lonely on a rock handing out QSOs to the deserving, attempting to make the best of each propagation opening, fighting fatigue and often lonely with only the company of a generator. True isolation. It was scary, surreal and exciting all at the same time.

Setting new standards

For this expedition our main goal was SAFETY. Second to that was the obvious make some QSOs and have some fun. This activation of Scarborough Reef was the first operation to activate RTTY, 30m, 80m, 160m, first HF Yagi and the first operation to activate four rocks simultaneously. Our QSO count of 45,820 almost doubled all the previous operations put together.

In addition the method of fundraising by using PayPal and online web donations made it easy for amateur operators worldwide to contribute financial support to the operation and see their donations listed on the website in near realtime.

There were those who had their doubts about us being able to activate one of the most politically sensitive DXCC entities, but in the end we were able to raise the bar once again and announced at HamCom in Dallas that all the individuals who contributed would be first to get their Logbook of the World credits for BS7. This was our way of saying 'Thank You' to all those who provided support.

The entire team extends their most sincere thanks to those around the world who worked diligently behind the scenes, and to our equipment sponsors, without whose assistance this trip would have been impossible.

The team thanks those individual DXers who, without hesitation, provided financial support.

Special thanks goes to those organizations such as INDEXA, NCDXF, GDXF, The Colvin Foundation, The Carolina DX Association and the Chiltern DX Club for granting the level of support they provided.

P29NI a Rousing Success

Derek Cox, G3KHZ

Derek/G3KHZ, Alan/AD6E, Mike/K6MYC and Skip/W5GAI were QRV October 21-24 on the Garove Islands, OC-181, making 4,181 QSOs and October 29 - November 2 on the Hermit Islands, OC-041, making 6,468 QSOs – with a grand total of 10,649 QSOs.

The team had two issues at the start. (1) Luis, CT1AGF, was turned back at Singapore because his passport expired within six months, not allowing entry into Papua New Guinea (PNG). He returned

home. Luis held the P29VLR callsign, so we had to use P29NI on both islands. (2) The Titanex vertical for 160m, which was shipped from Hawaii, never arrived. So we erected an inverted-L in a coconut tree with two elevated radials, and it worked very well.

The team assembled at the Rapopo Plantation Resort Hotel in Rabaul/Kokopo PNG on October 17. Our transportation, the 'live aboard' dive boat *Barbarian II*, was anchored offshore - and beyond it on the

opposite shore was the raging Tavurvur volcano, which had buried Rabaul in ash back in 1994. It was spewing ash far into the sky, more active now than at any time since the initial eruption. Fortunately for us the ash cloud headed off NW, away from us.

On leaving the harbour the next morning Captain Rod Pearce and his crew of four cruised out of Rabaul harbour around to the north of the volcano, then we passed through the tail of airborne ash way out at sea on our way to Garove Island, 180 miles to the southwest.

24 hours later we arrived and docked at the pier on Garove Island, an extinct volcano, with the caldera forming a lagoon surrounded by lush, but very steep green hills rising several hundred feet from the sea. The island is home to St Michael's Primary School (grades 1-8) and Catholic Church. The school headmaster provided us with two locations in school buildings for our radios and we were allowed to use their generator as long as we provided fuel. We had islander help to lug our radios and antennas up a path from the dock, up 45 narrow steps to a plateau, across a coconut forest and field to the school buildings that we were allowed to use. Antennas were set up along the bluff facing the lagoon, giving us good take-off angles to EU and NA.

We recreated and rested in the early part of the day when the radio bands were dead, then worked our radios late afternoon through the night. Local children and adults would drop by at all times of the day and night to observe our activities. We arranged a meeting with all the teachers and school-children, got to hear them sing and tell them about ourselves and what we were doing with our radios.

The bands were mostly dead from about two hours after sunrise until late afternoon. It was frustrating at times, hearing the VK9DWX team working LP into NA on 20m in late afternoon and we were hearing no signals.

Our most productive bands were 20, 30 and 40m with these QSO totals:

12m	1
17m	567
20m	1140
30m	756
40m	1357
160m	324

70 of these were on SSB, all on 17m. 160m was a focus because of so many requests for P29 on Top Band. It was disappointing at first because the band was dead on October 20-21, then only marginally open to a few JAs/UA9-Ø on October 22-23. Then on October 24, our last night on Garove Is., 160m opened up to West Coast NA and EU. We ended up with these QSO totals:

AS	267
EU	43
NA	10
OC	4
Total	324

The very first EME QSOs from P2 were made from the Garove Islands. Mike, K6MYC, erected his dual yagis for both 6m and 2m EME and had good luck with EME QSOs, gathering 36 contacts off the moon from 14 Countries: DL, ES, G, HB9, I, JA, K, ON, OZ, PA, S5, SM, UA and VK. Mike also decoded, but did not work, stations in F and UA9.

After five days QRV on Garove Island we drove 30 hours and 330 miles NW to the Hermit Islands. This island, like Garove, is an extinct volcano, but in this case the rim of the volcano is a sea-level coral reef, and the centre of the caldera has a lagoon with several islands. Our location was Luf Island, which has a low-lying and narrow centre with hills at each end. We anchored in the lagoon and were welcomed by island residents, hosted by local 'village councillor' Bob Poplis and his family, who assisted in lugging our gear across the narrow strip of land to the north shore, where we were provided with one thatched-

roof hut. We erected one of our tents 100 yards away and put our generator in between them. The antennas went up along the beach and we had a local fellow climb a coconut tree and attach a wire to the top for our 160m Inverted-L.

The Hermit Islands have a Seventh Day Adventist church and a 1st to 8th grade primary school. There were no pigs in this island, unlike Garove, and the locals did not eat pork or shellfish.

Better propagation made the HF bands more productive from this island. Again, our most productive bands were 20, 30 and 40m, with these QSO totals:

15m	116
17m	20
20m	1544
30m	2256
40m	1812
160m	719

SSB QSOs included in these were two 20m SSB QSOs and 354 on 40m.

160m was open every night into the East to West coasts of NA, especially as the sunrise greyline moved across them, and all over EU, Russia and Asia after sundown there.

We ended up with these QSO totals:

AS	405
EU	283
NA	26
OC	5
Total	719

EME was marginal on Hermit Island, with moon positions not favourable for EU or NA - and Mike, K6MYC, made only one 2m QSO with W5UN in TX.

We ended the DXpedition with 10,649 QSOs in the log:

2m	27
6m	10

12m	1
15m	116
17m	587
20m	2684
30m	3012
40m	3169
160m	1043

including SSB QSOs as follows:

17m	70
20m	2
40m	354.

The 160m 'by continent' QSOs were:

AS	672
EU	326
NA	36
OC	9

After five days of operating on Hermit Island we packed and loaded our gear aboard ship, thanks to four island ladies who carted our generator across the island, and then motored 150 miles in 24 hours to Manus Island, where we stayed overnight at the Harbourside Hotel, shopped in the local open air market, and in their supermarket 'Best Buy'. We had a farewell last supper aboard the Barbarian II with Captain Rod and his crew: Daisy, Lillian, Leonard and Godfrey.

At Manus airport the next day for our respective trips home it was like the one we experienced at Rabaul/Kokopo, a small WWII Quonset hut building, crammed with people, no ventilation and steamy hot. On our flight to Port Moresby we had an entourage of PNG officials who had been at a meeting at our hotel. Skip, W5GAI, sat with the head of Aviation, Transportation and Civil Works, who was quite interested in how amateur radio could be a source of tourism to PNG. Skip also reported that our 'NoJetLag' herbal pills worked well to combat jet lag. We experienced 20 hot, humid, sweaty, exciting, fun days in Papua New Guinea. We would have lost 20 pounds

each had we not been served three excellent hot meals a day aboard the Barbarian II.

The PNG weather was good, with very little rain, the QRN tolerable with our K9AY RX antenna for 160m. Mosquitoes were non-existent (we saw some only once), but flies and ants were abundant and pesky, even though they didn't bite, which was really odd.

All the islander were very hospitable and helpful. Most spoke English, all spoke Pidgin - a modified, truncated English. For example: "What is your name?" = "Wanem nem bilong yu?", "How are you?" = "Yu orait?" and "I am fine" = "Mi orait."

Sincere thanks to the people of Garove and Hermit Islands for their gracious reception and hospitality. We sincerely appreciate all the sponsor companies and individuals who donated equipment and funds to help defray the costs of this expensive trip, especially for our extra activities on 160m and EME.

A short video of a small cruise ship welcoming ceremony by Garove Islanders in 'traditional dress' is to be found at

www.youtube.com/watch?v=UUqJaBOprd0

The website and online log for the trip is at

www.425dxn.org/dxped/p29_2008/.

3DAØ DXpedition October 2008

David Hutchinson GI4FUM / 3DAØDJ *william.hutchinson6@btopenworld.com*

After the Afri75 Dxpediton to the Hawane Resort in Swaziland in March 2007 Daniel, ZS6JR, suggested to me that I might be interested in operating a JOTA station for the scouts in Swaziland in October 2008. The CQ WW SSB contest would be the weekend following JOTA and Daniel was looking for operators to run a contest station from Hawane. My wife and I had been out to Namibia in February and I was quite keen to get the excuse to go back to Hawane and perhaps also the Kruger National Park. Gillian (GI8MIV) had been bitten by the safari bug in February and happily I was able to persuade her to come with me in October.

We flew out to Johannesburg on 14 October, hired a rental car from O.R.Tambo Airport and stopped over a night in Pretoria before driving up to Swaziland. The roads from Pretoria to the Oshoek crossing post are good and the drive took us four hours. We arrived in Hawane on 16 October and the first job was to help Daniel erect the ¼-

wave vertical and 28 x 40m radials for 80m. The 60ft tower with A4S and a 40m 4 square are still in place. We started testing on air later that afternoon running Daniel's FT-100MP and IC-2KL. The Hawane Resort is in the mountains of western Swaziland at 4,500ft ASL near to the border with South Africa and 15km west of the capital, Mbabane.

3DAØSS operated from 16-19 October 2008. A group of 10 Swazi scouts and leaders backpacked with us from the Friday evening until the Sunday morning. They learned about the phonetic alphabet and all had the opportunity to speak on the air from the station to other scouts. The station operators were David, GI4FUM, and Daniel, ZS6JR.

Station statistics:

510 QSOs
74 countries
24 CQ zones

A total of 50 GB and Ireland stations were worked, of which 9 were GB prefixes, 5 were GI/MI, 3 were EI, 5 were GM/MM and 3 were GW/MW/2WØ.

On the Monday following JOTA Daniel, Gillian and I drove out beyond Manzini to visit the Swazi Scout Thirst for Life Project farm, where they have their chicken rearing project. They plan to run an International Scout camp there in August 2009. I was quite surprised to find that the farm is quite rural and is 7km from a main road along a dirt road. Access to the site by visitors from overseas will be by bus from Manzini, which passes the farm once a day. The Swazi Scouts are very enthusiastic about their farm, but their numbers are few and there is a lot of work to be done. They have been helped in the past three years by visits from scouts from the UK who have helped to clear part of the site. All the help and sponsorship is very much appreciated.

3DAØDJ operated from 21-27 October 2008. For the CQ WW DX SSB contest we replaced the IC-2KL linear with an Alpha 78 Bandpass HF Linear. Toni DaMata, ZS6GF, and Andy Cory, 3DA0TM, joined the operator team for the contest. We had no Internet access throughout the DXpedition, so we had no DX cluster available to us.

From the Tuesday to Friday prior to the contest we made 1,331 QSOs in 96 countries. During the 48 hours of the contest we made 3,395 QSOs in 133 countries.

Contest statistics: 5,437,434 points

Band	QSOs	Countries	Zones
160	1	1	1
80	4	4	3
40	321	97	27
20	962	146	32
15	1818	145	33

Power issues

Swazi mains power is not clean and is unreliable. We arrived at the beginning of the rainy season when you can expect frequent thunderstorms. Hawane Resort is 1500m ASL in the mountains. A typical day starts with wall-to-wall sunshine and blue skies with temperatures rising to the mid-20s or low-30s Celsius. By lunch time the clouds appear and build up and the thunder starts to roll at around 1pm. This together with the rain creates heavy static which makes listening on the HF bands difficult. Nor can you make out the weak stations who are calling you. Top band and 80m are particularly prone to static problems. The problem with thunderstorms here is that the mains power may suddenly fail. This results from a trip switch somewhere in the district suddenly tripping during the storm and the mains power is then off for several hours until some Swazi power worker decides to go and switch it on again. The power is often lower than 220 V and fluctuates. You notice the lights flickering at night with the fluctuations.

Our power would often fail at around 2250 hrs each evening and we eventually tracked this down to a trip switch at the resort itself. Apparently the resort earth system is connected to their water borehole and after a rainy day the switch was more likely to trip out. Fortunately they were able to lend us a diesel generator to use during the CQ WW contest when the mains power failed. I found it was wise to have brought battery-powered laptops (small lightweight ones) and means to charge equipment from our hire car when we couldn't do it from the mains. Although we did very well on the radio during the fortnight at Hawane, making over 5,000 contacts, this could have been much better if our power source had been more reliable.

9UØX and 9UØZ Burundi

Franz Langner, DJ9ZB

It happened that a representative of the Federal Government, well known to me, stayed for some time in Burundi, and had maintained good contacts with the authorities there. He was very willing to help us gain an amateur radio licence.

Burundi, a small country on Lake Tanganyika is very poor after many years of war between the Tutsi and Hutu. It borders on Rwanda (9X), Tanzania (5H) and the Democratic Republic of Congo (9Q) and is one of the smallest countries of Africa, with an area of 27,834 km². The national languages are predominantly Kirundi, French and Swahili.

After a short discussion with Franz, DJ9ZB, we agreed to take an Icom IC-7000 and a Cushcraft R8 vertical for SSB, together with a Yaesu FT-890AT and a G5RV (160m version) for CW. We were accommodated in the same building as the German Embassy, with the vertical on the ground and the G5RV suspended as a V-beam with west as the preferred direction.

In spite of generally bad propagation conditions and strong QRN, many 80m QSOs and some 160m contacts were made. While the large majority of the stations worked were from the W5, W6 and W7 call areas, we also worked twelve KH6 and two 5W stations. Signals from Europe were heard at only moderate strength. However, there were also some openings to the Far East, with good signals.

With more than 10,000 OSQs logged, we thanked our local helpers and contacts and caught the flight home. Burundi was undoubtedly a satisfactory trip. Burundi is a very unstable region in security terms. A democratically elected government is now

trying to make a new beginning. However, rebels from the rural regions try, especially in the capital, Bujumbura, to disrupt these efforts. For this reason the African Union sent eight hundred soldiers from South Africa to protect the most important facilities, including the German Embassy.

Burundi was previously part of Rwanda – Urundi, with its capital Usumbura, until 1918 a part of German East Africa and from 1919 under the administrative control of Belgium. From 1946 it became a UN trust zone, still under Belgian administration. In 1962 it became an independent kingdom, and after a 1966 revolution, a republic.

The capital, Bujumbura, lies at the northern end of Lake Tanganyika. Burundi has today about seven million inhabitants, comprising about 83% Hutus, 16% Tussi (Tutsi) and 1% pygmy. The population consists of 86% Christians (of whom 75% are Catholic), 12% followers of traditional religions and 2% Moslem.

Our thanks go in conclusion to the GDXF, Clipperton DX club, INDEXA, CDXC/UK, SDXF, OZDXG and the NDXA for their willing support.

[With grateful thanks to G3LAS for translating this. Ed.]

CDXC
CHILTERN DX CLUB
The UK DX Foundation

Troubles in 3X

Roger Western, G3SXW

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You will have heard that the President of Guinea, Lansana Conté, died on 22 December aged 74 after a long illness. This was followed immediately by a military coup d'état. Many thanks to the several friends who contacted the 3X5A team with good wishes.

Lansana Conté was one of the last few remaining despotic, autocratic African rulers. Gross mismanagement of the economy left his 10 million people in abject poverty. Guinea is rich in natural resources, with nearly one half of the world's resources of bauxite, used for making aluminium, not to mention gold, diamonds and uranium. Guinea is ranked as one of the world's most corrupt countries. The President had been ill for some years and his death was expected. When it finally came there was a sense of relief that now some change could come about.

So, when the military declared a coup d'état, the population welcomed it: any change from the current incompetent government was good news.

At the time of writing, in late December, this transition has been smooth with no troubles – so far. A night-time curfew was imposed and some soldiers have been firing into the air to enforce it.

The next few weeks will be important for determining whether the country makes a smooth transition to better times, or whether it descends into in-fighting between factions, anarchy and civil war.

Recent trends in neighbouring states like Sierra Leone, Ivory Coast and Liberia will hopefully not be copied where disputes between tribes caused long-term civil wars.

Good Timing!

From our point of view the VooDoo Contest Group's 3X5A activity in CQ WW CW Contest at the end of November was very successful. It was also well-timed - or rather the President's death was! Our operation was good fun and we all returned home safely some three weeks before the coup d'état.

These days we travel with our own transceivers and laptops, so the main stockpile left in storage in Conakry are the seven Alpha amplifiers, antennas, towers, rotators, coax, cables, switches and filters. Also computer peripherals such as wireless routers, WinKeys, external keyboards, mice and so forth. This is all safely stowed inside a container in the yard of a Belgian-owned company owned by our friend Karel, 3XY2A.

The future is, of course, uncertain. As a very worst scenario Guinea will fall apart, Karel will have to leave and all will be lost. That extreme is highly unlikely - a way would be found to rescue our possessions, by shipping them out.

Next Year

Indeed, our stockpile is meant to just gather dust in Conakry for the next many months anyway, so whatever happens in the meantime does not directly affect us. But come next October we will be planning our next foray into West Africa. On the back of this second 3X5A operation we did a brief recce trip to 9L Freetown, Sierra Leone, and made arrangements to operate there next November.

So our plan will be to move the stockpile from Conakry to Freetown, probably by road. The middle section of the route is

really, really rough. It took us five hours to do about sixty miles and we decided that our normal heavily-laden bus would never make it next year. Alternative methods are being developed.

At present the plan is to continue with our normal routine of moving country every other year: 9L5A for November 2009 and 2010 is certainly achievable, but with an extra spanner in the works this time! But we can't complain: our contest-group has been

in West Africa for 16 years and never met any problems. So now it is perhaps our turn to have an extra headache or two. We wish the people of Guinea well. They have suffered long enough and deserve leadership which cares about them, instead of simply lining its own pockets. We also wish Karel well. He has been in Conakry for 15 years and is well connected. At the same time we hope and expect our small CQ WW Contest world to continue unabated.

Climbing the Log Mountain - face the challenge of typing up your old logs!

Nigel Cawthorne, G3TXF

Computer logging only came into the G3TXF shack in the early 90s with the arrival of John/G3WGV's excellent TurboLog program. All G3TXF's earlier QSOs (from 1965) have remained in old paper logbooks.

During the past 12 months a major project has been to put the old QSOs into electronic format. It has been a huge task. But now that it is completed, the satisfaction of having it all done is indescribably positive! This time last year G3TXF had 140K QSOs in the computer, but 100K QSOs were still buried in 40 RSGB paper logbooks.

Why bother?

There are numerous reasons why having your entire log in electronic format makes sense. Here are just some:

- The whole log can be easily searched for old calls, old friends
- To find long-forgotten QSOs that can be used for various awards
- To act as a database for the cataloguing of your QSL archives
- To enable the easy back-up of your log for safe storage

- Enables the uploading of your entire log to LoTW
- Allows uploading to Michael/G7VJR's excellent Club-Log

How to do it?

There were two keys to the success of this project. The first was the excellent Fast Log Entry (FLE) program by Bernd, DF3CB. This free program was designed for the speedy entry into electronic format of DX-pedition logs. It is a brilliant program for entering the basic elements of QSO data from a paper log. The resulting ADIF file can then be imported into your main log. In my case I was importing the old G3TXF logs on a year-by-year basis working backwards over twenty-six years from 1990 to 1965.

The second, and equally important, key to success was finding someone who could reliably and accurately type in the old logs! Thanks to a contact provided by Derek, G3RAU, such a person was found. If anyone else is contemplating typing up their old logs, but is shying away from it because of the magnitude of the data inputting task,

there is a possible solution. Please contact G3TXF for further details.

QSL hits on LoTW

One major benefit of going through the old logs and putting them into electronic format is that they can then be uploaded to LoTW. The LoTW QSL hit rates for older logs drop off dramatically as you go back in time. For example G3TXF's 1991 log resulted in a 5.4% QSL hit rate on LoTW. This is already lower than the hit rate from uploading a current log to LoTW. However, for 1980 the hit rate was down to just over 1%. And for the 1970 log it was just 31 QSLs for 5,000 QSOs to LoTW, or 0.6%.

Not unsurprisingly the lowest QSL hit rate on LoTW was with the oldest log (1965) where there were just two LoTW QSLs for the 1,400 QSOs uploaded! But the good news is that both these LoTW QSLs from my 1965 log are CDXC Members: John, G3SZG (now 5B4AHK), and Peter, G3SJK. Keith, G3VKW, and Don, G3XTT, are two other UK CDXC Members who generated many early QSL hits on LoTW. The oldest LoTW QSL for a US CDXC member was for a 1969 QSO with Bruce, WA3GNW. However, there are also some nice DX

nuggets to be found in these early entries on LoTW, including LoTW QSLs for Roger/G3SXW's YA1R operation from Afghanistan in 1970.

The end results

The most important result is that G3TXF now has all his 251K QSOs made from home since receiving his licence in 1965 in one electronic log. In time this same log can be used as the basis of a QSL archive record system, as well as providing a tool for research and analysis of the QSL collection.

What next? There still remain a handful of early DXped logs (eg 3V8NC '69, 5T5NC '80 and 8Q7XF '88) which are not yet in electronic format. These will be done over the coming months. G3TXF will then have all his home logs and all his DXped logs in electronic format.

Getting your old logs into electronic format (particularly if the majority of your QSOs were made before computer logging was introduced to your station) can be a huge and daunting task. But equally there is no way to describe the satisfaction of having your entire log in an easily storable, searchable and retrievable electronic format!

DXing on 160m - You can't work 'em if you can't hear 'em

Stan Rudcenko, GØKBL

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Being a radio ham is about self-improvement. Failing that, one can spend more money. I have done a bit of both, with interesting results so far. Most of us have experienced the frustration of listening to a number of local hams working DX on Top Band which most of us cannot even hear - and which they obviously can. Even if the reports they send probably exaggerate a little, and the 569 given to a DX station is probably no more than 549 in real terms, my

inverted L at 45ft with a couple of 40m radials and lots of chicken wire is clearly short of around 6dB in comparison. My aerial certainly helps me to get out, with

VP6, VU7, 4S7, JA and KL7 worked over the past 12 months, but the fact is that I can't hear at least half of the DX worked by others. There is always the K9AY system, but since I have deliberately restricted myself to keeping my aerials at the back of

the garden for the sake of marital harmony (and EMC), there is not much room left for two 25m loops without compromising my other aerials there. But I did find room for a single loop, so I bought a Wellbrook ALA100 amplifier (www.wellbrook.uk.com) and started experimenting. The ALA100 broadband amplifier is not cheap, but performs extremely well in coping with strong adjacent signals. The Wellbrook amplifier is also totally weatherproof and uses power supplied through the coax, which also makes life easier. My first try was to put a 18m delta loop in the loft. It worked, but picked up even more computer hash than my inverted L on the 160m band. But the loop worked surprisingly well on 20m and up, with received signals at least 1 S-point stronger than on my Carolina Windom at 50ft.

The next step was to try and put the loop outside. This needed some 90m of RG58 coax and a spare 30ft fishing pole. The first loop was about 18m in circumference, which produced an improvement on 40m signals compared with my two phased verticals and the Carolina Windom. But 160m signals were still better on the inverted L, if only just. Enlarging the loop to about 25m produced a small improvement, so that the loop was about equal to the inverted L while producing significantly better signals on 40m and up. Having measured the loss from the RG58

coax (3.9dB on 160m) I also plugged in the MFJ-1040C preamplifier at the RX end to compensate. Signal strength improved, but the MFJ preamp just could not cope with strong adjacent signals, so I bought the Palstar MW550P preamplifier, which got rid of the problem. I can now often read signals on 160m which are impossible to read on the inverted L. The signal improvement is marginal, perhaps no more than 3dB, but it certainly helps with very weak signals. I am not sure what I can do to improve things further. Better coax would help – my other (RG213) run has a loss of only 0.9dB over the same distance – and I have yet to try a bigger loop as well.

The real bonus is much improved reception on most bands, which is like having a beam, compared with the Carolina Windom and the phased verticals I use on 40m. The project has cost me around £400 so far (two preamps, coax) and there is still room for more improvement and more money to be spent on it. If you do not need another preamp because of a shorter coax run, the cost should be below £200. From my experience so far, it was worth a try. I would recommend it to hams who can get out on 160m, but can't hear much - as the loop performs at least as well as a decent inverted L which may be difficult to put up in many gardens. There is no guarantee you will work more DX, but then if you can't hear 'em you can't work 'em.

FH Mayotte

Phil, G3SWH, and Richard (Dick on CW), G3RWL, will be active from Mayotte between 26 February and 5 March 2009. Mayotte counts as AF-027 for IOTA. The 2003 'Most Wanted' survey by 425 DX News shows Mayotte at #121 for DXCC. We will both use the single callsign of FH/G3SWH. Our activity will be mainly on CW on all bands 80-10 meters. Subject to QRN and site conditions, there may be some 160m CW activity. Richard may also operate some RTTY and/or PSK31. Propagation permitting, we plan to have two stations on the air for as many hours every day as possible. Our main objective is to work as many European, North American and ROTW stations on as many bands as possible. QSL via G3SWH, either direct with SAE and adequate return postage (recommended), via Phil's website for a bureau reply or via the bureau. There is more information at www.g3swh.org.uk/mayotte.html

73 Phil, G3SWH

The 2008 RSGB HF Convention and the FOC CW Pile-up Challenge

Ray Goff, G4FON

The idea for a CW Pile-up Challenge sponsored by the First Class CW Operators Club at this year's RSGB HF Convention was spearheaded by Chris, G3SJJ, and based on an audio file created specially for us by Tom, NØSS. Chris and I worked on the details prior to the Convention and

during the weekend we had additional help from Ivan, G3IZD, and Graham, G4FNL. We were given top billing by the RSGB and a room across the corridor from where Martin Lynch and the RSGB were selling their wares and QSL cards were being checked for DXCC. It was a good location and attracted lots of passing visitors.

In the room we set up Chris's headphone break-out box, which was capable of supplying audio to six pairs of headphones driven from my laptop. We had a group of six candidates at one point during the weekend, but we were prepared to run the test for single candidates. It was all done on a drop-in basis.

Each run consisted of a warm-up file, which came originally from the Louisiana W5FOC Social Weekend and contained mainly FOC callsigns, followed by the real thing.

Tom's file was excellent. It had a minute of instructions in Morse at somewhere between 15 and 20 wpm, which was followed by a brief CQ and then 101 callsigns. A good number of the callsigns were sent twice and some candidates used this to check that the call was correct, thereby missing the callsign underneath!

To log the callsigns each candidate was given a sheet of paper and the choice of either a pencil or pen to write with. Several people asked if we had keyboards and were disappointed to hear that we did not. It was

interesting that a fair number of candidates could not read their own handwriting and probably lost points as a result.

After each run we graded the resulting list of callsigns. How we went about this depended on how many people sat the test. If it was just one person, we asked them to read back their list of received callsigns and marks were awarded accordingly. When there was more than one candidate, each candidate passed their answer sheet to the person on their left and we read out all of the callsigns and asked each candidate to mark the paper in front of them.

The master stroke came from Chris, who designed and printed a certificate which was given to each candidate to commemorate the event. Using my printer we were able to overlay each certificate with the participant's callsign such that they left the room with one in their hand as a reminder that they had taken part in the fun. These certificates, printed on A5 high-quality card, went down very well indeed with everybody taking part.

So how did people fare? You will not be surprised to hear that the top three candidates were FOC members (G4BWP, G3SXW and G3VMW) and that the highest score was 64 out of 101. We had 65 people take part in the competition and in addition there were six teams, with each comprised of three members. The winning team was the (all FOC) Voodoo Contest B Team (G4BWP, G3XTT and GM3YTS). The lowest score was just four callsigns!

More surprisingly, perhaps, there were several callsigns on the tape that were not heard by any candidate! I guess that this means they were zero beat with a stronger callsign. I had asked Chris, who prepared

the list of callsigns to be used, to include my USA call, N4FON, thinking it might catch a few people out confusing it with the FOC Club Callsign G4FOC, and was pleased to see that several fell into the trap and that this caused some lighthearted banter between two contestants!

At the closing ceremony on the Sunday afternoon we were first up with our draw for the Chevron Morse key, so yet again a bit more publicity!

The outcome of the weekend was a positive promotion for FOC. I think that if we are prepared to continue to organise it, the Pile-up could easily become one of the standard features of the HFC weekend. People would arrive announcing that they had heard about it from people they had bumped into and wanted to try it out for themselves!

Sponsors and Winners

Highest individual score: an excellent vintage 1er Cru donated by the President, G3VTT - won by G4BWP.

Highest team score: three bottles of red wine (one per team member) donated by GU4CHY - won by the Voodoo Contest B Team (G4BWP, G3XTT and GM3YTS)

Prize Draw (every participant's callsign went into the draw): a Chevron Key 'provided' by MØAGA and financed by donations from Club Funds, G3SJJ, G4BUE, G4FON and G4UZN. The Draw winner was G4BWP but Fred has very kindly agreed that it should go to non-member G3ZVW, whose ticket was drawn after his.

Fred wrote afterwards, "I would like to congratulate Chris, G3SJJ, Ray, G4FON, and Ivan, G3IZD, on running the CW Pile-up Challenge in the name of FOC at the RSGB HFC. It was very popular and showed FOC very well in a public forum; I saw many people showing off their participation certificates. A big thank you to Kevin, MØAGA, for providing the first

prize, and also to Colin, G3VTT, and Dick, GU4CHY, for bottles of wine as prizes."

Steve, G3ZVW

Steve, G3ZVW, is a past Editor of the RSGB journal *Radcom* and currently writes a column called *Whatever Next*, which looks at modern development in radio and electronics. His reaction to winning the Chevron Key was as follows, "I am absolutely delighted to have won and yes, I would definitely like it. The paddle I currently use occasionally sticks, so I was thinking of buying a new one anyway. From what I have read on the Chevron Key website, I seem to have won the telegraphic equivalent of a Rolls Royce. I understand that Fred, G4BWP, was the first name drawn from the hat, but he wished the prize to go to an anon-FOC member - and that's when I got lucky. Please be sure to thank him for his most generous gesture. I wasn't particularly pleased with my effort in the Pile-up Challenge, and I wasn't even nursing a hangover that day! What I found difficult was that most of the callsigns were closely spaced in terms of frequency, whereas when I have been on the receiving end of a pile-up as ZD8N, people spread out because I work split. Under those conditions I can usually pick a complete callsign out straight away (I don't use a narrow filter). No matter, the pile-up was the same for everyone and my congratulations to those who came out top - even though it left me gnashing my teeth. I will be operating again from Ascension Island in January 2009 and the Chevron will definitely be travelling with me. Whilst I use a PC to make rubber stamp QSOs, the Chevron will be used for skeds and ragchews. Owning and using such a paddle might even lead to me improving my pile-up score at next year's HFC!"

The certificate, which was presented to each participant, was designed with help from Yvonne, G3SJJ/2, and Paul, W4/VP9KF. G4FON provided the overlay for the President's signature and participant's callsign, plus the laptop and printer to

enable the certificates to be printed and presented immediately at the end of each session.

Results (call/score)

G4BWP	64	SP3CW	41	G3VPW	23
G3SXW	63	G4IRN	40	G4DDX	23
G3VMW	56	G4TSH	40	PB2T	23
AA7A	55	MDØCCE	39	GW3JXN	21
G3SWH	53	G3BJ	37	G3LNS	20
G3XTT53		G3PJT	37	G3RVM	20
G3NKC	52	G3RTE	37	GØTZZ	19
5B4AGN	51	G3UFY	36	MØBJL	18
GM3YTS	51	K3NA	35	G3SVL	18
G4BUO	47	GM3WOJ	35	G7VJR	17
G3RWL	47	G3NOH	34	G3ZVW	17
G3WCY	46	G3SVW	33	G4JKS	16
MØDXR	45	G3LDI	32	G3VCQ	15
G3KMA	44	G3YMC	32	MØKOP	15
G5LP	43	G3ZAY	32	MØDHO	14
G3WRR	43	GØEHO	31	MØRYB	14
EI5DI	42	GØMTN	31	G3JNB	14
GØCKV	42	G4FAL	31	G4OWT	12
G3LCS	42	GM3POI	31	G3VKW	7
G4HZV	42	GØOPB	26	OZ3RE	4
G4FNL	41	GØORH	24		
HA5IA	41	G3RZP	23		

CDXC 'Most Wanted' List

Michael Wells, G7VJR

Club Log determines the CDXC 'most wanted' list by analysing logs, and by elimination determines which DXCC entities are 'most wanted' (all bands, all modes).

1.	Navassa I.	82.29
2.	Kingman Reef	78.12
3.	Conway Reef	76.04
4.	Desecheo I.	75.00
5.	Heard I.	75.00
6.	Crozet	75.00
7.	South Orkney	75.00
8.	Glorioso	75.00
9.	Midway Island	73.96
10.	North Korea	73.96

If I create a report over just three years, I find that 22 DXCC entities have not been

activated at all in this period. It shows just how active the DXpeditioning community has been in keeping a full 316 DXCCs on the air in that time (give or take the possibility of logging mistakes made by members which may cause one or two entities to seem to be worked - nobody's log is perfect, I've discovered).

The missing ones in the last three years are:

Midway Island
North Korea

Crozet
Malyj Vysotskij
Mellish Reef
Amsterdam and St Paul
Kingman Reef
Johnston Island
Pratas Island
Navassa Island
Auckland and Campbell
Conway Reef
Eritrea
Baker and Howland Islands
Juan de Nova and Europa
Marion Island
Glorioso
Heard Island
San Felix Island
St Paul Island
South Sandwich

Tromelin

Some really tough ones in there - anyone making a DXpedition to these entities would make a big splash on the air. Crozet is due soon. Malyj Vysotskij is a surprise. Unlike most of the others, it has only been slightly more than three years since R1M was last activated.

Lastly, for the datamode DXCC hunters, it is interesting to note that the only DXCC entities which have never been claimed by a CDXC member on datamodes are Wake Island, Scarborough Reef, North Korea and Macquarie Island.

73 Michael, G7VJR

IARU Region 1 Conference: DX and Contesting

John Gould, G3WKL

g3wkl@btinternet.com

I am relatively new to this game, having attended my first Region 1 General Conference in 2005 and what is termed the Interim Conference in 2007, where many of the recommendations for this year's event had been formed or at least been given an airing.

To the uninitiated - or those who need reminding - the Region 1 Conference is the forum where agreements are sought on an international basis on a wide range of issues concerned with how the hobby operates and regulates itself. Some matters are then elevated to the General Assembly, where issues affecting all three Regions are agreed. Many aspects operate on three-year periodicity, so one has to be patient and play matters 'long'. However, this timescale does work quite well with the other main event that impacts on our hobby: the World Radio Conference, the next one of which is in 2011.

That's the simple introduction. For more detail - and probably for better accuracy - speak to Don, G3BJ, the retiring Region 1 Secretary, or to Colin, G3PSM, who was

elected onto the Region 1 Executive Committee at Cavtat, Croatia, which was the location for the 2008 Conference.

To most in the hobby these Conferences are a bit of a mystery. Often the lasting memory is, unfortunately, a photograph of those representing the country holed up in some bar behind empty beer glasses! Whilst it's fair to say that there was indeed some beer quaffed during Cavtat, I think it is a fair generalisation to say that it is pretty hard work, with sessions starting at 0830 and going through to 2330 or later on several evenings. Often after that there are things to prepare for the next day, or informal discussions going on in odd corners of the venue. Some of the sessions need some

endurance too, especially if the specific item is not your brief or favourite part of the hobby! That is not to say that there was not some fun, as there was, but it is balanced with some long days sat in committee mode. You would not get people like me to volunteer if there wasn't some fun to be had! Having set the scene, I'll move on.

The recommendations and minutes have been available online [1] for some time and have been reported in a number of places, but because CDXC had been particularly involved in the Deliberate QRM issue I thought members would welcome a few words on this and also the wider issues relevant to HF DXing and contesting.

Deliberate QRM

Having taken a personal interest in this matter since John, G3LAS, raised CDXC's concern at an RSGB HF Committee back in 2002, I have to say that I was disappointed not to be able to put over a convincing case for tackling this scourge. Our proposal was to carry out sufficient DFing across Europe so that an alert could then be sent to the National Society concerned; they would then perhaps do some in-country monitoring to refine the location before passing the matter on to their Administration. This latter part of the plan at times mirrors the approach in the UK, where often matters never reach the courts - as a letter or approach from Ofcom is sufficient to sort the problem.

The difficulty that we had in Cavtat is that several of the countries present either did not want to police the bands, or if they were prepared to do so, preferred to do it themselves rather than, as they saw it, hand matters over to their Administrations. In addition, amateurs in at least one country are not allowed to monitor fellow amateurs! I knew from the 2007 Interim Conference that countries like Austria and Belgium were not keen on our approach, but I had hoped that with a more detailed proposal and some good results on long-range DFing

that they might be swayed. I was also expecting more support from other countries that I knew were in favour of our approach. On the day, though, several other countries joined in opposing anything other than a self-policed approach, and my supporters kept rather quiet.

I think we also suffered a little confusion as our proposals were discussed in the same workshop as operating practice booklet, 'Ethics and Operating Procedures for the Radio Amateur' by John Devoldere, ON4UN, and Mark Demeuleneere, ON4WW [2]. Their booklet, which is endorsed by IARU to help raise the general level of operating practice, is aimed at just that rather than explicitly at the deliberate QRM problem. Whilst adherence to some of the booklet's content, for example the parts dealing with pile-up and DXpedition operating, would go a long way to reduce the frustration and annoyance that may be the trigger for some to start jamming the DXpedition frequencies, the position that I took, and the RSGB supported, is that the booklet is unlikely to resolve the matter. Additional measures along the lines that we were proposing were needed. Discussing the translation of John and Mark's efforts into some additional languages and talking about publicising and promoting its contents was, I feel, a necessary but easy option for the floor of the conference to take.

By contrast our proposal was, to be fair, a long shot. Whilst some last-minute efforts by Alan, 5B4AHJ, and Rob, GM3YTS, produced a tremendous experimental result in DFing the 5T5JA operation, which exceeded expectations (see the DF map in the centre photo section). Their results were obtained by using side-nulls on their HF beams and as the process was rather complicated I doubt that there was any cheating! (Goodness, that defamatory comment will cost me a pint or two the next time we meet up.) Whilst their results might suggest that DFing with HF beams might have been enough, Alan's experiments did show that nearby hills or mountains seemed

to introduce azimuth errors in some directions. For this reason, and because few have beams on bands below 20m, we would have needed to complete quite a lot of development work to put some other DF systems into place. Additionally, our proposed approach would have needed development of techniques for in-country DFing, possibly some adaptation of existing ARDF techniques, and of course the not-insignificant CEPT work on harmonising licensing conditions between countries involved.

Some have said to me that the whole scheme would not have worked and what was needed was in effect to put the clock back to the good ol' days, when the administrations policed the bands, licences were harder to gain (and keep) and amateurs respected each other! Maybe. However, we have to deal with the way things are and the way international society has developed, so we can only move forward from where we are now.

As things stand I am none too keen to get involved in direct action of the form favoured (but not as yet 'recommended') by the Conference. Societies or, worst still, individuals getting involved in self-policing issues, especially when the final elements are not carried out by the administration, is in my view a risky business.

Today people are very aware of human rights and often have a view, right or wrong, as to what this means. We worked on the premise that group action would cause people to stop their malevolent actions. However, without an ultimate reference to Administrations such group action could be seen as an incitement to harassment, intimidation etc., as well as perhaps unethical. Hence my comments in the *RadCom* summary that we may well have to draw a line under the matter and put our energies into supporting good operating practices.

40m Bandplan

Probably the second most important aspect of the Conference, from the HF perspective, was the need to look again at the 40m bandplan post-29 March 2009. This is the magic date when all broadcasters vacate 7.1 – 7.2 MHz at the start of their A09 summer services, or rather when they should do so!

The reason that we needed to revisit the bandplan was because the plan approved at the last Conference, in 2005, was seen to be less than ideal by a number of societies, including our own. The plan put forward by the EDR, the Danish Society, and proposed/seconded by the Austrian and German societies respectively at the 2005 Conference allocated the first 50 kHz to CW, a further 25 kHz to digimodes and 7.075 – 7.200kHz to phone. There was no mention of other features, such as Emergency Centres of Activity, QRP calling frequencies etc.

The re-opening of the 40m band planning debate was the most hard-fought item on the HF Committee's agenda, with many hours spent in working group mode. Apart from the EDR proposal (of 2005) there were three other proposals put forward: REF proposed keeping the CW segment the same (ie 35 kHz wide), with expansions of the digimode and All Modes (mostly SSB) segments. Our position was to expand the CW segment up to 7.045 kHz, with corresponding expansions in the digimode and All Mode segments. DARC were somewhere between our proposal and the REF position.

The Norwegians did their best to impartially chair the working group discussions on the item, which wasn't at all straightforward as the Polish and Dutch Societies favoured the standing EDR position, and the Austrians wanting better provision for digimodes, but otherwise were more aligned to our and the DARC positions. It was interesting to note how strong the CW lobby was at Cavtat, yet we all recognised that we had to ignore our personal preferences and do what was right

for the majority of the members that we represented.

The basic plan, without accompanying notes, is reproduced below:

IARU Region 1 HF Band Plan – Effective 29 March 2009

FREQUENCY (kHz)	MAX BANDWIDTH (Hz)	PREFERRED MODE AND USAGE
7000 - 7025	200	CW, contest preferred
7025 - 7040	200	CW, QRP Centre of Activity 7030 kHz
7040 - 7047	500	Narrow band modes - digimodes
7047 - 7050	500	Narrow band modes – digimodes, automatically controlled data stations (unattended)
7050 - 7053	2700	All modes - digimodes, automatically controlled data stations (unattended) (lowest LSB carrier frequency or dial setting 7053kHz)
7053 - 7060	2700	All modes - digimodes
7060 - 7100	2700	QRP Centre of Activity 7090 kHz, SSB contest preferred
7100 - 7130	2700	All modes, Region 1 Emergency Centre of Activity 7110 kHz
7130 - 7200	2700	All modes, SSB contest preferred, Image Centre of Activity 7165 kHz
7175 - 7200	2700	All modes, priority for intercontinental operation

In the end I feel common sense prevailed, although only time will tell whether we reached the optimum solution. It could be that the whole matter is revisited at the next Conference in three years time!

HF Manager’s Handbook: Guidelines for HF Contests chapter

This item, which is rather hidden from general view, is actually quite important and is a subject on which the RSGB had most of the action. This was because with the involvement of Don, G3XTT, and subsequent comments by the RSGB Contest Committee, much of the chapter was re-drafted by the RSGB and approved by the Interim Conference in 2007. Apart from bringing it up to date, the revised guideline imposed only minimal control by IARU over contest operation, leaving contest organisers as much scope as is possible to develop this aspect of the hobby.

The main control that IARU retained, which was improved in terms of its definition, was to ensure better frequency management such that people could reasonably expect places

in which they could operate if they were otherwise not involved in the contests. The guidelines are aimed at Region 1 contests and thus will generally apply to the medium and smaller contests; as much as we would like to find a solution to fit all, ie to include the largest of contests, this has eluded us all!

We do, though, now have a framework that should help guide contest organisers when they arrange their contests. We should, therefore, find some non-contest space in which to operate for the majority of the weekends and other contest times. At the time of writing the revised version has not been put onto the Web, but it will probably appear as a link on the Region 1 HF Committee webpage [3] to replace v6.1. One of the main additions to the chapter at the conference was that contest organisers are required to make it clear which parts of the bands should be free of contest activity and that measures should be taken to put into effect rules that relate to frequency usage for the HF contests that they organise.

Still on the subject of contests: recommendations were agreed that

organisers should introduce a ‘Youngsters and Newcomers’ category where possible. Furthermore, organisers should be encouraged to replace signal strength reports in contests with some other less predictable exchange, so as to enhance the skill requirements of contest operators. We already have something for newcomers (QRS corral) and I promise that I wasn’t responsible for the second suggestion, so please don’t e-mail me about it!

QRP SSB & DV Centres of Activity

QRP enthusiasts should note that 18.130 and 24.950 kHz have been adopted as Activity Centres. Those interested in Digital Voice will be pleased, no doubt, that finally Region 1 has agreed to put mention of Activity Centres in its bandplan. These are at 3.630 kHz, 7.070 kHz, 14.130 kHz, 18.150 kHz, 21.180 kHz, 24.960 kHz and 28.330 kHz.

QSLing

A subject that has recently been aired in the *Digest* is the old chestnut of some DXpeditioners not responding to bureau QSLs. Those in favour of QSLing by the bureau will be delighted to know that the REF proposal that this practice should be encouraged was adopted, and that where this is difficult to arrange the recommendation is that the DXpedition organisers should appoint a QSL Manager in a country where exchange of bureau cards will be possible. Time will tell how well this will work out in practice, so we may not have heard the last of this issue. CDXC will need to take these points into consideration when supporting requests for DXpedition funding.

Links

- 1 www.iaru-r1.org/Cavtat%20papers.htm
- 2 www.rsgb.org/operating/procedures/Eth-operating-EN-RSGB-SITE-july1-2008.pdf
- 3 www.iaru-r1.org/HFCommittee.htm

Beacons below 20m

Here the recommendation made at the last Conference in 2005 ‘that beacons are not encouraged below 20m’ was clarified by detailing the exceptions. The exceptions agreed are that beacons related to scientific study, experiment or specific propagation, and those of an experimental nature or those operating at very low power requirements are allowed.

Final comments

We weren’t alone in getting our pet proposals ditched. There was a strong push from the Norwegian Society concerning what constituted a proper QSO that was not carried at the final plenary. The Romanians didn’t get anywhere with their proposals to change the scoring system for the IARU Contest, and the EU DX Contest proposal from the Swiss got referred for further discussion. The French too lost out in trying to get an AM Activity Centre for 80m.

I would like to thank all those who worked with me or commented on the various proposals, some of which I’ve not mentioned, as I felt that they don’t really relate to things in which CDXC members are specifically interested. Whilst we didn’t get our way on Deliberate QRM, we did at least give it a good try rather than just sit back and grumble. A specific thanks here goes to Roger, G3SXW, who was most instrumental in raising awareness amongst CDXC members and also to Michael, G7VJR, for hosting the DQ Cluster. Hopefully my pessimism on the matter will be unfounded and the recommendations made will prove good.

The RTTY Column

Phil Cooper, GUØSUP *pcooper@guernsey.net*

So the WAEDC RTTY contest is over for yet another year. This is probably my favourite contest of the year, as the QTCs make it much more fun than simply exchanging a serial number. In view of the fact that quite a few 'big gun' stations can't or won't send QTC traffic, it can assist those small pistols wo do. If you were one of those who didn't send them this time, please consider trying to get used to them and how they work for the 2009 contest.

After the contest, I had an interesting e-mail from Ian, GM4KLN. He noted that quite a few stations just could not pick out his weak signal. He cited several stations, and of those I have to say that I have never had any trouble getting my own call heard by them.

This got me thinking about why this may happen. I suspect this may be partially due to callsign recognition, and possibly the

differences in propagation between GM and GU.

The first is something that can be remedied fairly easily. I would suggest subscribing to the RTTY reflector, and then posting queries, comments, claimed scores and so on. This will help, and it won't be long before your call is remembered. Submitting your log is also another possibility, as well as posting it on the 3830 reflector. A lot of people do read the contest reports as and when the results are released, and it can help with recognition.

I can't help the propagation differences between GU and GM, but please consider the far end too! Remember that although you can hear them at S9, it doesn't mean to say they have the same conditions. How many times do you see DEAF, or some such comment on the cluster? This comment was aimed at VK9DWX during their stay, but a

quick look at their website would have given the reason for that. At the time they were suffering from a lot of QRN, and had S9+10 of noise at their end. This can happen to Ws and Europeans too, especially on the lower bands. OK, there are a few stations running a kilowatt into a G5RV, who really ARE loud and deaf, but they are few.

As the owner of a 'little pistol' station myself I am also aware that I need to make the most of what I have, and to optimise my set-up for the receive side. Take a look at www.rttycontesting.com as well as Don's (AA5AU) own home pages.

Of particular interest are these two pages:
www.rttycontesting.com/icom756proiii/icom_ic756proiii_index.htm
www.rttycontesting.com/icom756proiii/icom_ic756proiii_tpf.htm

These pages will give you an idea of what you can do with the gain settings to increase sensitivity. I appreciate they refer specifically to the IC 756ProIII, but some of the ideas may well be useful for other radios too. I also use an outboard audio filter here, and this really does boost the received signal by removing a lot of the adjacent noise, and in contest situations it helps greatly.

On my IC 756Pro I also make good use of the radio filters. Although my filters are set at 1000 Hz, 500 Hz and 250 Hz, I frequently turn the 250 Hz setting down as far as 150 Hz. Now, although RTTY is 170 Hz wide, because the filter shape is not sharp I can get away with that. OK, I may miss some callers that are way off my frequency, but overall it helps.

Another thing is not to get too hung up on trying to get through to a station. If you can't get through after a few calls, why not

wait and try later? I generally take a look back after 15 minutes or so and see if there is a better chance then. If it is a call such as HC8N it is often far better to wait till the last hours of the contest and try then. They will usually be begging for contacts, and will often spend more time trying to dig you out of the noise.

Also, waiting 15 minutes can see a big difference in propagation, and whilst that station was weak before, they may be loud

now. On the other hand if they have disappeared, then you probably weren't going to work them anyway.

By the time you read this, we will probably be into 2009, so a Happy New Year to you all, and I hope to see you in one of the contests soon.

Finally, a few dates for your diary:

Date	Contest	Website
Jan 17-18 Jan 26-27	UK DX RTTY BARTG Sprint	www.srars.org/ukdx/index.html www.bartg.org.uk
Feb 2-3 Feb 9-10	XE RTTY (FMRE) CQ WW WPX RTTY	www.fmre.org.mx www.cq-amateur-radio.com
Mar 1-2	Open UK RTTY	www.ucc.zp.ua/rtty2008rules_eng.htm
Mar 22-24	BARTG HF RTTY	www.bartg.org.uk

The above information can all be found on the www.rttycontesting.com website, which will almost certainly give up-to-date rules nearer the time. As you will see, a couple mention rules for 2008, which may change.

Enjoy the contests, and if you ever get bored between contests, why not try some WARC-band RTTY! There was a large amount of activity on 30m and 17m in the lead-up to the Christmas holidays, and I am sure this will continue in the New Year.

30m is always open and can give some unexpected paths at unusual times. If you don't hear anyone on RTTY, just try calling

CQ, and shortly after that the band will start to fill up nicely.

73 de Phil, GUØSUP

CDXC
CHILTERN DX CLUB
The UK DX Foundation

Contest

Lee Volante, GØMTN

A belated 'Happy New Year' to all CDXC members. Welcome to 2009, a year which will surely go down in history as marking a return to the long-lost sunspots, and an end to constant complaints about awful HF band conditions. However, these will be no doubt replaced by comments that the LF bands are now too noisy. We can't have it both ways.

I've received lots of reports and info this time, I think mostly due to Roger/G3SXW's plea for more feedback about *Digest* content. The CDXC Reflector is very active, so please let's hear more from you in the *Digest*. Coincidentally, after the recent CQ WW DX CW contest a thread on the CQ-Contest reflector talked about the benefits of hearing more reports from a greater variety of stations, and not just the 'big guns' aiming for the #1 World positions. The second and third tier stations can be as good an inspiration for new testers and also provide more practical 'targets' for anyone wishing to emulate a reasonably successful contest station.

I'm writing this with the ARRL 10m contest underway, with most signals arriving thanks to a combination of tropo propagation and meteor scatter. High winds are lashing most parts of the UK, but more worrying are the reports of severe ice storms in the North Eastern US that have claimed many antennas at the stations of KC1XX and K1TTT. I hope the damage is repaired soon. In the last *Digest* I mentioned the resources required to improve stations to remain competitive. This recent news highlights the fact that even maintaining the status quo at an existing large station can be a significant burden. Wind, rain, ice, salt water or the local wildlife will all do their best to keep

stations off the air from most parts of the planet – don't let nature win!

**6Y1V Superstation for CQ WW
Phone: Dave, G4BUO**

Having no plans for the CQ Worldwide Phone contest this year, it was a stroke of very good luck that I happened to speak with Dave, G3NKC, at the RSGB HF Convention and found that he was one of a team due to operate the contest from the Caribbean superstation 6Y1V in Jamaica, and that G4MJS had unfortunately had to drop out from the team.

In the past I have been away in Suffolk for five days at M6T; this time I just had to check with Denise that she didn't mind me being a bit further away for five days - and I was on the team! I paid a visit to Trailfinders first thing on the Monday after the Convention to get my air ticket, arranged to have my immunisation jabs, and then looked forward with growing excitement to my first-ever Caribbean trip. I flew out from Gatwick at 0945 on the morning of Thursday, 23 October, and landed at Montego Bay at 1600 local time the same day, having changed planes at Kingston.

There to meet me was Dave, G3NKC, and Dave, KY1V, who commented that this was going to be a 'Dave fest'! We drove to the site to meet the other team members: Martin/G4XUM, Manu/LU9ESD and Franc/IZ7KHR. The plan was to enter Multi-2. The station is located 900ft up in the hills west of Montego Bay and was built by KY1V and K1LZ. There are details and pictures at www.6y1v.com, but briefly there are two towers, plus a 4-square array of phased verticals for 80m. The tower nearer the house is 140ft high and supports two MonstIR yagis, both independently rotatable using ring rotors. Higher up the hill is 110ft of rotating tower and this supports stacked pairs of yagis for 10, 15

and 20m. The towers and antennas were installed by KC1XX and the rotating system by KØXG.

Clearly KY1V and K1LZ have put a lot of money into developing a world-class contest station, but Dave/KY1V's spending doesn't stop there, because each year he sponsors a young contester aged under 21 to travel to Jamaica to operate the contest. All costs flight, accommodation and food are met by KY1V, who selects the winner on the basis of an essay. He has fewer than 20 entries each year so the odds are pretty good - and it would be marvellous to see some young contesters from the UK apply for this wonderful opportunity. Last year's winner Manu, LU9ESD, came back for a second trip, all expenses paid, and was joined by Franc, IZ7KHR. Both young operators acquitted themselves really well in the contest.

When I arrived on site it was about 6pm local time, midnight GMT, and they offered me the chair and I sat down and soon had a pile-up of Ws calling on 20m phone. Even at a location like 6Y I was nervous of working stations on a contest band before the event itself, and in no time I had moved to CW where the pile-up grew even larger. A nice introduction to operating from the Caribbean! After that we went to our luxurious villa accommodation a few miles away and went out for a team meal.

The others had been in Jamaica since Monday, so most antenna tasks, such as re-stringing the Top Band slopers, had already been taken care of, but there was still an issue with the top ring rotor, so we headed out to the site. On the way we got a call from the local lad, Wayne, who looks after the site, to say there was no mains power in the district. He had got out the generator, which is a little larger than the club's set, but would not be man enough to power two 1.5KW stations. I was faced with coming all this way and having to operate barefoot!

As it happened, mains power was restored early on the Friday afternoon and we had no problems on that score, but the outage had caused a problem with the Internet connection to the property, which went via a relay node. It would be essential to have a connection to the cluster via the Internet, to get multiplier information. In fact the Internet was not restored until a couple of hours after the contest had started. Our plan 'B' was to use my Samsung mobile phone, for which I had the USB lead, as a GPRS terminal, but fortunately this wasn't needed.

On the Friday afternoon I took the opportunity to climb the 140ft tower, not because any repairs needed doing but simply for the view, which was fantastic! Montego Bay could be clearly seen about 10 miles to the east, and there was a clear take-off through north almost to west. This covered the major QSO areas of Europe, the USA and Japan. Before I left I had printed out a great circle map to try and get my head around the directions and propagation paths. For example VK is to the south-west, Siberia is due north and the UK is at a bearing of about 30 degrees.

We organised ourselves into two teams of three and kept strictly to a six hour on, six hour off schedule. I was with David, KY1V, and Manu. We started the contest at 6pm local time and I got the short straw having to deal with the 'zoo' that is 40m phone during a major contest. Yes, we were the only contest station from Jamaica, so were a multiplier for all - and yes, we had a superb location and antennas, but it was tough going! A shift to 80m improved the QSO rate. Running multi-2 means you have to QSY in-band for every available multiplier, but this was not always easy given the QSO rate. In the end there were undoubtedly periods when we spent too long chasing multipliers and should have been running harder, but overall the experience of the three Daves and Martin, and the energy of the two under-21 ops, added together to put in a very good performance: we ended up with over 9,000 contacts, and 561 country

multipliers for a claimed score of just over 16M points, a long way ahead of our rivals at V26B.

There were a few problems during the contest, the most severe being loss of direction control on the rotating tower. I moved the hire car to try and see which way it was pointing by the light from the headlights, but this didn't work out and it wasn't until dawn that we had any idea where the stack was pointing: it wasn't an option to clamber through the undergrowth in the night to check the tower.

Highlights were the Saturday evening run to the States, with the rate meter up in the high 400s for much of the time, although I was very disappointed not to end up at over 300 for the 2100z clock hour. On the Sunday morning once we had worked out which way we should point the rotating tower at daybreak, 20m exploded to Europe and the pile-up was easily 30 deep for much of the time. This slowed the rate down considerably. At one point I asked "Who's the Romeo Victor 3?" and three of them came back, so much against my wishes I resorted to working by numbers (starting with three) which thinned the pile-up down to a more manageable level. Conditions were not good and we really struggled on 10m with only 88 in total. 15m was patchy, but quite good to Europe on the Sunday morning.

After the clocks in the UK went back on Sunday night, we in Jamaica were five hours behind and so the contest finished at 7pm - most civilised! We were able to have a team meal and then relax back at the villa with several glasses of rum punch. Everyone was exhausted, but pleased with how it went, and how well we got on as a team. This was my first trip to the Caribbean and it was over all too soon, as the taxi came to take me to the airport at 9am on the Monday morning. I had a fantastic time and really enjoyed my stay in Jamaica. One local patois phrase I will use a lot at work - "Soon come man" - means, it

will get done some time. I must say I find the laid-back Jamaican lifestyle very appealing.

Dave, G4BUO

Thanks Dave – a great account of multi-op fun, with the powerhouse combination of a carefully engineered station in a superb location.

CQ WW DX CW 2008

Trawling the post-contest reports reveals a variety of adventure in the biggest CW contest in the world. For example, Nigel/G3TXF and Ian/G3WVG braved the extreme cold putting OX5AA on the air in Greenland, and giving many of us a relatively rare multiplier. Being called by them on 160m was a pleasant surprise – especially as it was an 'ESP' level QSO. I heard the distinctive 'AA' first, mentally crossed my fingers, and then made out enough of the prefix so that I was sure it was the guys calling me.

Closer to home in the UK the Multi-Single category was closely fought, with Murphy making a few appearances too. The G6PZ team struggled with some LF antenna problems in Somerset, as did the G5W crew a little further north. Cold and hungry Shropshire mice were reported to have eaten antenna control cables. This may have been in protest against 'mouse atrocities', as the 3830 report from the OG50F Multi-Multi team reported that a long-time mouse 'team member' finally went SK thanks to a trap. The LX8M team also reported a visitor, but this time a welcome one in the shape of Santa Claus. Only in CQ WW...

In response to the success of the CU2X station during the CQ WW DX Phone contest, many of the other leading lights in Europe were considering only 2nd place would be their realistic target in the SOAB HP category for the CW contest a month later. To maximise WRTC qualification chances, Andy/G4PIQ and Bob/G4BAH

transformed M6T into a successful Multi-Single station for the weekend.

It seemed that this was the year for 40m, with DXCC counts of up to 170 being recorded in a single weekend. From the UK, North America seemed workable until after lunchtime, with Asia also coming through strongly to keep up the all-important points/QSO ratio.

Here's a report from Colin MUØFAL, operating in the Single Op All Band Lower Power category.

CQ WW CW 2008 - MUØFAL

This year I used 100W to my 160/80/40 trapped dipole/ATU. Back in 2006 I'd set a Single band 80m low power GU record. That was hard work, but GU4YOX gave that score a whoopin' last year. I'd had a couple of years in limbo, but decided to be a bit more serious in SOAB. I hoped that 15m would play, but it did not.

40m is not a good run band for me so I concentrated on 20m in daytime and 80m at night. From 00z on Saturday I ran on 80m until 3am. Mel decided on a late-night glass of water, but a spotlight then blew in the kitchen, fried the 5 amp fuse in the mains fusebox, leaving the radio side of the house with no lights!

I managed to work OX5AA on 80 CW by the light of the laptop, but there was no way I could run at 3am, so I decided to get a few hours kip. On Saturday morning I followed the plan and used 40m from 0700, and even as late as 1100 I was switching back to 80m for USA 3-Point mults. Lionel, MUØGSY, called me for a country mult and subsequently spotted me on the DX Cluster. I had a nice run from that. Good to hear Lionel trying CW too. He is actually very competent.

In late morning I moved to 20m and between S/P runs I checked 15m for mults. The band was open but was very selective,

mostly east Mediterranean and EA8s and not worthy of CQs. Later in the day on the Saturday I got tired and running was not a good idea so I searched all over, mostly 20m, but found a few mults on 15m. This included even KP2M, a FRC member friend from W3 Land. 20m stayed open about an hour after sunset.

Then 40m was almost impossible. A call from GU4YOX gave me a second GU on 40m. Late Saturday/early Sunday I had a huge run on 80m. On Sunday I did much the same on 20m. GU4CHY was the GU mult there and heard my huge W pile-up. Call areas 1 to 7 all at once, but in an orderly fashion, followed by 6Y1V and a PY1 for two double mults.

Late afternoon I looked at my 40m scores and was not impressed, so a few good hunts on added both country and zone multipliers. The last hour I decided that running was a good idea, more luck than anything. Zig, N3RS, called me amidst an EU zoo pile-up, after which I had a huge increasing pile-up mixed between Europe and the USA.

Europe just did not understand 'NO EU - Only NA', so I just fished for 3 pointers and appeased the EU zoo in between as well as working several G stations and sensible Europeans.

Overall I was down on zone mults and scored less than last year, but I had great fun. This is what contesting should be about. I can safely say that CQ WW CW 2008 was the best contest fun I have had for a few years.

73 Colin, MUØFAL

Band	QSO	Mults
160m	0	0
80m	414	66
40m	160	66
20m	493	84
15m	16	16
10m	0	0

Total 1083 232

Score: 427,344

Mailbag

I was pleased to receive another copy of the Torbay Amateur Radio Society's 'HF Contest News' from Derrick, G3LHJ. This club newsletter highlights the scores and results of the club members – throwing the spotlight on some local competition in some less well-known events like the OK/OM DX Contest, LZ DX, CIS RTTY, and the EPC PSK63 QSO Party. If 'CQ WW' is not your favourite contest, the more relaxed pace of some of these events may be just what you're looking for. Well done to Derrick, and his counterparts at other clubs and societies, for reminding their club members what events are forthcoming, and persuading people to get on air. The many RSGB 'club' contests are also ideal for this.

After my comments last time about using a PostIt note and my log from the previous year's contest as reference, a few people have commented about the feature available in the Win-Test software which allows you to set targets which can be tracked over the duration of an event. I'll report more on this in the next *Digest*, as my Christmas stocking will hopefully contain a copy of Win-Test. In the meantime, for CQ WW CW this year I printed out a chart with an hourly breakdown of QSOs, which I dutifully updated as the contest progressed. That was a great motivator for me not to start slacking on Sunday evening!

Learn CW Online (LCWO)

A different 'interface' for learning Morse has been developed by CW contester Fabian, DJ1YFK. With LCWO you can learn Morse online using your web browser. Quoting from the website, 'you don't need to install a program on your computer, and you always have your personal settings available, from any computer on the globe

with an Internet connection'. It features a Koch method course over 40 lessons, speed practice using code groups, plain text, or callsigns. High scores are tracked to give a competitive element – try to beat your own previous scores, and climb places in the overall tables. You can even generate your own CW MP3 files to play on your Ipod whilst walking the dog in the park. And for any office workers reading this, lunchtime Morse practice has now never been easier. 6,000 different users have tried the system so far: have a look yourself at www.lcwo.net.

And finally...

One other unusual item of correspondence this time was from Rob, EI5JP (ex-MW5EPA), who uses recorded QSOs and contest audio as samples in dance music tracks that he creates. Just think that the callsigns in your pile-up may be chanted by clubbers in Ibiza over next summer!

73 Lee, GØMTN

We regret to record the passing of the following CDXC members:

G3RGR	Maurice Nisbett
GM3AKF	Bryan Taylor
GM3TRI	Bert Ferguson
	(see also p. 63)

E-mails to the Editor

from VK4BUI

Hello Martyn,

Very hot and steamy here just now, bit stormy too - makes us very lazy and things get put off and off and off.

Prompted by Roger's [G3SXW's] letter to you I feel a bit guilty for not having made comments before on the content of the CDXC magazine.

I always look forward to receiving my copy and usually read it all straight away, then have to wait two months for the next edition. It has, for me, the right balance of topics which are always very well written and give good insight to the matters that go on behind the scenes, be it contests, DXpeditions or run-of-the-mill business - plus, of course, your pithy humour.

I retired in 1995 after some 40 years in the communications world, three years in the Merchant Navy as an R/O and the rest working for various government departments. I took my licence (MØBUI) in 1998, so am a relative new boy to the

amateur world. My wife, Jacky, and I came out here to VK in 2000, so I'm now VK4BUI (the vanity of it) and to some extent feel a bit out on a limb and the CDXC *Digest* helps me keep in touch. As a member of the RSGB and WIA I naturally receive their magazines as well, and very good they are too, but contain a lot of technical information - a side of the hobby I have less interest in. It is operating that I enjoy: chasing DX, IOTA, Ships, Lighthouses, chit-chat and contests (where I pit myself against myself, given that it is such an uneven playing field), or even a plain short RST exchange.

Regarding DXpeditions and the usual pile-ups: VK/ZL often get left out in the cold when the DX is asking for certain areas only (understandably, I guess, given the relative lower activity from here). I admit to calling anyway, and thankfully am often picked up to get in the log.

So very many thanks to all concerned and long may it continue.

Vy 73

Les MØBUI / VK4BUI

The RNIB and GB2HLB

CDXC member Terry, GM3WUX, will be operating special event station GB2HLB from 26 December 2008 to 22 January 2009, to celebrate the bicentenary of the birth of Louis Braille.

Each QSO will receive a special QSL card depicting Braille and raising awareness of the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB). A fundraising page for the RNIB can be found at

www.justgiving.com/louisbraille

Otherwise, donations in support of this event can be made as advised on the RNIB website, www.rnib.org.uk.

Louis Braille was the remarkable inventor of a system of embossed type used by blind and partially sighted people for reading and writing. Braille is a fascinating code based on six dots arranged in two columns of three dots. There are 63 combinations of these six dots and variations of them represent all the letters of the alphabet, punctuation and groups of letters. Today Braille has been

adapted into almost every known language and continues to offer blind and partially sighted people the key to literacy, knowledge, independence and opportunity. Louis Braille was born near Paris on 4 January 1809. As a child he had seen his father at work making shoes and decided he would like to try. He picked up one of his father's tools, but it slipped and pierced his eye. The damage later caused his other eye to become infected and he soon lost his sight altogether.

At a school for blind children Louis was taught to read, but not to write. The letters were raised above the surface of the page so that they could be felt with the fingertips, but it was very difficult to tell the letters apart and there was no facility to write.

In 1821, a soldier named Charles Barbier visited Louis' school to talk about a system he had invented called 'night writing'. It had originally been designed for soldiers to pass instructions along trenches at night without talking and giving their positions away. It consisted of twelve raised dots, which could be combined to represent different sounds, but it proved to be too complex and was rejected by the army. Louis quickly realised how useful this system could be. He experimented with it until he found an ideal system using six dots. He continued to work on the scheme, developing separate codes for maths and music and in 1827 the first book in Braille was published.

Louis Braille died in 1852 and it seemed as if this system would die with the inventor. Then in 1868 Dr Thomas Armitage led a group of four blind men to found the British and Foreign Society for Improving the Embossed Literature of the Blind. This group grew and today we are the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) and the largest publisher of Braille in Europe.

Today Braille allows blind and partially sighted people to enjoy reading and writing in multiple languages. Technological

developments mean that Braille is as relevant now as ever. Refreshable Braille displays can be connected to computers as can Braille keyboards, while portable Braille note taking machines allow people to read and write notes at work and at home.

Braille is also used everywhere in daily life from bus stops and maps to music notation and text books. Braille gives people the independence to manage their own lives, to read their own bills, private bank statements and medical letters. It is also used around the home to label everyday items, such as tins or packets of food, cleaning products, washing machine and cooker dials, bank account books, CDs - the list could go on.

Braille remains at the heart of RNIB's work. The charity continues to champion the development of Braille technology, giving Braille users even more opportunity to take charge of their own lives. RNIB also provides a range of Braille services, including:

- National Library Service Braille collection - books for all age groups, including materials for people learning Braille and a selection of Braille music including scores and books about music and music theory.
- Braille books and products for sale - diaries, Braille displays, labelling equipment, pill dispensers and other items to make daily life easier.
- Braille magazines - covering a wide range of interests.
- Courses to learn Braille
- On-demand transcription services for individuals . Braille production for organisations, from exams to utility bills.

The RNIB has a range of activities planned during 2009 to mark the bicentenary of Louis Braille's birth. For more information on these or on Braille visit

www.rnib.org.uk/braille

Not the GB2RS News

- Ofcom announces long overdue changes to the UK callsign system
- Exciting new American contest
- CW abbreviation banned

Long overdue changes have been announced by the UK communications regulator, Ofcom, with a view to ensuring that everybody knows in which part of England an amateur radio station is located. As of 1 July 2009 all existing English callsigns will be revoked and England divided into nine call areas with the prefixes allocated as follows:

GØ	Greater London
G1	South East
G2	South West
G3	Clifton, Bristol BS8 only
G4	Midlands
G5	Yorkshire
G6	Lancashire
G7	North-east (other)
G8	North-west (other)

Stations in the Isle of Man, Northern Ireland, Jersey, Scotland, Guernsey and Wales will be unaffected by these changes and allowed to keep their existing callsigns. And when on holiday in Scotland, say, G3RFX, the architect of this new system (so allowed to keep his old callsign) would sign GM/G3RFX.

Also, to avoid the ‘American syndrome’: if you move from one English call area to another, eg Greater London (Ø) to Yorkshire (5), then you will have to apply for a new callsign with the appropriate area indicator. So our advice, if you don’t want this to happen, don’t move.

Additionally, all ‘M’ and ‘2E’ prefixes will be phased out, regardless of the licence category, seeing as there should now be more than enough ‘G’ prefixes to go round. Also, the highly unhelpful ‘GB’ prefix,

where you haven’t a clue in which part of the UK a station is located, will be abandoned.

We have news of an exciting new American contest next weekend: the Worked All New Kentucky Experimental Radio Stations. The exchange is the usual 59 report, plus the name of your favourite Bourbon whiskey. If you can’t stand Bourbon, then simply give the name of your favourite Scotch instead. Teetotallers quote the name of their favourite mineral water.

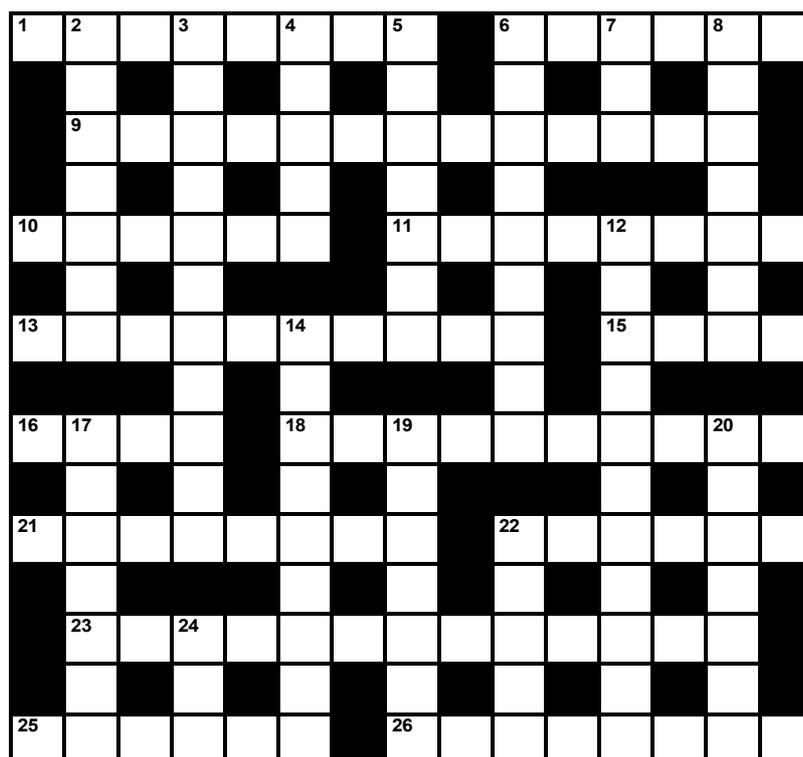
The CW abbreviation for Merry (“Hic!”) Christmas, ‘MX’, has been banned - in case it should appear too religious or give the impression that the operator has had too much to drink. We are now told to use the more neutral American expression ‘Happy Holidays’, or simply ‘HH’ on CW.

[But didn’t some radio amateurs in Germany use the ‘HH’ abbreviation during the 1930s-40s to mean something slightly different? Ed.]

Solution to Prize Crossword 31

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

Digest Prize Crossword 32 *by RFX*



The winner of Prize Crossword 31, November 2008, and that £10 note: Geoff Plucknett, G4FKA, Coalpit Heath, Bristol (via e-mail).

ACROSS

- 1 Pasta dish invented by Italian in European capital? (8)
- 6 Favourite vehicle first seen in Axminster? (6)
- 9 Bisexual island goddess (13)
- 10 Further thought given to end of slavery by revolutionary mind (6)
- 11 Bugle call signalling final delivery? (4,4)
- 13 Long-distance US coach operator based in Somerset? (5,5)
- 15 Wise, perhaps, to abandon current bird (4)
- 16 Language suppressed in Kurd uprising (4)
- 18 Angry turns leading to side-on blows (10)
- 21 Neil and I, somehow refusing to accept the truth (2,6)
- 22 Place of worship for NUJ members? (6)
- 23 Throwing a fit - like the queen giving birth? (6,7)
- 25 Like spring too (2,4)
- 26 Strangely, poet isn't one who prefers Family Favourites (8)

DOWN

- 2 Quickly starts to introduce new health and safety techniques everywhere (2,5)
- 3 A growing business encompassing many fields (11)
- 4 Presumably it costs nothing, so to speak (5)
- 5 Medical equipment provided by popular fitter (7)
- 6 Traverse part of East London, beginning to seize old weapons (9)
- 7 QRM primarily radiated from Italy (3)
- 8 Writer producing strange Morse in the centre of Birkenhead (7)
- 12 The last word in divine dilemma (11)
- 14 Refined oil? In fact that's not true (9)
- 17 Turn into Southfork or the Ponderosa, say? Surprisingly hers can. (7)
- 19 Advice to sunbathers providing protective cover (7)
- 20 Garments worn by female medics? (7)
- 22 Workers from the south before the beak, deeply distressed (3-2)
- 24 Compete with Schwechat? (3)

Deadline for entries: 20 February

DX and Events Calendar

Compiled by G3XTT

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

till 20/01/09	CT1/ON4LO/P: Portuguese lighthouses
till 22/01/09	GB2HLB: special callsign (Scotland)
till 30/01/09	KC4/K2ARB, CE9/K2ARB, VP8DKF: Antarctica
till 31/01/09	CN89NY: special callsign
till 31/01/09	XU7ACY: Cambodia
till 03/02/09	EA8/ON5JV and EA8/ON6AK: Canary Islands (AF-004)
till 06/02/09	9M2MRS: Penang Island (AS-015)
till 15/02/09	OPØLE: 'Princess Elisabeth' Antarctic station
till 28/02/09	FM/F5IRO: Martinique (NA-107)
till 28/02/09	TU8/F4EYS: Ivory Coast
till Feb 2009	OD5/F5TLN: Lebanon
till 07/03/09	VKØBP: Davis Base (Antarctica)
till 31/03/09	6W2SC: Senegal
till 31/03/09	J5UAP: Guinea-Bissau
till Apr 2009	OD5/IV3YIM: Lebanon
till Apr 2009	VK2LNX and VK2FSNJ: Maatsuyker Island (OC-233)
till 31/08/09	VR2/F4BKV: Hong Kong Island (AS-006)
till 30/11/09	FT5WO: Crozet Islands (AF-008)
till Nov 2009	HFØAPAS: South Shetlands (AN-010)
till Nov 2009	OD5/W5YFN: Lebanon
01/01-28/02/09	CF, CG, CH, CI: special prefixes (Canada)
01/01-31/12/09	HE8 and HB8: special prefixes (Switzerland)
01/01-31/01/09	K3Y: special event call
01/01-26/01/09	TR8CR: Gabon
01/01-April	VQ9JC: Diego Garcia (AF-006)
10/01-28/04/09	H44MS & H4ØMS: Solomons Islands and Temotu
12/01-27/01/09	ZD8N: Ascension Island (AF-003)
16/01-18/01/09	T88SM, T88CP, T88HK, T88HS: Koror Island (OC-009)
17/01-18/01/09	TC2SLH: Sile Lighthouse
17/01-31/01/09	VP8YLx: Falkland Islands (SA-002)
21/01-28/01/09	5KØCW: San Andres Island (NA-033)
22/01-26/01/09	CV5A: Flores Island (SA-030)
23/01-04/02/09	C56KR: The Gambia
24/01-25/01/09	TC2ALH: Anadolu Lighthouse
31/01-07/02/09	VP8DLQ: Falkland Islands (SA-002)
12/02-26/02/09	KP5: Desecheo Island (NA-095)
21/02-22/02/09	TC1ALH: Ahirkapi Lighthouse

26/02-05/03/09	FH/G3SWH: Mayotte (AF-027)
07/03-12/03/09	S2: Bangladesh by Korea DX Club
21/03-22/03/09	TC1RLH: Rumeli/Turkeli Lighthouse
04/04-05/04/09	TC2FLH: Fenerbahce Lighthouse
09/04-13/04/09	C91FC: Mozambique
19/06-05/07/09	5JØM: San Andres (NA-033)
22/07-29/07/09	V31UR and V31WL: Caye Caulker (NA-073)
24/07-27/07/09	MMØNDX/P: St. Kilda Islands (EU-059)

Bert Ferguson, GM3TRI

Bert passed away on 22 October 2008. Although he was 87, his death was totally unexpected. Indeed he had visited the QTH of another local amateur in the morning and died in his shack in the afternoon. Bert had recently completely refurbished his shack and it seemed an appropriate place for him to leave us. His family have certainly expressed this view. Bert had served in the RAF during WWII – as a gunner in a bomber and also as the CW operator. Bert worked for British Telecom and CW remained his favourite mode of communication throughout his radio amateur days, as the myriad of recently framed certificates on his shack wall testify.

Bert was also a member of the GMDX Group and we had many an eyeball when I took him to the Group meetings in Dunblane and latterly at the King Robert Hotel at Bannockburn. There was a large number of local radio amateurs at his funeral in Perth and at the reception thereafter, both being very much a celebration of his life. His cheerful disposition will be missed by us all.

Best 73

Dr Ron Harkness OBE GM3THI
(Secretary, Perth & District ARG)

Gavin Taylor, GMØGAV, adds:

Bert's QTH in Perth had an excellent take off to the north, combined with a 3 ele tribander and a 3 ele WARC beam, he worked plenty of DX. Bert was a real character, never short of a joke or story to tell. My favourite was about planning permission for his mast. He didn't have planning permission when the planning officer visited enquiring about the mast. Bert sent him off saying "that mast is coming down over my dead body". It's still there after 25 years.

CDXC Clothing

We are able to offer a range of high quality CDXC clothing through suppliers Aquarian. All items are available in a choice of colours containing an embroidered CDXC logo and your callsign, also embroidered, with a red 'CDXC' and the remainder of the logo text in gold. Your callsign will be in red.

Please order direct from AQUARIAN. Prices include your callsign (except ties, which do not carry a callsign). Additional lines of text may be added at extra cost. Please note that postage charges listed are to UK addresses. Please contact Aquarian direct for postage charges to other countries.

ITEM		SIZE	PRICE
Sweatshirt	Polycotton raglan sleeve	S, M, L, XL	£21.00
		XXL, 3XL, 4XL	£22.00
Children's sweatshirts	Polycotton raglan sleeve	3, 5, 7, 9, 11 years	£16.00
Rugby shirts FR1	100% cotton	S, M, L	£25.00
		XL, XXL	£26.00
		3XL	£28.00
Rugby shirts FR2	Quartered 100% cotton	S, M, L	£29.00
		XL, XXL	£31.00
Polo shirts	100% cotton	S, M, L, XL, XXL, 3XL	£19.00
Polo shirts	Polycotton	S, M, L, XL, XXL, 3XL, 4XL, 5XL	£18.50
Children's polo shirt		3, 5, 7, 9, 11 years	£15.00
T-shirts	Heavyweight 100% cotton	S, M, L, XL, XXL, 3XL, 4XL	£16.00
V-neck pullover	Lambswool	36" to 50"	£31.00
V-neck pullover	50% wool / 50% acrylic	36" to 48"	£28.50
Crew neck pullover	Lambswool	36" to 50"	£31.00
Fleece jacket		XS, S, M, L, XL, XXL	£28.00
Children's fleece jacket		3, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12 years	£23.00
Tie			£14.25

Colours available: navy, black, royal, bottle green. Rugby shirts FR2 in navy/sky or navy/grey.

ORDER FORM:

ITEM(S)	QUANTITY	SIZE	COLOUR	PRICE
Additional text @ £3.00 per line				
Sub-Total				
P & P: £1.75 for first^t item, £1.50 additional items to a maximum of £10, £1 children's items, £3.00 fleece jackets				
Callsign				Total
Name/Address				

**AQUARIAN, Quarryhill Cottage, Justinhaugh, by Forfar, Angus, DD8 3TQ
Tel.: (01307) 860 350**

