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Club News and Views

Editorial

Martyn Phillips, G3RFX

I was actually toying with the idea of not writing an Editorial any more. So there. After all, it seemed to me that most of the items and articles speak for themselves. Indeed a brief look at the Contents page – or a quick flick through the the Digest itself – will tell you what's in there. Anything from me on the subject would be unnecessary duplication. Also, what could I possibly add to the words of our expert contributors, who've said it all already.

But a *Digest* without an Editorial? That would be like 20 SSB without the highly efficient and always very entertaining operating style of Bob, 9K2ZZ; 17 SSB without the ever reliable, beacon-like figure of Chris, SMØWX – or the CW end of the bands without the opportunity to contact so many different east European countries in one afternoon. Unthinkable. So I finally pulled myself together and wrote one.

And even as I type it's snowing here in Bristol. In fact my XYL, Jane (who very much dislikes being referred to as that...), has just taken 2¾ hours to get home in the car from work – a journey of two miles at most and one which normally takes no more than 10 minutes.

Yes, the stuff is everywhere, much the same as that super-succulent pizza: deep-pan, crisp and even. And why is it that the city always comes to a virtual standstill at the slightest sign of 'woe', as Jane calls snow. Answers on a postcard, please, by the next *Digest* deadline, 20 April. I look forward to getting the general 'drift' of your argument, as it

were, and perusing your postcards here in the shack – or rather my 'office', as Jane prefers to call it.

Anyway, here you have it: another action-packed, 60-page *Digest* keeping you up to date with the latest developments. That includes 3B9C, of course, now very much in the final countdown phase. But they're not the only ones now straining at the leash to get started, as you'll see on more pages than one. From Brunei to Banaba, Malawi to Greenland and Bermuda to the Isle of Jura: it's all in there.

Not to mention those who've only recently returned from their latest radio trip. And what's the first thing they do when they get back? Yes, start planning the next one. It's almost as if the world's not in order if that's not pencilled in, at very least. I know exactly how they feel.

In this *Digest* we also have Martin, G3ZAY, to thank for an article with a difference on an IOTA theme: 'G3ZAY's Island Reading List' (page 38). That's in between Stan, GØKBL, talking about his experiences with the Carolina Windom – and Jim, VK9NS, on the famous B2 World War II TX/RX ("You what?").

Anyway, thanks to all of you for your contributions, no matter how small. Do keep 'em coming!

73 Martyn, G3RFX

www.btinternet.com/~g3rfx

Chairman's Chat

John Butcher, G3LAS

The main excitement on the bands recently seems to have been the lively conditions on 160m. This is little consolation for me because my low band wires were brought down by high winds last autumn and I'm still waiting for my 'tree man' to do the business for me. Does anyone fancy their chances on a 90' black poplar? In spite of the frustration watching the cluster spots, it reminds us that this should become the norm for the next few years, so a little thought and investment now ought to pay dividends. Not that the higher frequencies are dead yet – far from it. There have been a few mini-openings on 10m lately and 12m has quite often been worth a visit.

The Club is still receiving a healthy number of applications for support from expedition groups and we all know that apparently dead bands can spring magically to life when something juicy appears.

As you will know, our new website was launched early in January and we have received a number of complimentary comments from the surfing fraternity. At present, in mid-February, just over a hundred members have asked for their passwords, so a number of you are presumably finding your way around the pages. Nevertheless, about five hundred have not yet seized the opportunity. The new site offers a number of new facilities for news items, members' adverts, message board chat etc., so why not get in there and take a look.

A feature of the web pages is the capability for interaction. No doubt many of you are taking part in the CDXC-sponsored DX challenges for 2004. We have the IOTA 2004 activity programme and the Kenwood Challenge for the mega-prize of a brand new TS-480

transceiver generously donated by Kenwood UK. In both of these programmes you can enter and update your scores on-line, which adds to the interest by showing you how you are doing in comparison with others. Quite a few people are already involved, but there could be many more. As I write this, three of the top four places in the Kenwood table are CDXC Committee members, which can't be allowed to continue, and in IOTA 2004 the top three are all from mainland Europe. Our national pride is at stake, so get in there and compete.

It was good to see that eleven callsigns appeared in the Penallt table, which compares well with previous years but it isn't enough. With over 600 active DX-ers in the Club, it makes me wonder what the rest of you are doing. Surely you couldn't all have lost your aerials in the winds. Don't just keep filling your logs with juicy DX on the quiet. Let us all know how you're doing.

Our next unmissable social event will be only a few weeks away when this issue of the Digest appears. The Annual Dinner is on Saturday, 24 April, at a new venue, the Pendley Manor Hotel in Tring. This promises to be a spectacular occasion, especially if we keep up the recent trend of increasing numbers.

The grandeur of the occasion will no doubt be matched by our special attraction: the first presentation by the Five Star team who will have just returned from their trip to Rodrigues Island. Provided that they have recovered from the journey (and associated hangovers), the story might well be one of yet another record-breaking expedition. Maybe we should

run a sweepstake on the number of QSOs they will make. What are the odds on 200,000?

To be among the first to hear the story, book now to avoid disappointment. Full details and mouth-watering menu etc. are on the website and Shaun is waiting to receive your booking – with payment, please.

The week before the Dinner on Sunday, 18 April, the Club will be putting in an appearance at the Kempton Park rally. See you at the racecourse - although sadly, no horses are likely to be around.

73 es gud DX John, G3LAS

President's Patter

Neville Cheadle, G3NUG

First of all, a reminder that the CDXC Annual Dinner takes place at the Pendley Manor, near Tring, Herts, on Saturday, 24 April. The Annual Dinner is a very popular event and it helps us (and the hotel) enormously if members get their bookings in as early as possible. Access from the M1 (Junc. 8), M25 (Junc. 20) and the A41 is very easy; Tring is just to the north of Hemel Hempstead.

We have an excellent room at the Manor; we are taking over the main dining room and there is a spacious bar and lounge nearby. A booking form is enclosed with this Digest so please return this to Shaun, MØBJL, as soon as possible. There is quite a bit of accommodation in the Tring, Berkhamsted and Hemel Hempstead area that is somewhat less expensive than the Pendley Manor. Details are available on our website.

The 3B9C team will be giving a video presentation after the Dinner, followed by a question and answer session. Many of the team will be there, having returned from Rodrigues the previous weekend. Who knows what we will have to say! It's really up to the propagation and cyclone gods: we have the radios, the antennas, the operators and the

computery to make quite an impact. By the time of the next Digest it will all be over.

We have been trying to establish when the Club was founded. We knew it was in the early 1980s, but until recently we have been unable to establish an exact date.

Roger, G3KMA, kindly responded to our appeal for early newsletters, so we will soon have a complete set. Newsletter No. 1 was dated 6 October 1983 and the first AGM was on 25 February 1984, with Roger in the chair. But the Club had existed under the CDXC name since 1981 as a grouping of some 20 or so DX-ers in the South-east. The first social gathering was on 6 March 1982 at the QTH of Keith, G3VKW. In fact the Club had its origins in a DX alert group which met on 144.525 MHz from 1979 onwards. The original members of that group were G4DYO, G3VKW and G3VLW.

As regards the 25th Anniversary: the Committee believes that 2006 is the appropriate year to celebrate this - on the basis that the club took its name in 1981. We have plenty of time to plan for something special!

Roger mentions that it's interesting to note that the first DX-pedition grant, value £100, was made to ZL1AMO's Kermadec Island operation in March 1984. Our present DX-pedition listing goes back to March 1992, the South Sandwich DX-pedition (VP8SSI), so your President needs to do some more research to find which other DX-peditions we sponsored in those early days (and also to find QSL cards for our ever-growing display).

I hope all members with Internet access have had a chance to look at the new website. It seems to be very popular and to have been well received. Our thanks again to Dominic, MØBLF, for the excellent design and also to Martin, G3ZAY, who did a good deal of editing work before the site went live.

Chairman John, G3LAS, has now taken over as Webmaster, an arrangement that is working very well indeed. If members have kit for sale or other announcements of interest, for example about forthcoming rallies, DX-peditions etc., don't hesitate to put them on the site. Thanks to Alan, G3PMR, who has finally retired as Webmaster, having previously been our Newsletter Editor. Enjoy your retirement with our Cyprus branch, Alan.

Not surprisingly, I have been a little busy lately, getting organised for the 3B9C Rodrigues DX-pedition. Logistics is one of my babies and, as I write this, I know that our container has reached Mauritius and will be shortly shipped to Rodrigues, where it will arrive before the end of February, cyclones permitting. So that's one challenge completed, well almost!

Apart from the overall project management responsibilities, I've also been very involved in the sponsorship programme being lead by Bob, GU4YOX. Don, G3XTT, produced an excellent brochure about this project which was mailed to over 200 DX clubs worldwide and to over 450 local clubs in the UK. We've had a very favourable response and we expect

to have a large number of applications for the Nevada Rodrigues Trophies. There are many more categories than in the case of D68C and the trophies are beautiful - and really worth winning! There are awards for clubs, individuals, newcomers and SWLs and we expect a lot of interest. We've even made it into the KIBV Awards Directory website, another first!

Have a look at the latest Press Release, No. 3, in this Digest for further details.

Everything is going to plan. We have a team of 31, up to 16 stations, 20+ antennas and a wonderful sea-facing location. Some of us will be on the island for nearly four weeks. I wonder how many of the current 634 CDXC members we can work? Give us a call, try EME on 70cms or SSB on 160m. I saw a request earlier today for RTTY on Top Band; now that could be interesting!

Finally, please don't forget to send in the booking forms for the Annual Dinner as soon as possible. Thanks.

Neville

73 Neville G3NUG

CDXC
CHILTERN DX CLUB
The UK DX Foundation

Secretary's Update Shaun Jarvis, MØBJL

CDXC offers a warm welcome to the following new members:

Call	Worked	Name	Location
5B4AHK	250	John Wright	Cyprus
GØHFX	203	Chris Parnell	Wilts
GØOMS	150+	Kevin Brown	Northants
GØORC	245	Vince Shirley	Derbyshire
GØVTB	146	Fred Bourne	East Sussex
GØVXD	186	Gary Clayton	West Yorks
G3KOZ	226	Doug Henderson	Wilts
G3NCN	101	John Ellerton	Berks
G3TLB	100+	Keith Smith	East Sussex
G3YNN	129	QRZ AR Group	East Sussex
G4WBB	150+	Dave Cousins	Barnsley
G6IQL	172	Vince While	Birmingham
G7BXS	152	Bob Wake	Devon
G8HOD	100+	Ken Waters	Cambs
GMØHWB	100+	Peter Lafferty	Strathclyde
GW3YAF	100+	Dave Davies	Carmarthenshire
MØZAK	146	Jim Steel	Leics
M1FCV	100+	Clive Roberts	Glos
M1SMH	100+	Stuart Heathcock	Middlesex
M5FUN	141	Jonathan Constable	East Sussex
MM3XPG	100+	Dave Hulin	North Ayrshire
MU3GSY	100+	Lionel Rothmeir	Guernsey
MWØIDX	264	Roger Dallimore	Llandudno

Chiltern DX Club - Aims and Objectives

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

Membership Full details are available from the Secretary.

Subscription £15.00 for UK members, £20.00 for overseas members (US\$30 or 30 Euros). New members joining between 1 January and 30 June pay 50% of the annual subscription. Subscriptions are due on 1 July of each year, and should be sent to the Treasurer.

Digest Published six times per year. Articles for publication should be sent to the Editor by the published deadline. Please note that views expressed in the Digest are not necessarily those of the Editor or of the Committee.

Website <http://www.cdxc.org.uk>

DX an' all that

Don Field, G3XTT g3xtt@lineone.net

The year has got off to a good start, with some fine propagation on the HF bands. Of course, we haven't exactly been seeing daily openings to KH6 on 10m, but that has been compensated for by some great DX on the LF bands. And this month there will be all those lovely DX-peditions (although yet another one has bitten the dust - this time the Clipperton Island effort which has been postponed due to transportation problems).

Having said all this, it's been frustrating, in the light of the CDXC Kenwood Challenge, to see various Pacific DX being reported in Europe, but completely inaudible in the UK (or at this QTH, at least!).

DXCC

In the wake of Chesterfield and Ducie, the ARRL has changed the DXCC rules to prevent every little atoll becoming an IARU member so that its even smaller outlying atolls could qualify as separate DXCC entities in their own right. To my mind this is a sensible step. I have a press release regarding potential IARU membership for American Samoa which talks piously about the need for better representation at IARU, but I seem to recall that the same was said for Pitcairn (which opened the door for Ducie to become a DXCC counter) yet, when Pitcairn was granted IARU membership, the Pitcairn radio club immediately asked RSGB to act on its behalf at IARU meetings (which had been the case up to then anyway).

All of which rather highlights the way the DXCC rules were being abused. What prizes for assuming that, suddenly, American Samoa will no longer feel the need for its own IARU membership, now that the rules have changed?

DXCC Challenge

The ARRL has recently published the annual DXCC Challenge standings. The award is issued to those working and confirming 1,000 band-countries (Entities) on the 6m through 160m bands. The report by W3UR in the Daily DX says "As of September 30, 2003 some 1,337 DX-ers have attained the 1,000 country level. Currently there are 335 DXCC Entities. So with 10 bands that makes 3,350 possibilities. Once again W4DR, Bob Eshleman, leads the pack for the fourth year since the inception of the award. Bob finished the season with an amazing 3,083 band points.

The top ten DX-ers are as follows:

1. W4DR, Bob Eshleman 3,083
2. W1NG, Ken Bolin 3,076
3. OZ1LO, Leif Ottosen 3,051
4. K5UR, Rick Roderick 3,049
5. SP5EWY, Rys Tymkiewicz 3,045
6. W9ZR, Randy Schaaf 3,042
7. N4WW, Austin Regal 3,037
8. I4EAT, Fausto Minardi 3,035
9. W1JR, Joe Reisert 3,021
10. K8MFO, Don Karvonen 3,018

W1NG jumped a few spots and closed in on W4DR. The difference between 1st and 2nd place went from 30 band-countries last year to just seven this year. Last year's Continental leaders remain the top DX-ers this year from their parts of the globe. Europe's top DX-er was OZ1LO, Leif, with 3,051. He also went from 4th place to 3rd place. From Asia it was JR3IIR, Ichiro, scoring 2,896. LU2NI, Carlos, had 2,233 from South America. The African leader was ZS6EZ, Chris, with 2,221. And finally the Pacific champ is VK9NS, Jim, who has 2,046 band countries. The complete list of

all 1,337 top DX-ers can be found at <http://www.arrl.org/awards/dxcc/listings/challenge.html#challenge>. The leading UK station is G4BWP, in 15th place with 2,966 credits.

2003 Activity

W1JR has compiled a list of the Entities which he believes were unavailable in 2003. His list is:

AF: 3B6, 3Y (Bouvet), 5A, 9X, D6, E3, FR/G, FR/T, FT/W, FT/X. FT/Z, VKØ (Heard) and ZS8.

Antarctica: 3Y (Peter 1).

AS: 1S, 7O, BS, P5, VU4 and VU7.

EU: 1AØ and R1M.

NA: CYØ, FO/C, KP1, KP5, XF4 and YVØ.

OC: 3D2/C, FK/C, KH1, KH5K, KH7 (Kure), T33, VK9M, VK9W, ZL7 and ZL9.

SA: CEØX, HKØ/M, VP8 (SG) and VP8 (Sand).

Possibles, but doubtful are: C21, JX, R1FJL. This would leave 287, according to my calculations. It will be interesting to see what scores are achieved in our Kenwood Challenge. With possibly a similar theoretical total on HF this year, plus maybe 70 or 80 on 6m (probably very little ionospheric propagation, but Sporadic E and trans-equatorial, especially in June/July), we could see scores up around the 350 mark. Maybe someone should be running a sweep on what the winning score might be!

Most Wanted Survey

Which brings us nicely on to the latest DX Magazine 'Most Wanted Survey', which was taken between late September and ended

during mid-October of 2003. The total results are published in the January/February 2004 issue of the DX Magazine and the Top 100 list can also be found on the DX Magazine Web site (www.dxpub.com). The magazine breaks down the results by World-wide, Europe only, World-wide (no Europe or USA), overall USA, USA/NA Eastern Time Zone, USA/NA Central Time Zone, USA/NA Mountain Time Zone and US/NA Pacific Time Zone.

Here are the Top Ten Most Wanted, on a World basis:

1. Scarborough Reef (BS7)
2. Andaman & Nicobar Islands (VU4)
3. North Korea (P5)
4. Lakshadweep Islands (VU7)
5. Peter I Island (3Y)
6. Yemen (7O)
7. Juan de Nova & Europa (FR/J & FR/E)
8. Navassa Island (KP1)
9. Desecheo Island (KP5)
10. Aves Island (YVØ)

Europa should have dropped quite some way by next year, of course, but some of the others look set to stay in the Top Ten for some years to come. Navassa and Desecheo are proving very frustrating to potential DX-peditioners. Both are relatively easy to get to, and a certain amount of access is allowed, but the authorities concerned are proving extremely resistant to allowing amateur radio operations from those locations.

TO4E/TO4WW

Finally, Nigel G3TXF, responds to my question about Europa last time, by saying that he did indeed manage to work TO4WW on 160m in the CQWW CW and ended up with Europa in the log on all nine HF bands. A fantastic effort, Nigel! Mind you, he does say it was frequently an exercise in frustration - but, then, who said DX-ing should be easy?

The Kenwood Challenge

Objective

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

The Prize

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

Eligibility

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

Scoring

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

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

Modes

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

Dates

The competition opens at 0001z on 1 February 2004 and closes at 2359z on 31 December 2004. Applications must be sent to the CDXC Awards Manager and postmarked 31 January 2005 or earlier.

Log

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

Decisions

Decisions of the CDXC Committee are final.

Updates

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

Note: CDXC Committee members are eligible to participate.

G3NUG

OX/DL2SWW and OX/DL2VFR

23 March – 05 May 2004

QTH: Maniitsoq Island, NA-220, 12.4% confirmed according to the IOTA Most Wanted list. Operators: Frank, DL2SWW and Ric, DL2VFR. Modes: CW and SSB.

Objectives: to give NA-220 to as many IOTA chasers as possible, give band points from OX as far as propagation allows. We do not expect to have any good propagation on 160 or 80m at the time/season we are going, but if there is a chance, we will be QRV. But no 6m planned!

QSL via Bureau via home call 100% and if requested, direct (return postage: Europe US\$1, outside Europe US\$2). Logs will be available after the expedition.



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



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

All preparations for 3B9C are on track, and everything is looking good. Our container was due to arrive in Rodrigues on 26 February. This bulletin brings news of the Nevada Rodrigues Trophies for working 3B9C, some information about QSL-ing, and other items of interest.

Most Wanted List

The DX Magazine's latest rankings show that Rodrigues has moved from 81st Most Wanted Worldwide in 2002 to 75 in 2003. For the US the change is even more marked, up from 79 to 53 in the Eastern time zone and from 49 to 33 on the West Coast. Incidentally, we note that since our 2001 expedition to the Comoros, D6 appears to have vanished completely from these lists!

Nevada Rodrigues Awards Programme

The objective of the Nevada Rodrigues Trophy Programme is to encourage individual stations of all types worldwide as well as local club stations to make contact with the 3B9C DX-pedition during March/April 2004. We are very keen to encourage all amateurs to participate, particularly those with low power,

relatively poor antennas or who are new to HF. We also want to encourage members of local clubs to participate. Trophies will be awarded to stations who work 3B9C on the highest number of band-slots. There are also trophies for SWLs.

Only contacts made on the following bands and modes will qualify for the Nevada Rodrigues Trophies:

CW: 160m to 6m (10 bands)
FM: 10m only
PSK: 20m, 15m and 10m
RTTY: 20m, 15m and 10m
SSB: 160m to 6m excluding 30m (9 bands).

There are 26 band-slots available in total. (The 3B9C team plan to operate on further bands and modes such as SSTV and satellite but these contacts will not count towards these trophies.)

Details of the various trophies for UK stations (and SWLs) are set out below. Note that low power stations must have only single element antennas, eg a dipole or a vertical. We will adopt the CQ Worldwide Contest definition of low power, ie 100W or less.

Club awards: In the case of a reasonably active club well over 100 contacts (and perhaps many more) could be made. Claims for individual trophies may be included with club applications providing they are clearly marked as such.

Certificates will be awarded for the third and fourth places (second and third for ROTW) providing there are at least 10 entries in the particular category.

Section 1: UK High Power (See note 1)

Trophies will be awarded to the two high power stations based in the UK who work 3B9C on the most band/mode slots.

Section 2: UK Low Power (See note 1)

Trophies will be awarded to the two low power stations based in the UK who work 3B9C on the most band/mode slots.

Section 3: UK Local Clubs (See note 1)

Trophies will be awarded to the two UK local clubs whose members work 3B9C on the most band/mode slots.

Section 4: UK M3 Licencees (See note 1)

Trophies will be awarded to the two M3 licencees who work 3B9C on the most band/mode slots.

Sections 5: UK Newly Licensed HF Stations (See notes 1 and 2)

Trophies will be awarded to the two stations licensed since 1 January 2003 to operate on HF and based in the UK who work 3B9C on the most band/mode slots.

Section 22: SWLs

SWLs worldwide may participate. Trophies will be awarded to the two SWL stations who

log 3B9C on the most band/mode slots. Three consecutive QSOs must be logged for each band/mode slot.

Claims for the same number of band/mode slots:

In cases where several stations claim the same number of band/mode slots the station(s) making the contacts in the shortest time from the start of the DXpedition will be the winner.

Applications

Applications should be sent by e-mail to Chris G3NHL, g3nhl@tiscali.co.uk, by 31 May 2004.

Award section name and number, name of operator (club), callsign, e-mail address and postal address are required together with log extract showing the following: Date, Time (UTC), Band, Mode. The approved application form (available on the 3B9C Web page or from G3NHL) should be used.

For club applications send one form per member together with a summary.

No individual may apply for more than one award.

Charges

There are no charges for these awards. A picture of the very attractive Nevada Rodrigues Trophy can be found on our website at www.fsdxa.com/3b9c.

Notes

Note 1

For the purpose of this award the UK includes G, GD, GI, GJ, GM, GU and GW.

Note 2

Newly licensed HF stations are defined as: 1. Those amateurs whose licence conditions did not, prior to 1 January 2003, allow them to operate on the HF bands, or 2. Complete newcomers to HF, licensed since 1 January 2003.

QSL Route

The callsign of the 3B9C QSL manager and PO Box will be announced in the next press release. Requests for Bureau cards can also be made via the 3B9C Web page. Direct cards will be available shortly after the DX-pedition members return home.

Every effort will be made to ensure that cards are handled in a timely manner, with particular attention to the end of September deadline for DXCC updates.

QSL-ing will be handled in a distributed manner, using StarQSL, a software management tool developed by John Linford, G3WGV, especially for this purpose.

The 3B9C QSL card is being designed at the moment. It will be an attractive four-sided full colour card and a proof will be shown on our Web page.

Sponsorship

We are delighted to welcome a number of new corporate, club and individual sponsors. NCDXF in particular have made a generous contribution. Full details appear on the Web site. However, further funds are still required to make this expedition a success, and we look forward to welcoming additional sponsors in due course. Details were given in previous Press Releases and are also on the Web site.

In every respect, we expect this to be the biggest single amateur radio operation of all time, giving everyone, not just the privileged

few, the opportunity to work a rare one and to compete for a range of trophies and awards, but obviously the cost is high.

Web Site

The 3B9C, Project Star Reach, Web site is already recording well over 300 visitors a day, and that number is growing all the time. There is a huge amount of detail available on the site, as we very much want to make it an integral part of the whole Project. Do take a look!

In particular, you might like to start thinking about how best to catch 3B9C on the bands you need. Several major publications will be carrying 'How to' articles in March, but you can also find useful data on the Website, along with our early propagation predictions, focused on the main concentrations of amateur population.

The URL, again, is www.fsdxa.com/3b9c.

Don Field G3XTT, NK1G

(3B9C Publicity Officer)

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12 February 2004



3B9C - How to work us 1

Propagation and Choice of Band

Don, G3XTT

Many DX-peditions nowadays run propagation forecasts for the major geographic areas, and post them on the DX-pedition Website. 3B9C is no exception.

But if you live elsewhere in the world, or want to run some much more specific predictions for your own QTH, there are plenty of propagation prediction software packages available which allow you to do it yourself. Follow some of the links at the end of this article for some good examples.

Rest assured that the 3B9C team themselves have done similar analyses and will be aware of where their beams should be pointing on any given band and at any given time. Almost certainly, the easiest bands on which to look for your first QSOs with the expedition are going to be 20, 17 and 15m. As the sunspots start to reduce in number, openings on the highest bands become less frequent, while the low bands are always a tougher challenge, with greater absorption and higher noise levels.

Of course, most serious DX-ers have gain antennas for 20, 15 and 10m; often a triband Yagi or even stacked monobanders. So even on those bands you may well have to wait your turn for a QSO (the good news is that 3B9C will be active for three full weeks and four weekends). Far fewer DX-ers have gain antennas for 30, 17, and 12m, so 17m may well be an excellent band on which to focus to make that first 3B9C QSO (or, indeed, to chase other DX-peditions). This highlights one of the dilemmas facing the would-be HF

operator. With nine HF bands available, not to mention the VHF bands, how on earth can you put up an effective antenna system to cover them all? Unless you live on a farm, the answer is probably 'no way'.

This is why low-profile multiband antennas such as trapped verticals or the G5RV are so popular but, inevitably, they are a compromise. It's often forgotten, for example, that when Louis Varney G5RV came up with his ground-breaking antenna design, not only did the WARC bands not exist, but neither did 15m. And in no way was the antenna expected to present a resistive 50Ω load to the transmitter but, in those days of valve PAs, it didn't really matter! Modern solid-state rigs may behave differently, and reduce power in the face of what they see as a mismatch.

Web Resources

DX Lab (includes PropView):

www.qsl.net/dxlab/

DX Summit (DX spots):

<http://oh2aq.kolumbus.com/dxs/>

DX Zone (List of propagation prediction programmes):

www.dxzone.com/catalog/Software/Propagation/

VOAcap Download:

<http://elbert.its.blrdoc.gov/hf.html>

W6EL Propagation Software:

www.qsl.net/w6elprop/

3B9C - How to work us 2

Rigs and Operating Techniques

Don, G3XTT

What about your transceiver? The answer is that most transceivers these days are more than capable of doing the job, and almost all elderly ones are too. The only feature you will need that you may not be using in your day-to-day ragchewing is split-frequency capability. 3B9C, like almost all DX-peditions, will operate split-frequency at all times in the early parts of the expedition, although may revert to co-channel working later, when the pile-ups diminish, for those without the capability. What is split-frequency operation, and why is it used?

Quite simply, DX-peditions transmit on one frequency and listen on a different frequency. For example they will transmit on 28.495 MHz and listen between 28.500 and 28.520 MHz. There are two reasons:

1. If the DX-pedition station listens on the frequency on which it is transmitting, it will not be heard by those calling because of the pile-up on that frequency.
2. The DX-pedition operator will be faced with a huge barrage of calls and will not be able to differentiate between them if they are all calling on the same frequency.

Experienced DX-peditioners will tune slowly up and down their listening band. Listen to the stations working the DX-pedition and establish the operator's tuning pattern. Work out where he is likely to be listening next and then call – bingo! Never, never transmit on the DX-pedition's transmitting frequency unless the DX-pedition says "Listening this

frequency". On CW, generally all you will need to do is set your receiver to the 3B9C frequency and then use XIT (transmitter-incremental tuning) to offset your transmitter by the necessary split (see your transceiver manual if you haven't had occasion to do this before). Activating RIT (receiver incremental tuning) will also allow you to hear the calling stations, while leaving your main receive frequency on 3B9C.

RIT and XIT usually only work for splits of up to 10kHz, which may not be sufficient for SSB operation. In this case you need to bring your second VFO into operation. Set, say, the A VFO on the 3B9C frequency. Set the B VFO on the frequency where 3B9C is listening, and activate 'Transmit on B, receive on A'. Again, your transceiver's manual will explain how to do this.

When 3B9C responds to your call, the exchange will consist simply of an exchange of signal reports. Make sure the 3B9C operator also has your callsign correct. The reason for the short, contest-style exchange is simple: the expedition operators want to maximise the number of people who get a chance to work 3B9C, so contacts are kept as short as possible. Information such as QSL route, etc. have been announced in this magazine and elsewhere, and there will even be a log look-up facility on the 3B9C Web Page so you can be sure that you are in the log OK. If not, then do feel free to have a second attempt. If your contact is, indeed, OK, then please try to work 3B9C on other bands and modes.

So where on the bands will you find 3B9C? The plan is to focus initially on the frequencies listed below, subject to change for technical or operational reasons. In any case, the team is well aware that band plans in some countries, including the USA, restrict certain classes of operator to sub-sections of the band. This will not only be reflected in the range of

listening frequencies used, but in transmitting frequencies as the DX-pedition progresses. With widespread use of PacketCluster (via VHF/UHF and Internet) and the DX Summit Web pages, even if you don't hear 3B9C immediately, you should always be able to find out very easily where the expedition is currently operating.

Mhz	CW	SSB	RTTY	FM	SSTV	PSK
1.8	1822	1842	-	-	-	-
3.5	3502	3795	3570	-	-	-
7	7002	7052	7035	-	-	-
10.1	10102	-	-	-	-	-
14	14022	14195	14085	-	14230	14071
18	18072	18145	-	-	-	-
21	21022	21295	21085	-	-	21071
24.9	24892	24945	-	-	-	-
28	28022	28495	28075	29580	-	28071
50	50102	50145	-	-	-	-
50 Beacon	50090	-	-	-	-	-
	Look for us on OSCAR-40					
	70cm band					

Regarding the above frequencies, note that the team is aware of at least one other major DX-pedition to be active while 3B9C is still on the air, so may decide to change transmitting frequencies to avoid confusion.

Typically, a DX-pedition SSB station transmitting on 14.195 MHz will listen up in the range 14.200 to 14.220 MHz. If 3B9C finds itself operating on the same transmit frequency as another DX-pedition it will, for example, move down around 5 kHz typically to 14.190 MHz and will then listen down say between 14.165 and 14.185 MHz so as to split the pile-ups and avoid confusion.

Listen to the operator carefully. Each has been briefed to give the 3B9C callsign at least after every two QSOs and to announce the listening frequencies every five QSOs. Incidentally, 3B9C will not work by numbers, believing

that with good ears and equipment this is quite unnecessary.

There really isn't the space here to discuss how to get started with the more specialist bands and modes, but the team does encourage readers to have a go. There have been many articles written about getting started on RTTY and PSK, which is straightforward using a personal computer and its built-in sound card. There will be a section on the 3B9C Web site giving some hints and tips, with links to useful references. The same is true of satellite and EME. The latter requires a well-equipped station, but satellite operation through AO-40 doesn't require large investments in equipment, especially if you already have a 70cm multimode radio (3B9C will be using the popular FT-847) and 70cm yagi. Again, follow the links on the Web page for suitable advice on getting started.

Some upcoming DX-peditions (other than 3B9C...)

V8

A reminder that Jim, G3RTE, Phil, G3SWH, and Ray, HSØZDZ (aka G3NOM), who are all members of FOC and CDXC, in association with Greg, V85GD, will be mounting a multi-band, multi-mode DX-pedition to Negara Brunei Darussalam (Brunei) between 8-15 March 2004.

The main operation will take place from the QTH of Greg, V85GD, under the special callsign of V8JIM.

A single operator entry will also be made in the RSGB's Commonwealth Contest using the special callsign of V8NOM.

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

Activity is planned for all bands from 160 to 10m and will include CW, SSB and the digital modes. Propagation permitting, we plan to have three stations on the air for as many hours every day as is possible. Our main objective is to work as many European, North American and ROTW stations on as many bands as possible.

We have set an expedition target of 12,000 QSOs, with an approximately equal split between CW, SSB and the digital modes.

The QSL manager for V8JIM will be G3SWH and for V8NOM it will be GM4FDM.

We are happy to meet the costs of transport to and from Brunei, but would appreciate sponsorship and donations towards our living

expenses, printing QSLs and the like. Any surplus will be equally distributed between the operators to offset their personal contributions.

T33C

An international team of 20 operators will activate Banaba (T33) for two weeks during April 2004. Banaba (formerly Ocean Island) currently ranks #21 on the European most-wanted list. The small, sparsely populated island is accessible only by sea. The operators leave Europe and the USA around 24 March and hope to land on Banaba on Sunday, 4 April. The Banaba operation has been issued the callsign T33C. The expedition will be a major effort, featuring 24-hour operation. CW, SSB, RTTY, PSK, and SSTV will be used as appropriate on all bands 160 through 6m and AO-40.

There will be seven separate HF stations featuring Elecraft K2/100 transceivers and ACOM 1000 amplifiers, including a dedicated station for the digital modes and another for 6m using RAKE 174MDX amplifiers. Operations on 20m and above will use Fluidmotion SteppIR yagis, whilst low band stations will use 30m ZX-yagis, vertical delta loops and a variety of receiving antennas such as AYL-4s and beverages. It is hoped that the logs will be transmitted daily to Australia via Pactor and published daily on the WWW.

If propagation is favourable, T33C should be easy to hear. A chart showing expected propagation can be found on the web page.

Members of the group will also activate Tarawa (T30) during WPX SSB. There may also be limited operation from Nauru, Fiji, and other island nations after the Banaba expedition. Look out for the only UK

participant who should be active from Fiji as 3D2TW: Tom Wylie, GM4FDM.

Our web page is at <http://www.dx-pedition.de/banaba2004/home.htm>, where all the latest news can be found, including a list of all the operators. As a small gesture to the islanders we hope to make a small presentation of books and materials to the Island school. QSL-ing instructions can be found on the web page. The QSL manager is Flo, F5CWU.

7Q7

Mark Marsden, G4AXX, Rich Brokenshaw, M5RIC, Dick Allisette, GU4CHY, and myself, Steve Telenius-Lowe, G4JVG, will be operating from Malawi between 18 April and 1 May 2004. All four operators are members of CDXC. We have applied for the licences and the 7Q7 callsign to be used will be announced shortly before the start of the operation.

We will be taking three stations, two of which will be operating at the full legal power limit. Kenwood UK has kindly agreed to loan the DX-pedition two transceivers: the new 200W output TS-480HX, which is ideal for DX-peditioning, and a top-of-the-range TS-2000. We will have two linear amplifiers, including an Acom 1000, while the third station will operate at 200W output. We plan to operate two stations as close to 24 hours a day as possible, with the third station also on the air at peak times of propagation.

Antennas planned include two triband beams, a pair of phased verticals for 40m and verticals close to the water's edge for 75/80m and 160m. With the full legal power, we should be very loud on all bands! Activity will be on all bands 10 - 160m CW, SSB, RTTY, PSK31 and if there is demand and if conditions permit: 10m FM.

Further details of the DX-pedition can be found on our website at www.malawi.digital-crocus.com, which will be updated with news of the DX-pedition right up until our departure. We plan to have a log-check facility on the website, which will be updated regularly during the operation.

We are looking for donations from DX clubs around the world to help to cover the high cost of this DX-pedition. Each operator is paying the full cost of his return air fare UK to Malawi and for the cost of accommodation and food in Malawi. We are looking for donations to help cover the additional cost of transporting equipment, the purchase and shipping of coaxial cable and the cost of printing QSLs. The cost of the QSLs alone is likely to exceed £500, depending on the overall number of QSOs made. We have received a quote of over £1,000 for the cost of shipping equipment to and from Malawi.

We are looking at the possibility of shipping a Battle Creek Special 160/80m vertical to Malawi and also at the possibility of shipping a 6m beam to allow for operation on the 'Magic Band'. However, both of these projects will require sponsorship as we will already have exceeded our aircraft baggage allowance of just 20kg per person.

Donations can be sent direct to me, Steve Telenius-Lowe, G4JVG, 27 Hertford Road, Stevenage SG2 8RZ, Herts; e-mail: g4jvg@ntlworld.com. Donations can be sent by bank transfer, in cash or by Sterling cheque. If you wish to make a donation by bank transfer, please e-mail me for bank account details. All donations, no matter how small (or large!) will be greatly appreciated. All sponsors, whether DX clubs or individuals, will be acknowledged with thanks on our website and (subject to a minimum amount) on our QSL card. We will, of course,

put the CDXC logo on our website and the QSL card.

The QSL manager for this DX-pedition will be Roger Brown, G3LQP. All QSLs will be answered, either direct or via the bureau. The address for direct QSLs is: Roger Brown, 262 Fir Tree Road, Epsom KT17 3NL. Please enclose sufficient return postage (US\$1 or one 'new' IRC) and a self-addressed envelope if

you QSL direct. Donations from individuals above and beyond the cost of return postage will be very welcome with your QSL. QSLs received direct, but which do not contain sufficient return postage, will be answered via the Bureau.

Meanwhile I look forward to putting you in our log in April!

Odds and Ends

Clipperton Island

The team going to Clipperton Island has run into a problem with the transportation. As a result, the DX-pedition will be postponed until alternative transportation becomes available. "We regret this delay but plans are still in place to go to Clipperton Island as soon as new transportation can be arranged", says team leader Dave Anderson, K4SV. Because of the island's remoteness this may take a few months. Watch for additional announcements. *[G3NUG]*

IARU Member Society rule

N4MM, John Kanode, ARRL Honorary Vice President, reports that the BOD voted to remove the IARU Member Society rule from the DXCC rules. This is one of the three criteria for adding a new DXCC Entity under the Political Entities provision. The UN and ITU criteria are still in place. "It was a long and complicated story and took up over an hour of fierce debate at the meeting," said John. The IARU criteria were responsible for the additions of the Chesterfields and Ducie Island to the DXCC list. There were several other possible DXCC entities that could have

resulted if the parent entities had gained an IARU society, including Sala y Gomez (CEØY), Swains Island (KH8), Gough Island (ZD9) and possibly one other.

New CIS Contest

Please inform your friends, club members etc. about the new CIS DX Contest. Official website: www.srars.org/cisdxc.htm with ex-USSR areas, prefixes, maps, territory list, info and much more.

73 de MMØDGR, Scottish-Russian ARS

VP9

I will be operating MØCNP/VP9 between 9-23 March with 100W from an IC-718, probably 40-10m, and mainly SSB and CW. If I can get the PC up and running, I will do some RTTY/PSK31. Antenna is likely to be a random length of wire as the QTH is particularly difficult to get any sort of antenna erected. *[MØCNP]*

The earth moves for GØPB

I am sure you are all desperate to know about this just in case it's some new technical OPB feature. Well, there I was on

Boxing Day doing the e-mails whilst nursing a slightly sore head when I felt the earth move. Well, it was a sort of vibration/rumble for a few seconds. I guessed it was a big lorry going past, but I could not hear anything. Even so, who would be driving a big lorry on Boxing Day? So I surmised it was one of the usual mild earth tremours we get in the UK from time to time - and expected an announcement on the news later that day.

A few hours later I was upstairs and looked out of the back window (Yes, the tower was still there) and saw a rather large dark patch in the middle of the lawn. So I put my specs on and looked again. This time my heart sank: subsidence. Worse still, it was right next to the tower base. Now in Reading there have been several cases of very old chalk workings being revealed and whole streets have been evacuated for many months; in one case several houses were demolished! So at this point all sorts of things were going through my mind, as you can imagine.

So with some trepidation I called up my brother-in-law, who lives nearby, and we went outside to inspect the scene. I was apprehensive about going out on my own in case the hole got bigger and I couldn't get out. Closer inspection of the hole revealed an old disused underground cesspit with concrete sides and roof, covered with about 18 inches of soil. The roof of the pit had collapsed under the weight, I guess.

The road where I live is very old and this was probably left over from the previous house on the site, seeing as this house was built in the 1940s.

Now I have a hole in middle of garden which measures 3.7m long x 1.7m deep x 1.3m across. That's big enough to put a small car in! The hole is indeed very close to the large concrete tower base, but there is no problem with that. But I just need to

move about 10 tons of hard core from the front of the house, through the kitchen and shack to the hole, as there has been no rear garden vehicle access since the extension was built.

I am grateful to Don, XTT, for offering to help with this small task and I have also co-opted a few guys from work to help, so it shouldn't take too long. I just need several wheelbarrows! BTW, Don, it's free tea all day and plenty of Malaysian food and beer afterwards.

The moral of the story: the next time the earth moves for you, just check the garden (there's got to be a pun in there somewhere)!

73 Tony, G3OPB

Contest Club of Finland

The Contest Club of Finland meeting was held on Saturday, January 17th, at Tikkurila in the outskirts of Helsinki. The CCF is a contest club, but the meeting is billed as contest and DX. The hotel venue was one of the major night clubs in the area and was extremely lively in the evening – with a queue lined up on the pavement to get in from the -7°C cold.

There were about 90 attendees for the convention including seven from the UK: GØMTN, G4FSU, G3ZAY, G4BWP, 5B4WN, 5B4AFM, M3MYL. Other foreign visitors included five SMs, one YL, one JA, one LA, one PA and an IT9. Admission was 10 Euros, which included sandwiches and coffee for lunch, and the DX Dinner cost 36 Euros. Perhaps the best bargain was the Ryanair flight from Stansted to Tampere, used by four of the UK visitors: 0.01p each way (+ taxes, of course).

The proceedings were run by Mikka, OH2BAD, and all the talks were in English. The lectures included:

- Small station contesting (OH3BU)
- HF Contest software (OH4JFN)
- UHF/VHF/6m contesting in Finland (OH5LK)
- Contesting in Japan & AH2R vs KHØAA (JH4RHF)
- The new EA8AH superstation (OH1RY)
- IH9P (IT9BLB)
- Contest award presentations (OH6LI)

The dinner presentations were given by OH2BP, who promoted RTTY contesting, and this was followed by OH2BH, OH2PM and OH2UA on the Albania project.

Next year's event will probably be from 21-23 January 2005. The format was being discussed at the bar this year and could be on a boat cruising to one of the neighbouring countries. Check <http://www.qsl.net/ccf/> for more information in due course.

Out and About

TO4E and TO4WW

Europa Island DX-pedition by the Clipperton DX Club

Activating Europa Island was not an easy feat. Looking at different ideas, it became apparent that many difficulties would have to be surmounted to make this DX-pedition a reality. In 1999 Didier, F5OGL, and Rafik, F5CQ, began the task. After one failure they developed a final plan in September 2003.

It should be noted that Europa has been a nature reserve for 30 years and access to the island is severely limited; only military personnel, needed to assure sovereignty, have permanent access. Additionally, technicians from the French Weather Bureau (*Météo France*) visit the island to maintain their equipment and occasionally scientists stay for studies. From 1950 to 1990 weather technicians were on the island full-time. That's why, at times, you would find stations such as FR7/E, FR5/E or FRØ/E on the bands. Automating the weather stations made full-time technicians unnecessary and that's why amateur radio activities have become rarer (See the QSLs on the LNDX site at

<http://LesNouvellesDX.free.fr> and click on 'Articles parus' in the list. You can get an English translation of this page by clicking on the word 'English' at the bottom).

Finally, on 21 October 2003, we got the green light for the DX-pedition. We quickly studied the various ways to get to Réunion Island, then on to Europa, with the French authorities in charge of the forces stationed in the South Indian Ocean. Transport to the island is very limited and we accepted the proposal that we would travel to the island by French Navy boat and return on an Army aircraft. The itinerary was to sail on *La Grandière* on 17 November at 1600 hours, with an estimated arrival time on Europa of the morning of 24 November. This added seven days to the trip and consequently several operators had to drop out for professional reasons. The original timing was for the mission to last from 12 to 15 days. As the return date was to be 17 December, the actual time would be closer to a month. Additionally, Didier, F5OGL, was

told by his doctor that he wasn't fit enough to go. This was a bitter pill for him to swallow. By telephone we analysed the situation and Didier sadly decided to cancel the DX-pedition and the follow-up. Bearing in mind the difficulty of obtaining authorisation, the availability of operators and propagation degradation, he decided to hand the reins over to Dany, F5CW. Didier was to stay in France to handle all the details with the authorities, the sponsors and the amateur radio organisations. As a result, only three weeks prior to departure six operators had to be replaced. All operators had to be French military. At the last minute Pascal, F5PTM, and Jean-Louis, F5NHJ, were recruited. Finally the team was reduced to five operators: Dany, F5CW; Eric, F5JJK; Freddy, F5IRO; Jean-Louis, F5NHJ; Pascal F5PTM.

F5CW took charge of managing the freight with a view to having it on board the boat prior to 14 November. He had less than two weeks to assemble, make an inventory, crate and ship through an intermediary. The day the freight was due to leave the Titanex antennas and Dunestar filters had still not arrived. We would have to carry these in our personal baggage. The original itinerary called for a round-trip by air from Réunion to Europa. The authorized baggage limit was set at 300 kg.

As a result we had to carefully select our equipment: a single amplifier, few heavy antennas, few poles for antennas etc. Finally three transceivers, one amplifier, one beam, several verticals, two PCs, 500m of coax, 800m of wire for radials, and accessories were loaded onto the boat on 13 November. In time the new team determined that the freight bill for the airplane would go up from 800 to more than 1,100 Euros. The travel costs from France to Réunion were paid for by the operators.

On 15 November the whole team assembled at Orly airport in Paris. A contingent of members

from the F6KOP radio club was there to wish us good luck and gave us caps with the TO4E callsign. It was a good opportunity to take a photograph for our Internet site run by Rafik, F5CQ. We checked our 35 kg of supplementary baggage, primarily the Titanex antennas modified to fit into 2m-long boxes, also our very heavy bags which contained accessory equipment: two transceivers, three PCs and band filters borrowed from Flo, F5CWU, who drove us 400 km through the night to help us out. It was a very kind gesture of his.

On our arrival at St Denis Airport on Réunion Alain Gillard was waiting for us with a bus to get us to our meeting site prior to boarding. A big thank you too to Eric, F5JJK, who managed all the logistics on Réunion. We couldn't meet up with Jacques, FR5ZU, as he was busy, but Yvon, FR1GZ, came and brought us a 9-element VHF antenna so we could make some attempts at meteor scatter with the South Africans.

On 17 November we gathered at *le Port des Gallets* to board the light transport ship *La Grandière*. We checked that our equipment was well stored on board and thanked those responsible. After a visit from the commandant of the French Navy at La Réunion, we got under way. At 1800 hours we left port, destination: the high seas. On our departure a helicopter from the *Gendarmerie Nationale* made a series of passes and vessel landings. The training here is indispensable for mastering delicate situations. Finally we headed for Mayotte. Our journey took us north of Madagascar, just to the south of the Glorioso Islands. Captain Menut welcomed us aboard. On 19 November we caught sight of the coast of the Malagasy Republic. Meanwhile we took part in various emergency training exercises such as fire drills, a man overboard, taking on water etc.

During the night of the 19-20 November we passed *Cap d'Ambre* off the north coast of

Madagascar. We arrived at Dzaoudzi at 0630 hours on 21 November. We were authorised to disembark at Mayotte for a short visit, as we were to ship out before 1700 hours the same day. At 0830 hours a launch took us ashore. Our contact, Major Salou (prearranged by F5CQ), met us. He provided us with access to the Internet to exchange messages and we downloaded files from Lance, W7GJ, which were transmitted by Rafik. We made our final purchases (fans, sun block...) and sent mail through the local post office. It was time to think about leaving. On board the boatswain announced that he had been told that we had 123 barrels of fuel rather than 120. The three barrels that we had requested were therefore on board. We left the lagoon before nightfall.

On 22 November we watched the film *Europa, a Savage Island*. The operators did not want to disembark due to the mosquitoes, but of course they were joking! Millions of mosquitoes can't stop a DX-pedition of this importance. We took precautions against the mosquitoes: repellent, special clothing and mosquito netting (one per station). On 23 November, our last day on board, we went over our baggage, left mail, and transmitted messages. The Marine officers of *PC télécoms*, intrigued by our DX-pedition, allowed us to use their equipment to announce our imminent arrival. Eight stations were contacted by F5CW/MM.

On 24 November we got up very early to view the coast of Europa at daybreak - an enchanting sight with a particularly calm sea. Typically boats make two or three attempts to reach anchorage. The sea floor is on a very sharp slope. Between the bow and stern of the boat the depth changes by more than 200m. We succeeded on our first try and thus gained at least one hour! Seeing as landing can only be done at high tide, one hour is important. The turn-around time in the morning is very short as the tide begins to ebb away. Also, we asked for a preliminary landing in order for F5CW and F5JJK to make contact with the

head of the detachment and to survey the location. So we gained time for the second phase. At 0700 hours Eric jumped from the Zodiac, wetted his shoes, then planted his feet on Europa. The first QSO was made from TO4E to Freddy, F5IRO/MM, on VHF FM so that we could maintain contact with the boat and exchange information on the unloading operation.

The detachment was well informed of our arrival. We surveyed the area to determine the best route by which to send our equipment. In the *Météo-France* building there is an HF station with a rhombic antenna pointing towards Réunion. 400m to the south, in the military detachment area, there is also an HF station with a W3HH antenna. After studying the various usage of these stations, we knew that the best place to locate would be in the vicinity of the weather station since their transmission sessions are infrequent and the frequencies they use would not cause reciprocal problems. For our operations, our filters would protect us. This location was spacious and it would be easy to set up three stations. Overall we were less than 100m from the sea and the location for the low-band verticals was not bad.

On our visit to the military station we asked to conduct trials on CW and SSB with their professional equipment. A first QSO was accomplished with F5TEJ in CW on 28 MHz at 0840 hours GMT, followed by 12 other CW QSOs and 24 QSOs on SSB. Yes, it was a small number, but neither Eric nor Dany had brought their PCs and the keyer was a really old one! We stopped quickly after passing information to our pilot station in France via F5CWU, seeing as the pile-up was building and the equipment was not set up to handle split operation. The professional operators, surprised at our contacts, seemed uneasy and we did not want to provoke the situation. Alas, amateur radio transmissions are little understood and our performance was intriguing to them.

We did not have Internet access on Europa. All the Cluster spots originated by TO4E or TO4WW were made by stations falsely using these callsigns. When we returned we analysed the DX cluster. The station spotted on 28025.1 at 1139z by DJ7MI was a pirate, similar to a spot by F5NOD at 1143z. Also at 1632z on 28.008 MHz. These spots did not pose a problem. Only the official log counts.

By 1300 hours the tide is again favourable and the unloading resumes. A large quantity of water is delivered in bulk in addition to bottles, 28 barrels of fuel and supplies. Three scientists, picked up at Mayotte, disembark. Their job is to capture six turtles and fit them with beacons and study their movements after their release near Juan de Nova and Madagascar.

The remainder of our team supervises the transfer of our equipment. If our packages fall into the water the DX-pedition will be compromised. To our relief the 300 kg arrive safely on the beach. Our equipment, now in the sun, has to be moved by hand to our location, 200m away across very hot sand. We have to make four round trips each to retrieve all the packages. Pascal, F5PTM, gets badly sunburnt. Quickly we prepare a table for the first station and the antennas begin to come out of the boxes. By the end of the day we complete our first QSO. At 1608z F5OGL is the first contact from TO4E. By 2017z the team is exhausted and operations stop. Happily at that moment there are very few mosquitoes, but the clammy heat of the night offers us little relief.

25 November. Before sunrise we have to prepare the six turtles for loading onto the boat. F5IRO and F5CW help with this delicate operation. Each turtle weighs over 150 kg and the three scientists cannot lift them alone. About ten people from the detachment finally arrive to finish the loading. Each night, with the tides, groups of green turtles come to lay eggs in the sand. In the early morning, the top

of the beaches resembles a battleground. In the burning sun we install the HB33 beam. This is the second attempt. It is installed only 7m from the ground but we can't get it up any higher. The 4-element 6m DXSR is also installed 6m from the ground on a small telescopic pole and the beacon is activated at around 0700z. We arranged the 18 and 24 MHz dipoles as slopers. The time has come to bid farewell to our boat, to thank the captain and the entire crew who helped us on our journey. At the end of the day a second station starts up on PSK.

The detachment chief checks the fuel after it is unloaded. Alas, there is no trace of the three barrels we ordered. Dismay. We begin a search, all to no avail. It's not easy to understand what could have happened. The schedule is thus reduced to 8.5 hours of power per day. Always we insisted on setting aside 48 hours to participate in the CQ WW CW contest with the callsign TO4WW. This participation was a major element when we obtained the authorisation to operate.

The first days were arduous. We had to work outside to assemble the antennas, unroll the coax and the radials, hammer in the pegs, prepare the area, erect the poles and the big GP. The instructions are strict and risks cannot be taken. There is no doctor and very little medication available. A major injury would mean the end of the DX-pedition. We must alternate between work and rest.

On 26 and 27 November we continued the installation and testing of the antennas. The V40 and V80E were mounted closest to the water. On the evening of the 27th tests on the low bands with the V80E were good, but the QRN on receive was dreadful. We would have to install receive antennas. A pennant is strung up in the trees and an 80m dipole is installed only 5m above the ground. The QRN is weaker on the horizontal dipole, but the noise level is abnormally high. On the pennant the QRN is above S5-S6. No doubt there are some

tropical storms in the area. This makes operation very difficult on 80 and 160m. Later a coaxial loop is made and installed, but the results proved mediocre.

On the 28th we finished installing and testing the antennas. We are ready for the contest. TO4WW will be active for 48 hours and TO4E will be active as the availability of operators permits. This will allow maximum use of the generator. Three operators will be dedicated to the contest and the other two will operate TO4E and can lend assistance. Surprise! A shuttle aircraft, scheduled just within the last few days, arrives at 1100 hours, but there are no barrels of fuel on board. This allows us to meet the island officer and to ask him if he could verify or locate the barrels we ordered. On verbal orders he confirms to the detachment chief that he is to give us the necessary fuel.

On the 29th at 0255 local time, five minutes before the beginning of the contest, the generator refuses to start. Due to the time it takes to analyse the problem and switch to the other generator, then restart, we lose 15 minutes. We were actually active for 46 hours due to two power outages, probably due to rain getting into the electrical system. During the night of the 29th/30th at 0016z and with the station on 40m, the SWR of the V80 goes abnormally high. The operator shouts for help! Zombie-like, two guys sluggishly emerge wearing head-band lamps and venture outside to analyse the situation. They find that a turtle has decided to lay its eggs at the base of the vertical. By her digging she has torn away several radials and has disturbed the ATU. Again, we lose time, but the turtle is in her home! We then decide that in future we must roll up the radial wires after each operating session and roll them out again for the next one. That's six 40m-long radials and ten 20m-long radials for the V80.

The pile-ups were huge. Many stations didn't understand why we were not working split.

They should have read the contest rules. At no time did we request 'up' as this would have caused a 10 kHz block of QRM on the band. Others complained that the CW was too fast. But they had plenty of time to practise, plus they could have also looked for TO4E. Finally we had only 4,100 QSOs in the TO4WW log with several dupes. The competition was tremendous for such a rare country. It was very hard to avoid the dupes seeing as the bands were saturated and our pile-up was naturally spread over 2 kHz. We chose the Multi-Single category. We never chased any multipliers and we were without the aid of the Internet or DX clusters. As a result our score remained modest.

On December 1st we returned to our limited schedule. If the stations we listened to were frustrated, in their comfy chairs, they can imagine what it was like for us. Wait for hours, occupy oneself as best as one can; no local pub, no TV (no power), no shopping. It's very hot, there are sharks in the water etc. It was very frustrating. In the evening, at dinner time, we then had power. The operators would continue operating until the power was cut off by 2245 hours local, and then eat after the detachment by flashlight and candlelight. Additionally, Pascal fell ill with an ear infection.

December 2nd. At the end of the day the detachment chief stated that we would have to reduce our hours of operation to conserve energy. We were existing on 5.25 hours per day. The contacts made by Didier, F5OGL; finding a solution was without results. So we reduced our operations. We had no choice. In our free time we would sometimes catch newborn young turtles as they left the sand. Our intention was to release them at night to prevent them from being eaten by the frigate birds and the crows. Frequently the gendarme would alert us. We would take all the pails and mess kits we could carry and meet up at the birth zone. As a result of our actions more than 1,000 turtles were placed in the water.

We hoped that we modestly contributed to the continuation of the species.

We found a working battery. It would recharge with the generator in five hours; we could have a station on a different schedule and so offer some additional QSOs. These QSOs would sometimes be dupes as we had to use paper logs. On battery we were forced to reduce the power to 20 or 30W, sometimes less. Pascal reduced the power to just less than 1W on December 15th. On 80m on December 12th just before sunrise, Dany was on CW making contact with North American stations. The power was limited to 70W. Happily the V80 worked well and the signals were workable. Showing up unexpectedly on the air would cause a reaction and several stations labelled us as a pirate.

December 10th. We found out that the tactical aircraft that was to come and get us had been postponed for two days. We had to change our airline tickets for the flight back to Paris. Jack, FR5ZU, proved to be very helpful. Our tickets were changed from the 18th to the 21st of December.

December 12th. Dany made contact with the military authorities responsible for the detachment. A new problem concerning power. His second-in-command called to give us an update, but communication was poor. The power outages caused thawing of the freezer elements. The cold room had broken down on November 18th and many of the frozen supplies were ruined. Basic nourishment was compromised, but we would survive. There are several coconut trees on Europa, plenty of fish and some wild goats. The baker made wonderful things with few ingredients. Right to the end we had our daily ration of bread.

On December 14th we decide to take down the beam seeing as a severe tropical depression, moving along the Mozambique Channel for 10 days now, was approaching Europa. On

December 15th we dismantled the V80 and the 6m beam. On the 16th we continue the dismantling and begin to collect up the equipment. The tropical depression arrives and spawns a cyclone christened Cela. We are worried. If the storm stays on its present course, no aircraft could come for several days due to the winds and the state of the runway. During the night the wind increases and the rain is torrential. Cela is upon us and the squalls register winds of up to 120 km/h. The weather instruments stop working. The eye of the storm arrives by 1200 hours, great calm, no wind, bright sunlight, scorching heat envelopes the air. Thousands of dragonflies come up from the swamp on the south side of the island. We prepare ourselves for the other side of the storm. In a short time the wind returns, but this time from the other direction. The window and door protection must be reconfigured.

By 1400 hours it's hell in paradise. The wind is coming from the ocean and the island vegetation no longer protects us. Gusts are observed of up to 130 to 140 km/h. Water and sand enters through joints in the doors and windows. Boxes must be placed high and the situation monitored. The next day sand is found stuck onto the outdoor walls right the way up to the gutters. The violent winds tear the roofing from the dining hall and the kitchen. Detachment personnel find refuge in a small building. For the moment it's impossible to walk around outdoors. Stones pelt the doors and torn away branches become dangerous projectiles. The V40, the only antenna left in place, is very resilient. It is mounted without guys and it twists hard in the gusts of wind.

On the evening of December 17th the detachment military personnel rejoin us in the weather building. We organised the place to shelter 12 additional people. Only the detachment chief and the radio chief stayed in their premises, which remained intact. The kitchen had to be repaired and an improvised

dining hall had to be made. Thankfully, the main station was already packed, and this was a relief.

On the 18th we took down the last antenna and finished packing. At the end of the day we found out that our return was again delayed. Aircraft do not want to circle in active cyclone zones. The message was 'maybe' on Sunday, December 21st. We have already changed our tickets to Paris once. Dany asks if December 23rd looks promising and could support a possible return.

On December 19th Pascal suggests that we put a station back on the air. It's a good idea since our return time is not yet known and tension is mounting. Dany gives the green light, we unpack the FT-1000 and the multi-band vertical. By 1520z the station is back on the air. Again the stations with no information cry 'pirate'.

December 20th. The freezers have to start up several hours before the aircraft arrives, so we have a final opportunity to get on the air and to make an additional 1,200 QSOs.

On Sunday morning, the 21st, the aircraft is confirmed, we take down the final station and repack it. The freight is ready by 0830 hours and we take it to the runway. The aircraft is there as expected. The relief detachment deplanes with a lot of freight. The flight crew signal to us that they wish to return quickly; they are going to eat where they are, in the shade of the aircraft, and that they have 12 meals and only five people, so they invite us to join them. It was delectable. It had been over 15 days since we'd had a meal complete with fresh produce, cheese, fruit, yoghurt etc. We slid the excess into the pockets of the gendarme who supported us during our stay. The amateur radio team is alone onboard for the return trip, since the detachment leaving the island won't depart until tomorrow, December 22nd. We damaged a propeller during take-off from Europa and the aircraft

stayed unavailable for one day. We saw the C-160 Transall parked at St Denis Gillot Airport just prior to our take-off for Paris on December 23rd. Our freight was being held in customs as a result of the Christmas and New Year holidays. The offices were closed, making it impossible for the freight to leave before January 5th.

On the Monday morning we called Air France to confirm our reservations. Oh no! Our reservations were not confirmed. We called Jack, FR5ZU, and together we went directly to the Air France office to confirm our flight. A big thank you to Jack for coming with us and helping work out the necessary flight changes due to cyclone Cela.

In conclusion, during 210 hours of operation we made 34,000 QSOs, also a good showing in RTTY and PSK of 4,000 QSOs thanks to Jean-Louis, F5NHJ, and Eric, F5JKK. Our low-band effort was limited due to available military electrical power. All in all, from 30 to 160m there were 6,377 QSOs, and, for the first time, 6m QSOs were made with ZS stations by meteor scatter or tropospheric propagation. A ZS-FR/E first also with a QSO on 2m in meteor scatter.

A big thank you also to all who contributed to making this DX-pedition a reality. Our Internet URL is <http://europa2003.free.fr/> where our most generous sponsors are listed. You'll also find lots of information with logos and links to our sponsors such as :

The Clipperton DX Club, the catalyst for organising this operation by Didier, F5OGL, and Rafik, F5CQ!

For their very important contributions:

The French National Defence Ministry, the Army, the Air Force, the French Navy and the National Gendarmerie, Météo France La Réunion, Mr Quillet Jacques.

The Army Forces in the South Indian Ocean Zone, the 2nd RPIMa, MS La Grandière, the 42nd RT, the RTNO and l'EMIAZD of Rennes, the federation of sport and art clubs of the Defence Forces, The GMPA.

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For the loan of material or acquisition of facilities:

F2YT, Radio 33, Titanex, DXSR Antennas, SARDIF, Radio DX Center, BATIMA Electronic, F6KOP, Mix Win, RCKrtty, CT K1EA, MMTTY, Dunestar, F5CWU, F5PED, F5LGE, F1AGS, FR1GZ.

To ZS6RO for transferring packet radio to e-mail, to the pilot stations and all who helped facilitate operations. To Nob, JF2MBF, and JA2MNB for the Japanese Web site. A big thank you also to our XYLs.

Thanks to Ron St.Laurent, ND5S, and to John Butcher, G3LAS, for the English translation.

The Clipperton DX club staff, F5OGL, F5CQ and TO4E operators, F5CW, F5JKK, F5NHJ, F5PTM, F5IRO.

TO4E extra

Europa DX-pedition (translated from the Clipperton DX Club Newsletter by G3ZAY)

TO4E/TO4WW went QRT at around 2000 UTC on December 20th, 2003. Around 34,000 QSOs were in the log, which can now be consulted at <http://europa2003.free.fr/>

The following message was sent to the Clipperton DX Club on December 29th by Dany, F5CW:

Firstly I would like to wish you and yours a good 2004. We've all been back since early on December 24th and were welcomed at Orly by the F6KOP team, who are planning a DX-pedition to 5V7C in March. I hope to join them for that trip.

TO4E/TO4WW is over. As you know, we were very frustrated by the lack of power, as were the many ops who were waiting for us on the low bands. Only 34,000 QSOs in 200 hours of operating. Despite uncomfortable conditions, we did our best to be on the air as much as possible and even did a few hours on battery power and QRP (less than 50W), with an old battery we found on site and with lighting from a candle on top of the FT-100D. Pascal even kept a pile-up going with the power knob on zero, giving about 100mW output.

The generators were there – we had five diesel units: 5KVA, 12KVA, 2 x 35KVA, and 1 x 40KVA. But we had to respect the military's rules on use of fuel. Europa, being a nature reserve, is only allowed to hold small stocks of potential pollutants. A few years ago we could have used a group of five wind

generators that produced 200KVA but the eco-lobbyists demanded they be dismantled, arguing that the blades were killing the birds. A study is taking place at the moment suggests the answer may be solar power.

I would like to thank the pilot stations for all their help, including those who worked behind the scenes: Laurent, F8BBL, Flo, F5CWU etc. Your help was very valuable and it was important to get the bulletins out in order to calm down the more vocal operators!

We will soon be sending photos and videos to all our sponsors. Almost 5GB of digital images are on disc as well as three hours of raw video.

The QSLs will not be printed quickly. We want to make a high quality card and ask you to be patient. Didier, F5OGL, our main organiser, will assemble the team to decide on the QSL design.

Thank you to Richard, ZS6RO, for relaying packet messages over the web to Rafik, F5CQ, and Didier, F5OGL. But usually of course our packet station was occupied with the pile-ups.

In conclusion, 34,000 QSOs are not enough. But they are more than were made in the last 10 or 20 years by the operators who were able to get there sporadically – like Jacques, FR5ZU, who gave us considerable assistance. And we were able to activate 160 and 80m, make a few QSOs on 6m (meteor scatter and tropo) and also on 2m. And we were on RTTY and PSK thanks to Jean-Louis and Eric.

We are definitely ready to head off there again as soon as possible – with other solutions to the power problem in our luggage.

And despite a few moaners huffing and puffing into their microphones and incapable of following the DX station's instructions, 'ham spirit' remains our watchword.

The Team:

- Dany F5CW, soon to be 5V7C, FM/F5CW
- Eric F5JJK, often on RTTY and 6m/MS, soon perhaps in FR5 or FY5
- Pascal F5PTM, CW above all, but sometimes RTTY and SSB. His first Dxpedition!
- Freddy F5IRO, CW & SSB, a few RTTY QSOs. Our turtle catcher who released them safely into the sea each evening. Soon in FK8 perhaps.
- Jean-Louis F5NHJ, often on RTTY and SSB, and named "CinquéNové" for his Italian language skills.

The Stations:

- Station 1: Yaesu FT-1000MP, ACOM 1000 amplifier, 3 ele tribander, V80E/V40/dipole.
- Station 2: Yaesu FT-920, GP3W / GP/ Dipole
- Station 3: Digimodes, IC-706 / FT-847, GP, Dipole.
- Station 6 metres: Yaesu FT-100D, Beam 406DXSR, GP V50.

F6AJA, Jean-Michel Duthilleul, editor of the French language DX bulletin, "Les Nouvelles DX," has written an article on Europa Island, with photos of the 18 QSL cards from past operations from Europa. Go to "published articles" at <http://LesNouvellesDX.free.fr>.

OC-264 – Maria Atoll 2003

by Nando Rubino, IT9YRE

Claudio, I1SNW, and I had just returned from Micronesia after activating two islands: Nomwin, OC-253, and Tà, OC-254. Although very tired, we were already planning our next trip to the Pacific Ocean. We were thinking about the possibility of activating two Polynesian islands, one of them, Hereheretue, OC-052, on the most wanted list - and the other, Maria Atoll, which would be a new one.

Hereheretue has about 10 residents plus three people at a meteorological station who are relieved every three months by military boats. No other regular boats cross the seas over there. Of course, there are no airports on the island and absolutely no hotel or similar accommodation is available. The island is quite a way quite a way from Tahiti, about 280 nautical miles.

The second group is an Atoll named Maria and its Polynesian name is 'Hull'. There are absolutely no residents. It consists of four very small islands named North Island, where we were based with our tent, then East Island, South Island and West Island.

Maria Atoll is more than 350 nautical miles from Tahiti and lies at the northern end of the Austral Islands group. Again there are no regular boats from Tahiti or the other Austral islands. The only way to reach this atoll is by private boat. It was very hard to find a good boat able to reach Maria, particularly due to the bad sea conditions and the weather over there. Finally, after many e-mails, one company answered, 'Tane-Catamaran-Charter' based on Raiatea, which is close to Tahiti. We asked them about the possibility of making such a trip and the first answer was, "Generally we can visit Bora-Bora, Huaine, Moorea and so on, but your request is very

unusual. We can try, but leave us some time in order to prepare the necessary plan".

Meanwhile we were also thinking about the possibility of taking with us a good CW operator and for this reason we spoke with our friend Alfio, IT9EJW, who is also our QSL printer. Initially it was very difficult, but finally Alfio joined us, giving a perfect number of operators: 2 for SSB and 1 for CW. This sounded good! Claudio, I1SNW, was the logistics man who handled the necessary paperwork in order to obtain the FO licences and keep in touch with the owners of the boat, Mrs Martine and Mr Christian. After a very long time we received from them the answer we'd been hoping for, "Yes, we shall be with you on this crazy trip!".

Due to the local wind conditions, the first island to be visited was to be Maria (Austral) and then Hereheretue (Tuamotu). The owners of Tane were estimating about three days to reach Maria and then about five more days to Hereheretue, with another three days for the return trip to Tahiti. Initially we planned three days of operations for Maria and two for Hereheretue. We spoke to the owner of the boat about the necessity to find some equipment, such as a 2 kW generator, some good car batteries, chairs, a table, tents etc. and last but not least, the total cost.

In the meantime the Telecommunications in Papeete had informed us that our licences should be OK, but the big problem was that we would have to collect them personally on Papeete – with absolutely no chance of having them sent by fax, e-mail or normal mail. Of course 'Murphy' showed up and did his best to work against us. Also, the Tane-Catamaran

answer was not very good for us – and very bad news about the cost.

The rent for the boat, all included, was 30,900 Euros, with absolutely no chance of any discount. This news didn't sound good for the team because we had to add our airline tickets and also some days in a hotel in Papeete. Anyway, finally the hard decision emerged, “OK, let's go ahead!”. The route for Alfio, IT9EJW, and myself, IT9YRE, would be Catania-Rome-Paris, where we would meet up with Claudio, I1SNW, coming from Turin. From there with Air France to Los Angeles (a stopover there) and finally, about two hours later, we would depart to our final destination, Papeete.

We arrived in Papeete at 0600 local time on 27 September. At this point in the story, our best friend, ‘Murphy’, showed up again. Claudio's luggage registered an excess weight of 5 kg, which meant an extra charge of 362 Euros. Also, the final destination of my luggage was wrongly indicated as Paris instead of Papeete. This was due to a mistake at the check-in in Catania. During our wait in Paris, the local check-in assured us that this had been corrected, but of course it was not true! Naturally, when we arrived in Papeete, the luggage was still in Paris. It arrived two days later and meant there would be only two days of operation from Maria Island and only one from Hereheretue.

Aboard the Tane, the owners were talking about the difficulty of reaching Maria Atoll due to the very dangerous reef about 800m from the beach. On a military map we could see a very small gap, only about 10m wide – but more than sufficient for us!

Finally, on 29 September at 0600 local time we were at Faaa Airport - with our luggage! ‘Murphy’ showed up again when the check-in staff asked to see our FO licences, so we had to go immediately to the MPT office to collect them. At 1400 local time on 29 September, a

little bit depressed, we were able to leave Papeete. On the boat we had the opportunity to put up a small dipole so that our friends, Silvano, KB5GL, Gaetano, IT9GAI, and Fred, N6AWD could be kept informed.

The wind was strong and our speed was around 14 knots. After three days of good sailing the wind dropped and it was necessary to continue very slowly using two very small engines. The owners of the boat, showing us the map, were continuously pessimistic that the passage through the reef would probably be dangerous! Finally on the fifth day at sea we saw Maria Atoll. At 1400 local time we were just in front of it. The reef was in fact quite a way from the beach - about 1 km.

Mr Christian left on a very small tender in order to find the gap and about one hour later, when he came back, he was not optimistic at all. Anyway, we decided to try. We went to the reef with the generator, antennas and two radios. During the trip we saw a beautiful big whale, no more than 10m from us. When we were just in front of the gap, Mr Christian waited for the right time to go ahead, but unfortunately he didn't quite time it right. The result was that the generator, the luggage, the camera, the antennas and the radios were suddenly all under water! Finally, we managed to enter the lagoon - but at what price! Not yet satisfied, about 20m from the sandy beach, we also saw a small shark - not so dangerous, said Mr Christian.

Believe me, we were very tired after all these experiences. Anyway, we then rested for a short while on the beach, waiting for Mr Christian to come back with Alfio and the only remaining radio and antenna. Finally we were able to assemble the tent, the vertical antenna - and powered the radio from a car battery. Despite our poor situation, the propagation was very good, especially to JA and W. Of course, it was also good enough for Europe. We were very happy to hear Roger, G3KMA, show up in the big pile-up and he

gave us OC-264 as a provisional reference number. This was a great goal for us!

During Alfio's operation on CW, Claudio and I were walking along the beautiful beach, 99% composed of coral with wonderful shells of all sizes. Please think about the very rare and even unique world of Maria Atoll. You have to know that the only information about it has come from scientists who reached the place about 85 years ago. Time on Maria Atoll is fixed for ever – at least we really hope so! On the beach we also noticed an enormous whale's jaw and under this, dozens of beautiful crustaceans. Unfortunately the forest on this side was impenetrable and this was perhaps fortunate for us, as it was probably also a little bit dangerous for humans.

During the (very dark) night, we had to minimise the use of our car batteries in order to keep them as long as possible for our equipment. Of course, outside the tent the silence was impressive and also a little bit frightening. Early the next morning, Christian came from the Tane to visit us in order to ask what we needed, but our only need was to make QSOs! Unfortunately, at about 0326 local time on 5 October, the battery started to die. The last call in our log was K3MH. After this we began to dismantle everything in order to be ready to leave the island as soon as Christian came from the boat. Finally the island had regained its natural balance. Of course we were very sad, but at the same time very happy to have done a good job for the IOTA hunters.

I think it is superfluous to say that we were all totally agreed that we cancel the second trip to Hereheretue (OC-052), at least for this year. The DX-pedition had given more than 1,700 stations the opportunity to add OC-264 to their IOTA score, despite the fact that Alfio was operating CW without a PC and with paddle and paper log only. However, our best friend, Murphy, was still waiting for us. When we were between Moorea and Tahiti, the

ocean was very big and the wind impressive, so bad that the spinnaker of the boat was torn. Finally, at 1500 on 7 October, we arrived back safely in Papeete. We were quite lucky to be able to leave early from Faaa Airport after only having to pay a small surcharge. During our stay in Papeete we had also the pleasure of meeting Antoine, FO5RK/3D2AG, an operator active from Rapa Island and Rotuma. It was great to have a cup of coffee with him while we talked about past DX-peditions and of course, our future plans.

Last but not least: do you remember our best friend, Murphy? Well, of course our luggage (IT9EJW and IT9YRE) did not arrive until two days after our arrival in Catania.

The final result of this DX-pedition was as follows:

	QSOs		
Europe	243	=	15.00%;
Asia	592	=	36.40%;
Africa	10	=	0.60%;
N. America	620	=	38.15%;
S. America	96	=	5.91%;
Oceania	64	=	3.94%.

The total cost of this DX-pedition was 20,900 Euros! Our sincere thanks go to Silvano, KB5GL, our pilot station, for his hard work - and doing an excellent job in getting in touch with our families - and to Gaetano, IT9GAI, our second pilot station who, with Mauro, I1JQJ, and all his colleagues on the 425 DX News, does a great job with all the information on the bulletin.

Sincere thanks also to all our sponsors (IREF, CDXC, GDXF, EUDXF, the Clipperton DX CLUB, ECO Antenne, DAE, Taverna Naxos, Shogun Travel and MDXC) and, last but definitely not least, our great friend 'Toshi', Toshiyuki Saito, JM1PXC, for his big contribution and friendly help in all our DX-peditions.

CU4/G3TXF – a short winter break in the Azores

Nigel, G3TXF

CU4/G3TXF was active from Graciosa for three days in February 2004. The trip coincided with the FOC Marathon (an annual QSO party among the 500 members of this CW operators' club).

Graciosa (CU4) is the second smallest of the nine main islands of the Azores archipelago. Corvo (CU9) is the smallest. Graciosa is one of the five islands that make up the central group [EU-175] in the Azores. The other islands in EU-175 are Terceira (CU3), San Jorge (CU5), Pico (CU6) and Faial (CU7).

Graciosa was chosen as the destination for two reasons. Firstly G3TXF has never worked any CU4 (or CU5) station from home, although he has confirmed CW QSOs with each of the other Azores prefixes. This suggested CU4 was rare. Secondly CU4 is described as being much flatter than other islands in the group. Most of the Azores are characterised by high peaks and sheer cliffs into the ocean. For all-round coverage flatter locations are usually to be preferred.

Checking the OH2BUA DX Cluster Database revealed that there had been no significant activity from CU4 during the past five years, and absolutely no activity at all on CW. So CU4 it was to be.

There are only three small guest houses on Graciosa (CU4), and on an initial inspection, none of them seemed suitable for radio. They are all within the main town (Santa Cruz) and none has any open space for antennas.

However a chance e-mail to Gabriel CU3AN on Terceira (who sometimes operates as CU4AP from Graciosa) resulted in an invitation to stay at his holiday house on CU4. This was a nice surprise. Gabriel's house is

located in the village of Fontes about one mile from the main town, and is perched on the side of a hill with a clear view from the NW through N to the SE. Although this is an ideal take-off from CU4 for both the USA and Europe, space for antennas was limited.

John G4IRN had kindly lent me his SteppIR 40m-6m vertical (which John had used successfully on S79 and FH). The SteppIR vertical has the major attraction of being a true quarter-wave on each band, without the necessary compromise and losses caused by using traps. The SteppIR vertical worked well. Only four radials were used. Others would have been added, had the stay on CU4 been longer. John G4IRN's SteppIR vertical provided fast and easy access to the seven bands from 40m to 10m. However the greater challenge were the LF antennas for 80m and 160m.

There was no space to put out a horizontal 80m dipole (let alone a 160m dipole). Also the presence of overhead power cables close to the roof of the house further restricted the scope for LF antennas. Fortunately a 33' portable fibre-glass pole had been taken along 'just in case' and it turned out to be most useful. Initially an inverted-L antenna was installed for 80m, with about 33' of vertical wire and 33' horizontal. The vertical was 'tuned' against the other half of an 80m dipole just dangling over the roof down to the ground in the garden next door. The 80m vertical antenna worked surprisingly well with some 500 QSOs being made. The greater challenge however was 160m.

After using the 80m antenna for just two nights, on the third night an extra 66' of wire was added to the inverted-L. The antenna wire was then literally wrapped around the

building. The lower end of the dipole was just 'wound up' into a ball of wire until it resonated (vaguely!). During the last hour of the FOC Marathon, much to my surprise, some 20 UK stations were worked on 160m.

The CU4/G3TXF operation lasted just over three days and netted 3,600 CW QSOs. 600 QSOs were in the FOC Marathon and 3,000 were general CW QSOs, mainly on the

WARC bands. Following CU4 a few days were spent holidaying on CU3 and CU2, but this time there was no radio!

The Azores (CU) are by no means rare as a country, and even the central group (EU-175) is not uncommon, but hopefully this short operation will have at least provided a few with a useful new prefix on CW for WPX: CU4.

DX-ing Highs and Lows

Roger Western, G3SXW g3sxw@compuserve.com

In quick succession I've just experienced a DX-ing highlight and then a DX-ing lowlight. Their very extremes, coming one right after the other, make them somewhat poignant.

The High

The highlight came first. I was tuning idly around on Saturday evening, Feb 21st, looking for any interesting DX, as one does. (Do you remember those pre-Cluster days when folks used to tune around?) It was 1840z, well over an hour after sunset in Surrey and we were still in the depths of winter, so the HF bands would be pretty much closed for the day. I checked 30m and heard only some loud Europeans. Twenty was full of Ws and VEs in the ARRL CW contest, but I was not taking part in that event this year, so I moved on. Yes, 15m still had quite a few signals, but they were really weak and only the 'big gun' W and VEs.

A quick spin of the VFODial showed that 17 was empty - just background hiss. But the WARC bands often seem dead when there is in fact propagation, so I tuned across the

bottom end again a little more slowly. The filters were open (600 Hz) so as not to miss anything as I passed by. Still nothing. But just then I heard a fluttery signal send 'CQ ZK3SB UP' at about 32 wpm. He was only RST 539, but easy to copy on this empty band. Wow! This would be a new all-time band-point for me, having previously only ever worked ZK3 on 20 and 15m many years ago. I had been hoping to hear this new expedition before they shutdown.

In rapid succession I stabbed at 'A=B' and then 'Split', pressed the T-F button and then swung the B VFO up about 1.5 kHz. All this took only a second or two, but by this time he had already started the next CQ call. It seemed that he had no callers, but I didn't have time to check on that. Nor did I have time to check the beam heading for Tokelau - the D3W rotary dipole is quite directional and it could be end-on to him for all I knew, but I would have to worry about that later. After all, if he had just that moment started up, then to get in before the pile-up develops would make it a lot easier to get the QSO. At that critical moment reaction speed is of the essence. Every second counts.

He finished that second call and I immediately sent 'G3SXW' just once, matching his 32 wpm, having no idea where he was listening. When a DX-pedition CW operator says 'up' it usually means somewhere between one and three kHz, but if he happens to have tight RX filters then you need to be very lucky to hit on the right amount of split the first time. If he is a European operator it is likely to be nearer to one kHz split, but if he is American or Japanese it might be nearer to two kHz. This is only a generalisation and was of no value to me at the time anyway because I had no idea of his nationality (later determined as Italian). My instant guess of 1.5 kHz split was merely hedging my bets.

It was the first call and I sent my callsign just once. He came back instantly, sending 'G3SXW 5NN'. I replied with '5NN TU' and he sent 'TU ZK3SB UP'. Wow and double-wow! The whole encounter had taken less than twenty seconds from the time that I first heard that polar signal, yet I had a new all-time band-point in the bag, increasing my 17m DXCC score to 292 worked.

It also somewhat restored my faith in the operators of that expedition. ZK3 is most needed in Europe, but almost all of the DX Cluster spots that I had seen were for times/frequencies when there was no propagation to Western Europe. They seemed to have been working almost entirely into North America and Japan.

This was an example of just plain good luck. Or was it? There is an old saying something about 'you make your own luck'. Whatever. I was happy and went QRT with a silly grin on my face. I just love those short, sharp, snappy QSOs. The chap on the other end really knew how to do it.

The Low

By coincidence the very next time that I switched on the rig definitely did not put a

grin on my face. This was the very next morning, also on 17m.

Scanning the bands I came across a small pile-up of loud Europeans all sending just their callsigns. To find out who they were calling I tuned down the band a little and soon found an extremely weak station sending at about 45 wpm. I could copy him at best 449, but he was 339 in rapid QSB most of the time. Who was he? Should I be interested? Firstly, I wanted to find out if I 'needed' him.

He sent 'DL1', paused for a split second and then repeated 'DL1' and then again, and again. Presumably he had picked up a partial callsign and was trying to work this DL1 and so wanted all the other stations to stand by. But in my view this tactic just doesn't work. Sending DL1 at 45 wpm takes only a second. Only a very small proportion of those calling in the pile-up will just happen to be listening at that precise moment. After all, callers spend most of their time transmitting, so they will be pretty unlikely to hear this ultra-brief instruction. He did complete a contact with the DL1, but only after about ten transmissions.

The next few QSOs were almost as time-consuming but – you've guessed it – after several minutes he had still not sent his own callsign. Then the policemen started asking 'DX?' and 'call?' and 'de?'. His signal was very weak, so it quickly became unreadable. Perhaps he finally sent his callsign, but no-one would have been able to hear it anyway. The QRM eventually subsided and he was still there belting it out at 45 wpm and struggling to make any contacts.

If I had been the more impatient type I would have left that frequency long before, but I was not pressed for time and was curious to find out who was operating in such an inefficient way. Ah, he finally sent his call, just once at high speed. But I couldn't copy it, seeing as he was in QSB at that moment. Don't you just hate it when that happens? I thought it started

with a '5'. After another three or four QSOs and 4-5 minutes later he sent it again. Yet again he was in QSB, but I confirmed that it started with '5'. Now almost all the callsigns starting with a figure five are to the S or SE of UK - and sure enough the signal seemed to be broadly peaking from SE (or NW) on my rotary dipole, which I had been swinging around wildly to try and peak the signal.

Finally, after at least 20 minutes I heard the prefix. I think that this was only the fourth time that he had sent his callsign, and still at 45 wpm. In those 20 minutes he had made, I would guess, about 15 QSOs. And I wouldn't be surprised if many of those were logged with wrong callsigns. Anyway, I realised that I didn't need it on 17m, so I left the frequency for pastures new, not bothering even to find out his suffix.

But how easy it is to operate in ways that alienate lots of folks, whilst in the meantime satisfying too few other folks with a contact. When the signals are so very weak, maybe 45 wpm is not best and ultra-short transmissions

are not the ideal way to control a pile-up. If he had sent 'DL1? DL1? ONLY' at 30 wpm he would have secured that contact far more quickly in the long run and improved his QSO rate.

The Moral

The sharp contrast of these two experiences, coming as they did, one straight after the other, gave me pause for thought. How easy it is to do it right and how easy it is to do it wrong. And how easy it is to give a great deal of either pleasure or displeasure by use of different operating tactics. And how the number of stations put into the log in a given time can be so many or so few. And how being able to send good CW (or type) does not necessarily make for a good CW pile-up operator. But most of all how easy it is to be constantly surprised by the wide range of experiences and the fantastic variation available from our wonderful hobby. You just never know what's coming next.

NB: it only a hobby!

The Carolina Windom – work the DX and keep the XYL happy

Stan Rudcenko, GØKBL *rudcenko@aol.com*

I am lucky enough to have a suburban house (in Cheam) with large trees some 200' apart in the E-W direction, although luck had little to do with it as this was my hidden agenda when buying the house in the first place.

Ideal for a doublet, said John, our club secretary, which was true, but with a gruesome ladder hanging right in the middle of the lawn it was also a quick way to a divorce. To stay in the back garden, largely

out of sight because of trees was the only answer to suburban marital harmony. Up went the Butternut painted to blend in with the greenery.

It worked quite well on DX, especially on 30m. The main drawback was that anything over 200W literally lit up the neighbourhood, switching on the floodlights in several neighbouring properties. The neighbours never found out, thanks to the large number of

foxes in the area moving freely around and turning on the floodlights anyway. Young ones chew coax cable too if you let them. The trees and the doublet were the obvious answer, but what to do about the feeder hanging in the middle of the lawn? Asymmetric dipoles, fed at quarter wave, worked - but usually on one band only.

The Carolina Windom (which is not really a windom) fitted the bill better. The antenna is 133' long, but has a shorter 50' leg, so the coax feeder does not hang down in the middle of the garden. It covers 80 to 10m. Fed by nearly 200' of coax, it does not even need an ATU. The main drawback is that it is heavy, thanks to two chunky baluns, and it tends to sag a lot, although there is now also a new, lighter, lower-power version.

Does it work? The Windom at 50' predictably out-performed the Butternut on all bands. It also out-performed a half-size G5RV on 20m and on 10m in most directions, vastly so on other bands. Subjectively, I work (CW and RTTY) maybe four out of every five DX stations I hear and I also have some nice DX on QRPp.

Using legal power, the Windom seems competitive with other Gs on 80-20m in terms of DX worked, except for the lucky few who can work stations I can't even hear. It slightly underperforms on 15 and 10m, where the beams clearly win. But 17 and 12m seem alright, if only because of the fewer beams around.

The performance in terms of directionality beats a dipole by a wide margin and seems to correspond to data provided by RadioWorks on their website (www.radioworks.com). I have also tried their Superloop delta loops. These are full-size on either 80 or 40m with a stub allowing operations on all the higher bands. The 80m loop works well, but does not out-perform the Windom on any other band in any direction.

The 40m loop, which I settled for, outperforms the Windom by up to one S-point in predictable directions on 40m, but does not work as well on 30 or 15m.

It is quite directional on 20m and often one S-point better on the remaining bands. A doublet would probably work well at 50' in some directions and come cheaper, except for those bits hanging down in the middle of the lawn.

My coax-fed combination of the 40m loop and a Windom CW80 covers 80-10m, provides reasonably competitive performance on all bands and is much less conspicuous than any other multiband wire system both from the XYL and neighbourhood point of view.

Even I have to focus hard when looking out of the kitchen window to check if it is still there. (It is not always there because of high winds or inquisitive squirrels, but that is a different story and I can put it back up quickly with some precision shooting with a catapult).

A curious neighbour asked my wife what is it I do with all these wires. He talks to aliens, replied my wife calmly. I am not sure what the neighbours made of it, but whatever it is, I think I have been classified as harmless and not just from the EMC point of view.

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G3ZAY's Island Reading List

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I can't always be on the air from an exotic IOTA destination, but when I'm not, the next best thing is to settle down with a good book on an island theme.

Islands have been a favourite setting for novelists since the form was invented and numerous academic dissertations have been produced to explain why this should be so. Clearly there are advantages to placing characters in an isolated setting where their options are constrained, outside influences are minimised, and the social dynamics can evolve or have evolved more rapidly.

Early science fiction writers like Jules Verne and H.G. Wells took advantage of the isolation, and of our still incomplete geographical knowledge which allowed readers to accept the idea of unknown islands, to postulate new environments which their successors would have to place on other planets.

Apart from novels, there is an almost inexhaustible supply of factual books about individual islands and groups. So let's get on to my list of favourites.

Islands in fiction

I have to start with the classics:

- *Robinson Crusoe* (Daniel Defoe) was published in 1719 and was based on the true story of Alexander Selkirk who was abandoned on the islands of Juan Fernandez (CEØZ), SA-005, off the coast of Chile.
- *Coral Island* (R.M. Ballantyne), written in 1858, is a story of three

teenaged boys shipwrecked on an imaginary Pacific island and was staple fare for young readers in the past. Apparently Robert Louis Stevenson acknowledged it as a formative influence, but gave the topic a rather different treatment in his own book *Treasure Island* (see below). Ballantyne went on to write numerous other novels, including several set in Hudson Bay, where he worked for the Hudson Bay Company after leaving school in Scotland.

- *Treasure Island* (Robert Louis Stevenson) was published in 1881 and its characters Jim Hawkins, Long John Silver and Ben Gunn are familiar to the entire English-speaking world.
- *Swiss Family Robinson* (Johann David Wyss) is more familiar as the 1960 Disney movie starring John Mills, but it was originally a novel by a Swiss clergyman written for his children, one of whom went on to edit and publish the manuscript. It was my all-time favourite film when I was eight years old!
- *Lord of the Flies* (William Golding) is a modern classic which tells of schoolchildren stranded on an island without adults and clearly acknowledges a debt to *Coral Island*. Enjoy it as a simple story about the veneer of civilisation being stripped away - or see it as an allegory for good versus evil, east versus west, DX-ers versus rag-chewers or whatever you choose.

- *Island* (Aldous Huxley) is his last novel and a Utopian vision to contrast with *Brave New World*.

Hammond Innes has written some of the most outstanding island-based adventure novels. The following are well worth a read - if you can find them, seeing as they seem to be going out of print fast:

- *Atlantic Fury* is a fast-moving adventure set in the St Kilda Archipelago, *EU-059* (although it has been renamed and moved very slightly from its real position).
- For a detailed description of the Minquiers, *EU-099*, about 10 miles south of Jersey, you can't do better than *The Wreck of the Mary Deare*. This was the book that inspired me to mount the first ever IOTA DX-pedition to Maitresse Ile with Don, G3XTT.
- It is not strictly an island story, but I can't resist mentioning *The Land God Gave to Cain*. There is an island connection, seeing as some of the action takes place around the remote Quebec town of Sept Iles, which is the base for IOTA expeditioners visiting the VE2 IOTA groups further east along the north shore of the St Lawrence (including the nearby Seven Islands, *NA-125*). But the main radio connection is that the action is kicked off when an amateur in the UK picks up a distress call from a crashed aircraft in the VO2 hinterland. Pedants have to overlook the fact that this happens on 80m during the day when such DX would be virtually impossible.

Iceland, *EU-021*, fans will enjoy *Running Blind* by Desmond Bagley. This is a cold-war spy chase by Land Rover across the interior of

Iceland. I was able to visit many of the locations a few years ago when, with GØPCE, I rented a 4-wheel drive vehicle and spent 10 days criss-crossing the island on the summer tracks. Highly recommended.

Compton Mackenzie must get a mention for *Whisky Galore*, which is based on the true story of the wreck of the SS Politician on the island of Eriskay. There is also a popular old movie which was shot on Barra. This is my excuse for introducing a bit of pub trivia: everyone knows that the word whisky comes from the Gaelic for water (of life), but the word 'galore' is also Gaelic from 'go leor', meaning sufficient. QRX for G3ZAY's Gaelic QSO Guide (and watch out for RFX's crossword clues)!

More recently I have enjoyed:

- *The Weight of Water* by Anita Shreve. This is set on the Isles of Shoals, *NA-217*, off New England and explores a 19th century murder which took place on one of the smaller islands.
- *The Shipping News* by Annie Proulx, which describes a family moving to one of the remoter corners of Newfoundland, *NA-027*. The setting is loosely based on St Anthony at the tip of the northern peninsula where I spent several days waiting for suitable weather to fly up to the Isle of Ponds, *NA-044*. There is also a movie, but the book is much richer.
- *Snow Falling on Cedars* is a murder mystery-cum-courtroom drama based on an island off the NW coast of the USA. A sub-theme details the treatment of Japanese Americans during World War 2. Again there is a movie which works well, but requires concentration.

- *Island* by Alistair Macleod is a truly wonderful collection of short stories set in the Gaelic-speaking communities on Cape Breton Island, *NA-010*. Strongly recommended. And if you enjoy the short stories, there is a novel, *No Great Mischief*, about early Scottish immigrants to Canada.
- *Further than the Furthest Thing* (Zinnie Harris) is actually a play performed recently by the National Theatre about Tristan da Cunha. It is set in the context of the evacuation about 40 years ago when the dormant volcano erupted, but introduces dramatic fictional themes about food shortages at an earlier time.

Non-fiction

This is a huge category and it will probably be necessary to come back to it in a later article, if anyone is interested. Some of my favourites, in no particular order, are:

- *An Island Out of Time* (Tom Horton) – a nice title for a book about Smith Island in *NA-140* that is disappearing into the waters of the Chesapeake Bay, but still retains a way of life (and an English accent) from previous centuries. If you can get there, stay at the Inn of Silent Music, run by a couple of retired university lecturers. But don't expect to operate, seeing as the power line noise off dirty overhead insulators can be S9++.
- *Island Going* by the naturalist Robert Atkinson describes visits in the 1930s to a number of remote Hebridean Islands including North Rona & Sula Sgeir, *EU-010*, the Monachs, *EU-111*, the Flannans, *EU-118*, St Kilda *EU-059*, and the Shiant, *EU-112*.
- *The Farthest Hebrides* by Alasdair Alpin MacGregor is a more romantic approach to describing the same outer islands covered by *Island Going*. MacGregor's portrayal of the islands was not universally applauded and Compton Mackenzie (owner of the Shiant prior to the Nicolson family) allegedly introduced a buffoonish character, Hamish Hector McKay, to his stories to ridicule MacGregor's prose style.
- *From the Alleghenies to the Hebrides* is a fascinating autobiography by Margaret Fay Shaw describing how an American woman came to live on the island of Canna, *EU-008*. Her husband, John Lorne Campbell, gifted Canna to the National Trust for Scotland in 1981.
- *Sea Room* (Adam Nicolson) is all about the author's love for the Shiant Islands, *EU-112*, which were given to him by his father and which he plans to pass on to his own son. Intending IOTA DX-peditioners should contact the Nicolson family before visiting. See <http://www.shiantisles.net/> for more information.
- *An Island to Oneself* (Tom Neale) describes the six years that the author spent living alone on the island of Suwarrow, *OC-080*, in the N. Cooks. The full text is available online at http://members.shaw.ca/tvds01/tom_neale/IslandOneself.htm. At least one IOTA QSL from Suwarrow has a picture of a memorial erected on the island to commemorate Neale's stay.

There are some island groups which have spawned an industry in their own right. Closest to home, the St Kilda Archipelago, *EU-059* (apart from the main island of Hirta, there is Dun, Soay, and Boreray - as well as

several smaller rocks and stacks), has yielded a large number of history and picture books. My main recommendation would be *The Life and Death of St Kilda* by Tom Steel, but Colin Baxter has published several excellent books of St Kilda photographs. And, according to <filmhebrides.com> the islands can even be glimpsed in one of the Harry Potter movies.

Over in Ireland, the Blasket Islanders, *EU-007*, decided in the last couple of decades they lived there that many of them had a book to write. My favourite is *Twenty Years a'Growing* by Morris O'Sullivan, but don't overlook *The Islander* by Tomás Ó'Criomhthain or *The Autobiography of Peig Sayers*. The islands are now deserted each winter, but a few hardy souls get over in the spring and there is a small hostel open in the summer. If the sea is too rough to make the crossing – or even if it isn't - don't miss the Blasket Centre in Dunquin.

Moving back to the Hebridean connections and quickly away to the Pacific, I am reminded about the books by Lucy Irvine, daughter of the former owner of the Summer Isles Hotel in Achiltibuie (on the Scottish mainland facing the islands, *EU-092*, but a favourite watering hole when I am in the area). Her book *Castaway* described life on one of the Torres Strait Islands, *OC-138*, between New Guinea and Queensland, but perhaps more interesting was *Faraway*.

This is the story of an elderly Englishwoman, Diana Hepworth, and her family who have lived on Pigeon Island, *OC-065*, in Temotu Province in H44 for decades. The island has hosted a number of DX-peditioners including Bernhard, DL2GAC/H44MS, who featured in Lucy Irvine's weekly despatch to the Sunday Times when his HF operations caused her a few problems with her satellite e-mail.

And, before I drift too far away from the Summer Isles link, I am occasionally asked if

the Isles are just like in the movie 'The Wicker Man'. Fortunately they are not!

Coffee table picture books

This list has to start with *Islands of the Arctic*, seeing as one of its authors is Professor Julian Dowdeswell, Director of the Scott Polar Research Institute in Cambridge, who greeted Yuri Zaruba and members of the Russian 'Lost Islands' DX-pedition when they spent an afternoon at the Institute after the 2002 HF Convention. Julian spent many seasons at Russian Arctic bases and knows many of the IOTA island destinations that Yuri and his team visited.

Another favourite is *Antarctic Oasis* by Tim and Pauline Carr, which is a breathtaking collection of pictures from South Georgia. The Carrs originally arrived in their yacht but have lived there for several years now and created a first class museum in Grytviken which is firmly on the Antarctic tourism circuit. I was lucky enough to visit them in December 2002 on my Antarctic trip when they opened the museum shop at 11 pm after a carol service in the whalers' church – the first late night shopping opportunity in South Georgia for many years, they said. Tim and Pauline remembered the VP8SGI DX-pedition and I put them back in touch with James Brooks, 9V1YC, so that they could get their copy of the video.

Closer to home there is a wonderful book entitled *Ireland's Islands*. It contains some great pictures of what is probably my favourite island - Skellig Michael in *EU-121*. This is essentially a rocky pinnacle about seven miles offshore and rising hundreds of feet vertically from the sea. Towards the end of the first millennium AD a group of monks created a settlement at the very top of the rock with a small chapel, a vegetable patch, and half a dozen stone huts. Access was via staircases cut into the rock faces. The mind boggles at the hardships of such a life. Modern

tourists can land from small tour boats when the sea is calm, or can take in the Skellig visitor centre on Valentia Island in South Kerry.

And, finally, returning to the UK there is *The Scottish Islands* by Hamish Haswell-Smith - and not quite a coffee table volume, but an outstanding reference work with sketch maps

and black and white pictures, is the *Shell Book of the Islands of Britain* by David Perrott and David Booth.

I hope this short list has conveyed some of my enthusiasm for islands and if you have enjoyed any island books – fiction or non-fiction – which I'm sure you must have done, please let me know at g3zay@btinternet.com.

The B2 TX/RX - Introduction

Jim Smith, VK9NS

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Hi Folks,

I came across this article (way down at the bottom of my computer) on the B2 I wrote ages ago and had more or less forgotten it. It was a spoof article, of course, but had been prompted by my first visit to Bhutan back in 1990, where I operated as A51JS, and later events.

I had long discussions with the staff of the (then) Wireless Division and the older members knew about Gus Browning and so on. I had finally got around to asking about the really early days of amateur radio in Bhutan.

In particular one day I was shown a battered looking B2 - the old suitcase set of WWII. It took me straight back to the late 40s as I had one on Car Nicobar!!

This B2 had come to Bhutan in 1947. It had no receiver but had the power supply and the AM modulator unit, which was not a common item and never part of the 'suitcase outfit to my knowledge. It had been used by Chawna, AC5PN, in the early 50s to be the first amateur radio operation from the Kingdom of

Bhutan. In those days Chawna was working for the Wireless Division.

In later discussion with a very high level Bhutanese (I had written and completed A Background History to Amateur Radio in the Kingdom of Bhutan) he mentioned my inclusion of the B2 photographs in my 'History'. He had suddenly remembered and realised it was the same equipment as shown in the photos.

In those far off days he, as a doctor, was always part of the King's entourage as His Majesty travelled around Bhutan.

He talked about Chawna setting up everything and getting in contact with Thimphu. He recalled that in a 1956 Royal trip the B2 set was carried on a person's back with the greatest of care and that Chawna was the wireless operator.

Anyway I decided to write this B2 'spoof' article especially for Lynpo Dr. Tashi Tobgyel, who at the time was Bhutanese Ambassador to Bangladesh. I have a wonderful letter from him thanking me for the B2 article, with him smiling at my comments about the aerial wire over the tree. It had

reminded him of Chawna fixing his aerial to a pine tree and Chawna calling "Hello, Hello, Able Baker Charlie calling..." - and the grins as wireless contact was made.

I still carry the happy memory of the first communications (internal) through wireless in Bhutan.

Another JS Equipment Review

The SPAM Co. Ltd B2 TX/RX

As we move into the 40s it is good to see that equipment manufacturers are getting the message and producing what we, the radio amateurs, want. After my last review of that powerful Air Ministry combo, the T1154/R1155, I was a bit miffed over those moaning letters to the editor. "Not another Review", was one comment - when we all know that we can never have too much of a good thing.

Many radio amateurs say that governments should not be competing in the commercial market. Well, they do have a captive market at the moment, as we are all 'off the air.' The SPAM-B2 is the latest all-singing, all-dancing TX/RX rig from the stables of the Ministry of Defence (MOD). Super Production Amateur Military Co. Ltd have done it again. This B2 TX/RX model recently released by MOD is marketed under that greatly improved ARROW Logo. We know this military logo stands for 'NO EXPENSE SPARED'.

The review SPAM-B2 arrived in a substantial wooden crate. A mere three hours later I finally got the combo assembled on my work bench. Well, in the bedroom actually, as I reserve the garage/workshop for the bigger 5KW AM transmitters etc.

By the way, the Ministry is really crafty: not a sign of the ARROW on the outside of the crate, just SPAM. This four-letter word is a pseudonym for some American food product being off loaded in Blighty these days. Nobody would ever think that there is a

complete TX/RX in the crate. The thought of having to open it to check would deter anyone!

Over the next couple of days I went over the equipment very carefully, as we all do when we get a brand-new rig - the B2 manual in one hand and a steady plod through the controls. Many years of practice has shown us that this is the only way to go; it would be madness just to plug it in and switch on!

The B2 Manual, you ask? It is highly detailed with adequate instructions on everything you need to know.

Someone must be making a packet, though. Where do they get all these newfangled names from? An HF superheterodyne, triode hexode, multiplicative frequency changer, high-power beam tetrode valve - dynamically engineered black metal valve cover for better heat dissipation of the 6L6 tube etc. If only I could think along these lines I would apply for the job tout de suite. (French for PDQ or 'pretty damned quick')

Checks on the transmitter show that it easily produces 20W of RF power on all design frequencies from 3 to 16 MHz. The CW has that unique tonal quality which we expect from a crystal oscillator. A major gripe here is this: why do manufacturers only supply one useless frequency with these transmitters? What crystal manufacturer is in the know so that it can dump its unwanted, unused crystal stock on MOD? The crystal pack with the

review SPAM-B2 was a typical example, useless except for testing. It was labelled Top Secret, Channel 10X - France/Blighty.

In a major change of policy and a break-away from the thinking of those other manufacturers, the transmitter actually has an output circuit one can tune. It is pointed out here that all transmitter checks, tuning-up tests etc. were done on a non-radiating dummy load. This is a standard practice of mine and in any case you don't really need that MOD reminder in red - 20 years in jail, bread and water etc.

The transmitter handles really well. I really liked the exposed PA coil and found that the RF burns received during TX tune-up were a great help. This is real 'hands on' tuning at its best and you just get that feeling that the tuning is right. Are you tired of these skimpy 50Ω O/P rigs? Have you ever tried to feed a wire fence with one? This B2 TX has a PI output circuit. (This is another of these words; I think PI is a Greek letter, but its connection with a TX output circuit escapes me)

Anyway, this circuit is guaranteed to put power into anything, but that red MOD writing stopped me proving this point. I was keen to try the B2 TX on that bit of wet string I have out in the back yard.

The manual says the receiver is a four-valve superheterodyne. Well, I suppose the SPAM Co. should know. It covers 3 to 16 MHz in three switched ranges. The low IF of around 470 kHz ensures image rejection is excellent on the higher frequencies. A pity, seeing as I always thought that image reception was a great idea - in a way, two channels for the price of one. Sensitivity is an incredible 3-5 microvolts for 10dB S/N. This seems a very weak signal to me. Is this a good idea?

The receiver tuning is immediately responsive. In fact the slightest touch on the dial really gets frequencies on the move.

Incidentally, I also found that by banging the operating table I could move the RX frequency very easily. (Use this routine when the wife is not asleep, otherwise problems can arise.) The receiver is also equipped with that latest innovation, the 'slow motion dial'. A great idea this, seeing as the same sort of touch (mentioned previously) moves the frequency less and a bit slower. Banging on the table still works, by the way. The RX front panel is clean, with the minimum of controls. I counted three of them.

Hang on a minute. It's the phone. No mistaking that three-minute one-ringer from the local exchange.

Well, what a turn up for the books! That was MOD on the line. They have requested me, Yours Truly (the guy jokingly said something about "this is an order"), that I take the SPAM - B2 on a field trial somewhere in France. They actually want me to check whether I can communicate with Blighty. They also mentioned something about national security, behind enemy lines, defence strategy etc. I tell you what: 'it's all happening'.

Okay, okay. I hear you loud and clear out there. "Not another all-expenses-paid trip?" Not another DX-pedition? Well, there is only one answer to that sort of talk: "Who needs France?"

I had 24 hours to get to a well-known Royal Air Force station down in the south of England to pick up a scheduled flight. This is the weekly 'Behind the Lines Dropper Flight', the BLDF as it is called locally. I just could not face re-packing that SPAM-B2 into its crate and had this sudden brainwave. (You know how this happens to everyone occasionally?) I put the assembled B2 into an old suitcase I had under the stairs. It wasn't a perfect fit; there was plenty of room to spare. This was handy for a couple of pairs of socks, underpants and my chocolate ration just for good measure.

The field trials were something else. It really felt scary with the enemy all around. We had arrived over southern France a bit too noisily for my liking, but the drop itself went well. It was expected that the enemy would want to get involved in this B2 review, so I was prepared. I have to get a move on, seeing as I have a sked in an hour - with Blighty, would you believe?

The B2 was set up very easily and my training at home really helped. I used an old tractor battery filched from a nearby farm for power - and the aerial was the next task. (I don't want to get into that aerial/antenna argument; antenna is an Americanism, if ever I heard one.) MOD get a bit complicated in the manual with a very elaborate mathematical formula $234/F$ feet for the length of aerial wire needed. I skipped that part. A bit hard, I thought.

To support the end of aerial wire over a nearby tree branch I used one of my two MOD issue 'self destruct/self protection' hand grenades. They said "keep one till last". A simple tip here: try to tape the pin and lever securely before attaching the wire to that handy grenade ring. Yes, I know that pin is almost impossible to pull out when you really need to, but we know how Murphy strikes. Take good advice when you get it! Toss or throw (grenades are tossed) over the tree and bingo: there you are.

The other end is attached to the AERIAL terminal of the B2 equipment. The equipment needs a good earth connection. For any other reference to earth/ground see my previous notes on Americanisms. No arguments, please.

Tuning up that B2 transmitter behind enemy lines teaches you one thing never to be forgotten. The longer it takes to tune up, the longer the enemy have to take a fix and lob a mortar shell over your way.

It's sked time, so hang on a minute. I've just 'back-tuned' the receiver to the TX crystal frequency. By the way, that's another very crafty idea: transmitter and receiver on the same frequency. All rigs should have this.

This B2 is really magic. The sked with Blighty went very well. These 'stay at home' MOD CW ops are a great bunch, you know. Friendly, and they have loads of time to spare. What is your name? Will you be on any other sked frequency? Any chance of natter on the phone? Where are you? What is the serial number of your morse key? Is the food good and how about the French birds? It took some time to get all these things answered, but I did my best to give the info requested.

I had a bit of time left to send a super important telegram that some French-speaking resistance fighter dressed as a farm hand gave me. My French is lousy (except for 'tout de suite'), but it was something about: help, we are surrounded, need assistance (that's handy, they use the same word we do), co-ordinates follow. I don't know about you, but I have never been much good with figures in Morse code. They will never know the difference, hence Vive la Difference.

I have to run, folks, as I hear a bit of traffic around these woods. It could be them. I had a bit of a hassle on packing up when I gave the aerial wire a sharp tug. They just don't make tape like they used to. This war-time stuff is rubbish. The bang was pretty loud. Out of this world, in fact!

I hear someone screaming my name. It's the 'missus'. "Wake up, you fool, there is someone on the phone. MAD, MOD or MID. I'm not sure who."

Fini (French for 'the end')

NB: this light-hearted review is in no way meant to denigrate the thousands of radio amateurs who, because of their unique communications skills, became operators in military service in WW II. On land, sea and air they gave their best in some diabolical situations.

The B2 was a remarkable unit and was in fact carried in a suitcase. It was complete, except for the actual power source, although even 6V batteries were supplied with later units. Headset, Morse key, spares, TX coils etc. were all provided.

The power supply worked all the way from very low DC voltage input up to high AC voltage input and there was a tap or a switch setting to suit. The TX could and did put power into almost anything - these were the days before the obsession with SWR. That tuneable PI Coupler was a winner, in fact it was to become a standard in most post-war rigs.

I first met the B2 in late 1947. In those days I was on VU4, Car Nicobar in the Indian Ocean. The Suitcase Radio, as it was called, became my first ever commercial rig. It was the days of military surplus, with some great modifications to get gear on the air.

In my view the radio amateur was the better for it due to the skills the situation helped to develop.

A special thanks is due to Robin, VK6LK, who several years ago kindly sent me some great photographs of his almost immaculate, but well used B2 station. His long letter of discussion on modifications which he had carried out on his outfit brought back many memories.

In Singapore in the late 40s Thieves Market was the place to be. A treasure trove of war surplus including American, British and Japanese radio and other equipment.

The Japanese already had a beam tetrode which out-performed the very popular 807 or the metal 6L6 (used in the B2). A simple modification soon had this JA valve as a PA in the B2 TX and it dramatically lifted performance right up to 10m.

Over 50 years down the track those silver plated PA tuning and loading capacitors look as good as new, the ceramic switches still work etc. The PU selenium rectifiers never did age well, but the silicon diode is a great replacement.

To those unique few who used the B2 and other clandestine rigs behind the lines in Europe - and of course in the Pacific area - I hope they will enjoy this article. The B2 TX left its mark (ouch!) on all who came to use it.

To all those operators: you have my deepest respect and the thanks of many for your great efforts.

73 Jim VK9NS

PS: I had written this article several months before a visit to Bhutan in October 1994, signing A51MOC.

In discussion about the old days it was mentioned that the Wireless Division had an old B2 in store. Used for many years on their CW Communications circuits, it had also been used on the amateur bands by Chhawna, AC5PN, in the 50s and 60s. Incredible!

IOTA News

Roger Balister, G3KMA

Monthly update of data in IOTA Directory, 11th Edition

New IOTA reference numbers issued

NA-226/Pr XE1 Colima / Michoacan State group (Mexico)

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

Provisional IOTA reference number as at 20 February 2004

NA-226/Pr XE1 Colima / Michoacan State group (Mexico)

Operations which have provided acceptable validation material

AF-009 TO4E Europa Island (November/December 2003)

AF-009 TO4WW Europa Island (November/December 2003)

AF-037 9L1MS/P Banana Islands (January 2004)

AS-149 RA0FU/P Moneron Island (September 2003)

AS-149 UA0FZ/P Moneron Island (September 2003)

NA-166 XF1K Pajaros Island (February 2004)

OC-078 V63MB Mog-Mog Island, Ulithi Atoll (May 2003)

OC-079 FK/AC4LN Art Island, Belep Islands (September 2003)

OC-158 H44VV Nggela Island, Florida Islands (August 2003)

OC-265 VK4GL/P Cato Reef, Coral Sea Islands Territory (December 2003)

OC-265 VK4WWI/P Cato Reef, Coral Sea Islands Territory (December 2003)

SA-055 LU1EDX/D Martin Garcia Island (December 2003)

SA-055 LU8DCH/D Martin Garcia Island (December 2003)

SA-088 ZY5X Santana de Fora Island (July 2003)

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

73 Roger

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The RTTY Column

Phil Cooper, GUØSUP *pcooper@guernsey.net*

This month, we will have a look at RTTY contesting, as this may be useful for those of you giving RTTY a go for the first time in the RSGB 80m Club Championships. I have entered the first two data legs so far, and it has been apparent that many of you are having a go at RTTY, which is excellent! It is fair to say that techniques for RTTY contesting are slightly different than in SSB or CW contests, and sometimes you just need to think about what is happening.

Let's assume you are in 'search & pounce' mode, running up and down the frequencies, looking for new stations to call. Once you find someone, make sure you are tuned in to their signal nicely, as some folk (like me) use quite tight filters, and you may just be outside their passband if you don't tune in exactly. With AFSK, this can be done with software, but if you use FSK, you really should tune in properly. You do not need to send something like GUØSUP GUØSUP DE G3XTT G3XTT G3XTT, as I know my own callsign, but I do need yours. Just send DE G3XTT G3XTT and leave it at that. If conditions are poor, then send your call three times, but twice is usually OK. The leading DE can help in identifying the call. Assuming I have heard you, then I will respond with something like G3XTT TU UR 599 001 001 001 DE GUØSUP BK.

I favour sending the serial number three times, as if you send it just twice, it can get corrupted, and can turn out like this: G3XTT TU UR 599 001 003 DE GUØSUP BK, and now you aren't sure whether 001 or 003 is correct.

You may well see G3XTT TU UR TOOAPPQAPPQ DE GUØSUP BK. Don't worry about that, as the software hasn't seen

the 'numbers shift' character, and it is fairly easy to translate the sequence TOOAPPQAPPQ into numbers. If you look at the top row of keys, then you will see that the Q=1, W=2, E=3 etc. In the above sequence, the numbers are separated by an A. The A is an unshifted dash, often used to separate the numbers, such as 599-001-001. After a lot of discussion on the various reflectors, the consensus was that this dash is not useful, and can actually cause more problems.

So now I have sent you my report, and I am now waiting for you to send me a serial number. This should follow exactly the same format as the one I sent you, and preferably without your name, QTH, locator square, or even IOTA. Assuming I have copied your serial number correctly, then I will send G3XTT TU NOW QRZ? DE GUØSUP CQ.

Note that CQ at the end of the line. It is there to indicate that I am soliciting calls, and not responding to a CQ call myself. When calling CQ, I also end with CQ, like this: CQ TEST DE GUØSUP GUØSUP CQ. That way, if you happen to tune across my signal, you know immediately that I am after calls. That isn't quite so obvious when you see GUØSUP PSE KK as you tune. You will now have to sit and wait to see if I was calling someone, or calling CQ.

If for some reason, you do not get the serial number clearly, then you ought to ask for a repeat. If it is some rare DX, then you may find it easier to log something and then wait to see what he gives out next, rather than try to get your query heard through the pile-up that is likely to occur. If it is DX, then it is also quite likely you will have sent what he sent to the previous station, so it should be a simple

process of deduction to work out what he sent you. If the station you called asks for a repeat of the serial number, do not just send your standard exchange twice, as this is not helping. What they expect to see is just a string of serial numbers, no 599 or anything else. Just set up another buffer with the serial number in it alone. Thus if they ask for a repeat, you can simply press the relevant function key as many times as is needed.

Of late I have seen stations just sending TU 599 001 001 BK as the exchange after you have called them. This is poor practice, and means you can end up with a lot of busted calls in your log. I have seen occasions when I have been calling someone, and they return with something like the above, but I then see someone think that report was meant for them, or it was me giving them a report! If I am not sure, I will wait, or call them again, and see if they include my callsign.

When setting exchange buffers for the contest, I always make sure that there is a space and a carriage return at the beginning and end of each sequence. This means that when I send my callsign to someone, it appears on a new line on their display, which makes it much easier to spot amongst the clutter.

Some software allows the use of a 'friend' file, which means you can include the name of the person you are calling in the exchange. People either like this, or hate it. It is up to you whether you use it, but I would suggest that you create your own friend file, and not use one of those that can be downloaded from the net. I get my names from real QSOs and also from QSL cards. During contests, I make a note of anyone who uses my name, but doesn't appear in my own friend file. It is then fairly easy to look them up on QRZ or Buckmaster.

If I had to pick one difference between using RTTY for a contest over SSB or CW, I would say *power*. For CW or SSB, power is a useful

tool. I do not believe that the same is true for RTTY. OK, I grant you won't break a pile-up for that bit of rare DX, but in a contest, all you have to do is to wait until late in the contest, and you will probably find that rare DX calling CQ over and over, and desperate for any call!

Timing is the key to RTTY contesting, and a little patience. If there is a bunch of folk all calling one station at the same time, then just sit and watch for a while. Does he work the first stations that called him, or the last? If it is just a mess, then go away and work a few others, and come back to him later.

The last point for now is about reading the rules! Don't rely on that copy of the rules from last year. Get the latest, just in case there have been any minor rule changes.

Make sure you understand the exchange format, and what the multipliers are. Some contests give you extra points for contacts on the lower bands, so try and make the most of this. There is no point in struggling to work a G station on 10m just because you can hear them, when you could easily work one on 40m or 80m.

Picking the right band for the mults must be familiar to all of you, as the same rules will apply to any contest, and it is no different for RTTY. I am sure all of you will be familiar with watching for odd band-openings at odd times? These also apply to RTTY contests.

Enjoy RTTY, and RTTY contesting, and I hope to see you in one of the RSGB 80m CC contests!

For a list of all RTTY contests, check out www.rttycontesting.com.

73 de Phil GUØSUP

Contesting

Tim Kirby, G4VXE tim@g4vxe.com

Many thanks to Stewart, GM4AFF, for permission to use his excellent article about CQ WW CW in Shetland and the challenges he faced there.

If you have any articles regarding your contest efforts, please send them in. They don't have to be huge DX-pedition efforts: a QRP entry from home can be just as inspiring if treated in the right way! So, please make an effort and drop me an e-mail (tim@timkirby.net). I'll be delighted to hear from you.

GZ7V – CQ WW CW 2003 by Stewart Cooper, GM4AFF

My reason for choosing to do CQ WW CW 2003 in a Single-Op All Band entry from Shetland was very simple. I had realised that the take-off from my own QTH is so restricted to the west that I was not prepared to suffer another defeat at the hands of the Garvock Hill!

So, way back in the spring of 2003, I booked the house that has become the home of GZ7V at Braewick in Eshaness, Shetland. It's a remote and beautiful place, with dramatic cliffs, dramatic views and dramatic weather, and it's a separate multiplier from Scotland in CQ WW. Facilities in the house are first class, and it would make an ideal holiday break for anyone who likes to brush against wilderness from time to time.

I had booked the ferry to Shetland for the Wednesday night, and the return trip for the Monday night. The ferry runs overnight, and arrives on Thursday at 0800, giving almost two days of set-up time. The trip north turned out to be very rough, and I was suffering from a cold, so I never really slept on the boat.

I decided to take as little equipment as was necessary, and asked my VHF buddy Allan Duncan, GM4ZUK, if he wanted to come and do some radio too. This meant that I could borrow his portable mast! It's a 50' thing which is easy to erect, complete with rotator and gin pole, and it fits in the boot of a car. The mast had been to the house before in 2000. In fact all the antennas were borrowed. I was lent the GMDX C3S, and I was very lucky to be able to borrow Gavin/GMØGAV's Titanex V80. This gave me 10, 15 and 20 in one small directional package, and the Titanex would give me 80 with (40 and 160 via an ATU) in a single vertical element.

I also took a W3DZZ as a last-resort spare antenna and a single beverage. The C3S took a little time to make the first time (at home before leaving), but once assembled, never forgotten. For those who use it in future, I found that in strong winds (which is the norm in Shetland) you must use something (I used tie-wraps and tape) to maintain the separation between the driven 20m element and the parasitic elements next to it. The elements actually struck each other in windy gusts, causing the SWR to rocket and the amplifier to trip. Thankfully I discovered this on the Thursday night.

I took an FT-1000MP transceiver with shiny new filters, an Alpha/ETO 91b amplifier with an FT-847 as a spare rig, which also provided us with 144 MHz. I opted to use a full-size PC (an old 486), a real monitor and a laptop, which I simply networked so that I had a real-time backup. I used CT which, along with the TopTen DX Doubler (just on the single radio), keys the rig and amp effectively. And so it was that the C3S was assembled on the Thursday, the station was set up on the

Thursday evening (sunset at 1508!) leaving the LF antenna until Friday. Initial tests showed that the antenna was behaving as it had during testing. My first QSO on 10m resulted in a call from a MMØXAU. When he asked for my WAB square I sent HU27, to which he replied, 'same as mine'. We have a joker here, I thought! We QSYed to SSB and he explained that he was Hans and he lived in the Eshaness lighthouse, only half a mile away, and one of the most remote lighthouses in the UK. He was round in 15 minutes and we had a chat and a coffee. It's a small world.

The next day I was up at the crack of dawn and spent the morning erecting the vertical and earth mat. I spent some time making the earth mat, of which I am very proud. It is made from a central ring of copper within which the main vertical mast is placed. There are eight holes drilled in the ring, with nuts and bolts used to attach two bundles of radial wires to each. The radials are bundled in 4s and attached to a terminal connector. That works out at 64 x 71'-long radials - that's 4,544' (just under a mile) or 1.3 km of wire!

It's very easy to lay out radials if they're made up in bunches of four and the central ring is pinned to the ground. The Titanex was resonant a little below the bottom of 80m, but I wasn't about to start chopping bits off Gavin's aerial! It worked well on 80m. I then spent the rest of the day trying to tune it on 40 and 160m! Each change involved disconnecting the tuner, walking to the house in the pouring rain and wind and re-soldering connections. After a few hours I was totally exhausted!

Well after dark, and after a few calls to Gavin, I decided to abandon 160m and only attach the 40m tap on the ATU. Even the simple operation of making a phone call involved a drive to the top of a local hill to get a mobile signal! The phone in the house chews up 10p coins at one every few seconds! I would worry about 160m later. In the dark of the Friday

night the W3DZZ was pulleyed up the mast and attached to a fence. The beverage lay abandoned in a box. I slumped in front of the telly and watched Eastenders. I felt like death.

I had spent some time putting together an operating plan. This was based on what I had been hearing recently, and previous logs from other November operations from northern Scotland. I intended to stick to the plan, apart from 160m, as it would give me something to aim at when I got tired. Last-minute tuning checks were made; I ensured that the PC clocks were correct, made a final cup of tea, and it began. I didn't sit down until 2355, found a clear frequency on 80, worked RA1QX as GM4AFF/P and then continued as GZ7V, much to his delight (and mine).

I was already so tired that I was finding 32 wpm very hard going, even at the start. This was bad news. I had a cough too, and I knew I wouldn't make it through the 48 hours. I have never experienced pile-up working like it before. I found it very hard. No amount of talking about it - or PED training - could have prepared me for it and few will know what I'm talking about. It's a wall of screaming noise, from which I pulled bits of calls, usually from the low frequency end, and not from the first wave, with massive attenuation to capture the louder ones.

This meant that my rate was awful, and I had to ask for calls at least twice each over. This probably appeared unprofessional, and I was aware of it. I endeavoured to pull full calls, because it helped keep the rate up, but it was impossible. If I asked for less than a full call, at least 10 stations would respond.

I have a couple of recordings of the pile up, but it isn't worth listening to. It sounds like the squeals of a hundred stuck pigs. If only split had been an option. I really need to know now how others do this well - I intend to find out!

The hours rolled by and I felt worse with each. I was already too tired. The rate was reasonable, though, with the 02-03 hour at 153 QSOs/hr. I went to bed a couple of times on Saturday as I felt so bad, but couldn't sleep.

As I lay there I didn't see the point, so just got up and kept going. I threw in the towel at about 1900 and slept until midnight. I don't know what I missed. By then I had lost the competitive urge, and was just there to give away a good multiplier.

The sleep did me good, though, and I didn't sleep again until the end, although I worked very little between 02-05. My best run was from 13-17 on the Saturday, with 160, 133, 170 and 155 QSOs/hr. Not what I would call brilliant myself but, given the pile-up problem, I was happy enough. I recall seeing the meter hit well over 200 QSOs/hr a lot, but it was never sustained.

During Saturday night the wind started to batter the windows of the house and at around 0100 I heard a clang. I later discovered that an element 'end' had become loose and fallen off the C3S. I ignored it and accepted the poor SWR for the rest of the contest.

On Sunday afternoon I decided to steal the balun, feeder and insulators from the W3DZZ and make a Top Band dipole using the beverage wire. This only took 15 minutes, and now I was QRV on all bands. It was good to know that I was going to get some more mults from the last 90 minutes on 160m, as I had originally planned.

At around 1700 on Sunday it was very obvious that a solar event had occurred, as the bands went dead almost immediately. Within 10 minutes I could hear little on 40m and the HF bands were a wash-out. The rate for 18-19 was a feeble 40 QSOs/hr. Allan fired up the

FT-847 into a small yagi in the front garden and was immediately in demand on 2m aurora from a very rare GM locator square. I had my tea!

I'm trying to remember now if there were any high points during the weekend, but on reflection the only times were when I called lonely CQers late on the Sunday afternoon and they were obviously glad to work a new multiplier.

It was actually nice to be pulled from band to band and give away some points that way. What was difficult was handling the ops who I called that couldn't deal with the call, GZ7V. There were at least a dozen who never did work me. After seven or eight attempts I just tuned on.

Strangely, at about 2000 on Sunday I found that if I beamed NW on 15m I was able to work W4 and Caribbean stations with an auroral flutter just like 2m. Someone must have spotted me because I actually ran for a little, although callers were weak.

One issue which got my back up (again) was how the big MM stations deal with finding a new frequency. I think it must be because the operator feels he is in a position of untouchable power, with a large infrastructure behind him, which allows him to spin the dial and transmit. I will not be working YT7Z again!

The 'tear-down' on Monday was very easy. Hans came over and lent a hand, and we were packed and wolfing into bacon sarnies by 1200. I actually left the old 486 PC with Hans because it turned out that he'd worked 1,400 QSOs in the contest using a paper log! It was less to carry back, and his need was greater than mine. Unfortunately my log for the second 160m Contest is on that PC!

The final total

BAND	QSO	QSO PTS	PTS/QSO	ZONES	COUNTRIES
160	126	141	1.12	8	38
80	692	1093	1.58	16	67
40	848	1441	1.70	24	81
20	602	1233	2.02	24	77
15	747	1442	1.93	20	73
10	702	1605	2.29	26	74
Totals	3717	6955	1.87	118	410
Grand Total: 3,672,240 points					

It only remains for me to thank the GMDX Group for the use of their C3S, GM4ZUK for his mast and transport, GMØGAV for the Titanex, Linda Pearson for her understanding in the use made of the house and her brother

Magnus for the use of the land for aerals. I am already planning my next visit.

Stewart Cooper, GM4AFF

Letters to the Editor

The 3B8 situation

Dear Sir,

I read with great interest of the activities of Bert van den Berg, PA3GIO, in the latest Digest. I would like to comment on the 3B8 situation. Late 2002 the administration moved offices and it would seem changed staff at the same time. I received my operating permission for 2003, but this year I was also unlucky and did not operate whilst there this month. I do not have family there that are in government, although I do know some prominent people who are close to those in government.

Basically, the situation is that the administration is in an uproar and amateur radio is not the only part that is suffering, I'm not sure

how long this situation will take to sort itself out, we can only persevere.

Best Regards

Gwyn, G4FKH

Not the GB2RS News

Hello Martyn,

Thanks for 'Not The GB2RS News' in the January Digest. It gave me a much-needed fit of the giggles. At first glance I thought it was serious news, which made it all the funnier. Keep it coming.

Thanks and 73 Tony Collorick G3RLG

Not the GB2RS News by RFX

Main News

The ITU, in association with Ofcom and *The Lord of the Rings*, has recently approved the exclusive allocation of the prefix 'ME' to amateur radio stations in Middle Earth, which will also count as a new DXCC entity. Middle Earth is not part of CEPT. For information regarding a reciprocal licence contact the Chief Wireless Officer, Ham Gamgee, ME1HG, the Post Office, Hobbiton. E-mail to ham@hobbitnet.me. Currently no amateur radio operation is permitted from Isengard, ME6, or Mordor, MEØ.

ITV is to launch a new reality series entitled *I'm a Radio Ham – Get me out of Here!* The contestants will be drawn from the UK amateur radio community at large and packed off to an exotic DX location in SE Asia, where they'll face a series of trials designed to test their all-round on-air stamina. These include having to do battle on 20m with a totally wild and unruly EU weekend pile-up - and an equally daunting challenge on SSB: successfully distinguishing one callsign from another in a mammoth JA pile-up.

RSGB QSL Bureau

In order to take advantage of the much lower labour costs, it has been announced that the RSGB QSL Bureau is to be re-located to India. Longer-term plans also envisage the re-location of RSGB Headquarters as a whole to that country, where local Indian staff will be employed.

HF DX News

Next weekend John, G3WGV, will once again be in peak condition and operating from the summit of Mount Everest, 9N-/BY-001 for the

increasingly popular Summits on the Air (SOTA) Awards programme. The callsign prefix used, 9N or BY, will depend on which side of the border his feet happen to be standing on at the time. As John himself added, "Yes, SOTA gives so many of us 'summit' to do at the weekend".

Contest News

Next weekend we can look forward to the wonderful world of the 48-hour YO Transylvanian DX Contest, on both CW and SSB. Contestants exchange the usual 59(9) report, plus their blood group and the name of their favourite Dracula film actor.

The Solar Forecast

This week the quieter side of the sun will be looking our way, so with a bit of luck the bands shouldn't be anything like as noisy as they have been of late, dammit.

Solution to Digest Prize Crossword 2

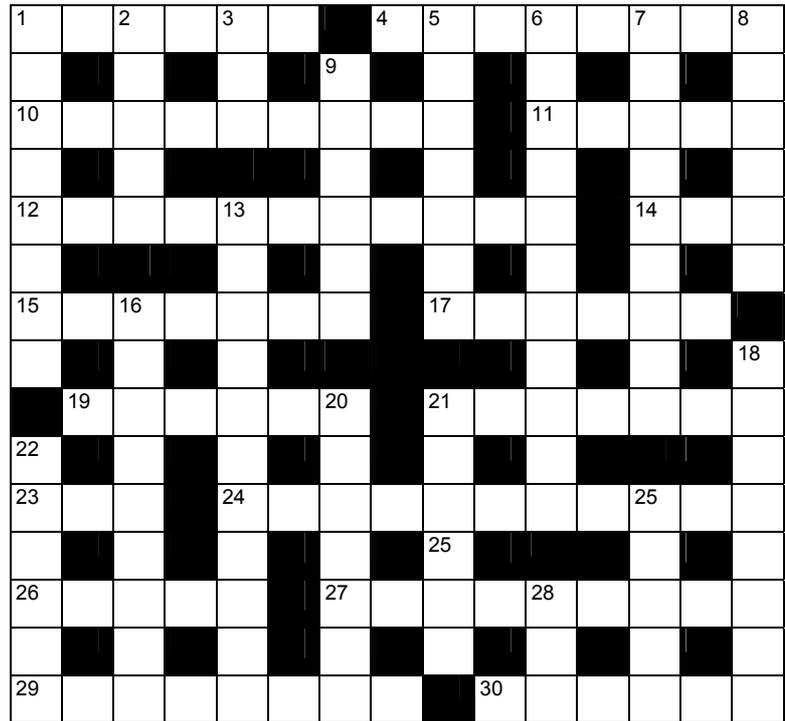
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T	O	P	B	A	N	D		B	A	R	D	S	E	Y

Digest Prize Crossword 3 by RFX

Again, a fair number of entries for Prize Crossword 2. It would seem that 6 down, EYTIE, caused a bit of confusion and also raised a couple of eyebrows, but then the word is in Chambers!

Admittedly 11 across, ESCHAR, was a slightly unusual word, but then that's what you sometimes get in this business. I normally try and make it no more than one such word in any one Crossword.

And the lucky winner of Prize Crossword 2, January 2004: John Hart, G4POF (by e-mail). He receives a brand-new £10 note personally donated by Neville, G3NUG.



ACROSS

- 1 Alloy taken from military man leaving island (6)
- 4 A Crimean resettled as citizen of Sebastopol, CA? (8)
- 10 N. actress on trial in cricket match (5,4)
- 11 Consumer racket the engineers backed (5)
- 12 Erection favoured by those who only keep a record of their QSOs from time to time? (3,8)
- 14 Part of HB9, an Italian city at heart (3)
- 15 Former dictator who in CW, we hear, went on to become Bond's boss? (3,4)
- 17 Sister, confused, takes the exam again (6)
- 19 Picturesque state, awfully nice (7)
- 21 Dig up in Kazakhstan soil (7)
- 23 Former exam girl (3)
- 24 Infallible as a rule – as a result of taking 30? (4,3,4)
- 26 Headless mammal providing support (5)
- 27 Little guys, or inferior canines? (9)
- 29 Separate, showing tact in speech (8)
- 30 Performance enhancer for the up and coming? (6)

DOWN

- 1 Line test organised to make oneself feel comfortable (6,2)
- 2 Scottish psychiatrist represented by the French in England (5)
- 3 Conclusion reached by Spain, Norway and Germany on cars from there (3)
- 5 *The Terminator*, as fêted in EA circles? (7)
- 6 Slow down one's amphetamine intake? (6,5)
- 7 Copper, say, or Sargent? (9)
- 8 Scandinavian's not Richard either, we hear (6)
- 9 Good-natured Englishman in TY (6)
- 13 Cheese meal the men cooked on the third of April (11)
- 16 Rises which have one doubled up with laughter? (9)
- 18 The colourless Russian drink? (5,3)
- 20 Path that's incomplete if it's open and complete if it's closed (7)
- 21 Country run by 15 listed under five times (6)
- 22 Monster capturing Rhea's foremost ally (6)
- 25 In the company of some keen ham on Guernsey (5)
- 28 Breakthrough in manor firebomb case (1,1,1)

DX and Events Calendar

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

till April till 30 May till 2004	IR7LH: Italian lighthouses by IK7JWX JW5RIA (Svalbard) by LA5RIA R1ANZ: 'Mirny' Base (WABA UA-07)
17/02-17/03 25/02-15/03 27/02-21/04 28/02-14/03 29/02-13/03	9U5M by PA5M Namibia: V51/DJ4SO Pacific tour (Fiji > Guam) by DK2ZF 6Y5 (Jamaica) by W9 ops Norfolk Island (VK9N) by DL ops
March-April March-April 01/03-12/03 06/03-13/03 07/03-14/03	9M8: Pulau Satang Besar (OC-165) by 9M2/G3TMA et al V8: Pulau Muara Besar (OC-184) by 9M2/G3TMA et al XU7AJV & XU7TZG: Koh Poah (AS-133) ON4AJT and ON6TZG Togo: 5V7C by F ops TA/DL3NBL/P: Ucadalar Island (AS-115)
08/03-15/03 09/03-23/03 11/03-16/03 13/03-14/03 15/03-10/04	V8 (Brunei, V8JIM/V8NOM) by G3NOM, G3RTE and G3SWH Bermuda (NA-005): MØCNP/VP9 Gibraltar: ZB2FX (G3RFX) RSGB Commonwealth (BERU) Contest 5W (Samoa) and Niue (ZK2) by DF2SS and DL1VKE
15/03-12/04 15/03-19/03 18/03-05/04 20/03-22/03 27/03-28/03	3B9C: Rodrigues Island (AF-017) VK4FRI: Fraser Island (OC-142) HKØGU (Providencia Island, NA-049) by DL7VOG BARTG RTTY CQ WW WPX SSB
29/03-05/04 04/04-16/04 09/04-11/04 10/04-11/04 17/04-18/04	C56JJ (Gambia) by PA9JJ T33C: Banaba (OC-018) TJ: Cameroon (Mondoleh Island, AF-???) by F6BUM CIS DX SSB GX4NOK/P: Inner Farne Island (EU-109)
18/04-01/05 23/04-05/05	7Q7 (Malawi) by G4AXX, G4JVG, GU4CHY and M5RIC OX/DL2SWW & OX/DL2VFR (Maniitsoq Island, NA-220)

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