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Club News and Views

Editorial

Martyn Phillips, G3RFX

First of all it's thanks to Mike, GU4EON, who has reluctantly stood down as *Digest* Picture Editor due to pressure of work. And taking over from Mike is Mark, G4AXX. Thanks, Mark, for agreeing to take this one on in addition to your other CDXC 'duties'. Please send any photos for inclusion in the *Digest* direct to Mark in future. You'll find his e-mail address on page 2 opposite.

Otherwise it's another bumper (and highly topical...) edition of the *Digest*, with contributions on both Kosova and St Barts. Nigel, G3TXF, has been to both and in fairly rapid succession. Indeed up to now I always thought that St Barts was a large hospital in London EC1, but apparently this one is an island in the Caribbean.

Tom, GM4FDM – he gets around a bit too. In this issue he tells us all about a trip last year to Brunei and V8FDM. In the course of which he bumps into local amateur V8BDS, whose daughter is married to the Crown Prince of Brunei, the Sultan-in-waiting. So presumably they're not short of a bob or two round his place either.

And once again what would we do without Roger, G3SXW? He contributes no fewer than three articles this time round, the first of them all about a recent 24-hour trip on easyJet to Madeira. Jane and I were in CT3 ourselves shortly before Roger's visit, albeit without any radio gear on my part. We liked Madeira a lot. A very friendly place, and exceptionally clean too. The likes of Naples could learn a lot from it.

Not far from CT3, of course, is CT2 – or rather CU ("See you...") as it tends to be these days. Michael, G7VJR, was there over the New Year. As he says, "... an unusual but easily accessible location that I had been curious about for some time" Me too. Maybe we'll go there one of these days. As an occasional airband freak, all I know about it is that CU1/Santa Maria is one of the main ATC centres on the transatlantic routes to/from Europe and the Caribbean.

Finally, perhaps I can just mention an item which unfortunately reached me too late for inclusion in this *Digest* (but I'll certainly include it in the next...): a 'clarification' of the German DX Foundation's Rwanda DXpedition, 13-20 February 2008. This takes the form of a one-page statement by DJ9ZB and DK8UH. Yes, the politics of amateur radio. But maybe it'll be of interest.

Which more or less ties the ribbons on it this time round. Needless to say, in this issue of the *Digest* you'll find all the regular features you've come to expect from our hard-working contributors and the mini-skirted maidens here in Clifton, Bristol.

By the way, if you know Bristol and are wondering where we are... well, roughly midway between the city centre and Brunel's famous Suspension Bridge. Very close to the Clifton Triangle, in fact, also the Victoria Rooms and the extensive BBC complex in Whiteladies Road. Although by far the closest local landmark of all: the Bristol University Student Union building. On occasions a delight in itself.

73 Martyn, G3RFX

Chairman's Chat

John Butcher, G3LAS

The shortage of sunspots certainly doesn't seem to have deterred the expeditioners in recent times. As I write this piece there are no less than three groups pounding into the 'LAS RX: VP6DX, 9XØX and TI9KK. When I say 'pounding' it is, of course relative, but all of them have been very good copy in the last few days.

Pride of place has to go to the efforts of VP6DX from Ducie Island. The signal strengths from this remote scrap of land have been nothing short of phenomenal on at least seven bands. Sadly, I have heard nothing from them on 12 and 10m, but fortunately VP6DI gave me those back in 2002, when the HF bands were really humming. As someone on the CDXC reflector pointed out, to mount such a major expedition in such a place and to consistently bend the S-meters on the low bands with multiple stations on-air is quite an achievement. Of course these guys really know what they are doing, as is evidenced by the very high standards of operating.

Although Ducie is over 500km from Pitcairn, it is obvious that a small atoll at sea level can expect much better propagation than the residents of Pitcairn can enjoy, clinging to the side of their mountain. It has also been fascinating to read the analysis of the low band experience by the experts on the CDXC reflector. They make it all seem obvious – once you are told why it happens.

It is also interesting to compare the three expeditions from the point of view of operating techniques. As I've said, the VP6 crowd have been pretty much faultless. Many of the ops in the other two groups have been good too, but I did hear one, who shall remain anonymous, working co-channel by numbers and also not acknowledging the end of any of his QSOs Chaos, or what? I can't understand why,

when people take the trouble and expense to mount these expeditions, they often don't seem to bother about establishing some basic ground rules for the operators. It is particularly noticeable that RTTY technique leaves something to be desired. Rhythm and clarity are as important here as on CW and SSB.

Well, it's now a few days later and we have yet another burst of excitement. This is the group of very well-known expeditioners who have appeared from the imminently independent country of Kosovo. Prominent among them is CDXC's own G3TXF, currently rattling along in his usual manner on 30m. Is he ever at home? This is a rather unusual expedition in that it is held before the new country has even been born. Probably, by the time this piece is being read, the situation will be clearer, in terms of the independence of Kosovo and its status according to the ARRL – which is not at all the same thing.

What is clear, as far as these things ever are, is that QSOs currently being made will count as Serbia, not as a new entity. To be fair, the publicity indicated that the visit was, 'To work together with the local telecom, assisting them in the establishment of a sound Amateur Radio regulation, license and exam structure for governing the Amateur Radio Service in Kosovo'. Nothing was said about a new country or even independence. However, given that the secession is being opposed strongly by Serbia and some other countries, is this a case of amateur radio sailing very close to the political wind?

This issue of the *Digest* should hit the streets just before the annual dinner on 15 March. We are looking forward to the evening at a new venue – the Wyboston Conference Centre. Anyone wishing to

make a last-minute booking should contact our Secretary, Chris G3SVL, asap.

By the way, it's not too late to join in the CDXC LF Challenge, which runs throughout March. Details are on the website. Although it runs on 160, 80 and

40m, all you really need to make a good score is a reasonable signal on 40m.

73 es gud DX

John, G3LAS

President's Patter

Neville Cheadle, G3NUG

Many thanks to those members who volunteered to help with the MØC QSLing. Jim MØZAK, one of the 3B7C QSL managers, is taking on the job. Thanks, Jim. Jim already has the logs and is loading these onto his computer. New 'generic' MØC cards have been ordered for Jim.

This means that those using the MØC call need not worry about QSLing. I know that this will be a relief to several of you. The call can be used in the following contests:

1. ARRL DX CW
2. ARRL DX SSB
3. ARRL 1.8 MHz DX CW only
4. ARRL 28 MHz Multimode
5. CQ WPX CW
6. CQ WPX RTTY
7. CQ WPX SSB
8. CQ World Wide CW
9. CQ World Wide RTTY
10. CQ World Wide SSB
11. CQ World Wide 160 CW
12. CQ World Wide 160 SSB
13. IARU Championship Multimode
14. IOTA Multimode
15. WAE DX CW
16. WAE DX RTTY
17. WAE DX SSB
18. ARRL RTTY Roundup
19. BARTG RTTY
20. IARU 50 MHz Trophy Multimode
21. IARU 144 MHz Trophy Multimode
22. IARU 432 MHz to 248 GHz Multimode
23. March 144 and 432 MHz
24. May 432 MHz to 248 GHz
25. November Marconi Memorial 144 MHz
26. Russian DX.

I'd like to encourage members to use the MØC call as much as possible. This gives excellent publicity for the club. Please e-mail me to check on availability.

As I write we have confirmed 52,500 contacts with 3B7C, 38.2% of the total QSOs and 77.6% have been sent direct. Cards are now arriving at a much reduced rate of 80-100 per week and are being distributed to managers in batches of around 100. We are now achieving a turnaround rate of two weeks, sometimes less. Queries have fallen to under five per week. In roughly half of these cases cards were sent out very recently; for the remainder no letters have been received. Postal theft continues to be a major problem in Eastern Europe and Russia. Thanks to the 3B7C/CDXC team for doing a great job.

Mike, GU4EON, has had to stand down as Digest Photo Editor due to pressure of work. Thanks, Mike, for your help and for handling the transition to the colour pages. It's also grateful thanks to Mark, G4AXX, for taking on this arduous task.

A final reminder that the CDXC Annual Dinner is on Saturday, 15 March at Wyboston. It looks as though we will have an excellent turnout. See you there.

73

Neville

CDXC Annual Dinner 2008

15 March 2008 at 7:30 pm

Wyboston Lakes, Bedfordshire

**After-dinner talk by Roger Western, G3SXW, on
'Seven Kilowatts in the Dark Continent'**

The Annual Dinner is one of the big social events in the CDXC calendar - and 2008 will be no exception. The venue we have used for the past couple of years is no longer suitable, but we are delighted to announce that we have secured a private dining room at the excellent Wyboston Lakes, the venue for the 2007 RSGB HF Convention. We have also been fortunate in securing Roger, G3SXW, as our after-dinner speaker. Anyone who has heard Roger speak will know that we are in for a treat!

The cost for the dinner is just £31 per head. For those wanting to stay overnight, Wyboston has rooms available - or there is a Travel Lodge less than two miles away.

The Annual Dinner is a great opportunity to meet and catch up with other members and their partners. With the excellent venue, food, company and after-dinner talk this is set to see a record attendance. So book early to avoid disappointment!

How to book

Complete the enclosed booking form and return it to Chris, G3SVL, with your cheque for £31 per person.

Wyboston Dinner Location

The full address is: The Waterfront Centre, Wyboston Lakes, Great North Road, Wyboston, Bedfordshire, MK44 3AL. It is located at the junction of the A1 and the A428. Contact Chris, G3SVL, if you require a printed map or detailed directions.

Overnight at Wyboston

Book direct on (01480) 212625 and quote 'CDXC'. The rate is £59 per room (breakfast extra).

Overnight at Travel Lodge

Book direct on (0871) 984 6010 - but the best rates are online at: www.travelodge.co.uk - put Wyboston in the hotel search box. Currently rooms are available for £39, with breakfast extra. The full rate is £51.

Any other questions

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

The CDXC LF Challenge 2008

Following a small survey carried out during 2006, the results of which were discussed at the last Committee meeting, it was agreed to keep the rules the same for 2008. If the response is as poor as it was this year, ie 2007, then we will review the situation for 2009. It is planned that the website will be working for this contest, enabling entrants to update their scores.

Aim:

The aim of the competition is to work as many DXCC entities during the month of March 2008. Each DXCC entity is counted ONCE only.

When:

0001 UTC, 1 March 2008 to 2359 UTC, 31 March 2008.

Bands:

ONLY the 1.8, 3.5 and 7 MHz bands

Modes:

No restrictions.

Logs:

Send a list either by e-mail to jkellaway@btinternet.com or by post to Jim Kellaway, 55 Ladbroke Drive, Potters Bar EN6 1QW. Headings in the following order only will be accepted, otherwise logs will be disqualified.

DXCC Entity, Band, Call, Time and Mode.

QSL cards are not required, but in the event of a dispute the CDXC Committee may request a photocopy or print-out of the applicant's log.

Awards – Multi-band

Penallt Trophy – Awarded to the first-placed station. The trophy is returnable, but a small engraved plaque will also be presented to mark this achievement.

Tindle Cup - Awarded to the second-placed station. The trophy is returnable, but a small engraved plaque will also be presented to mark this achievement.

The station in third place will receive a small engraved plaque to mark this achievement.

Single Band Awards – The leading station on each band (1.8, 3.5 and 7 MHz) will also receive a small engraved plaque.

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



11th Annual GMDX Convention and Dinner

Saturday, 26 April 2008 at the King Robert Hotel, Stirling

Once again the GMDX Committee is pleased to announce that the above Convention will be held at the King Robert Hotel, Whins of Milton, Stirling, on Saturday, 26 April 2008, starting at 1230. Bar snacks will be available from 1130.

The raffle Star prize is an FT-817 transceiver generously donated by Yaesu UK

Programme

| | |
|------|---|
| 1230 | Registration and Welcome |
| 1300 | 3X5A CQ WW expedition by Roger, G3SXW |
| 1400 | FJ St Barthélemy, the latest DXCC entity by Nigel, G3TXF |
| 1445 | Coffee |
| 1515 | Engineering for DX by Ian, GM3SEK |
| 1600 | Ragchew Time |
| 1615 | My experiences of seven DXpeditions of the year by Bob. K4UEE |
| 1715 | Convention wrap-up and raffle draw Star Prize: a FT-817 transceiver donated by Yaesu UK Ltd 2nd Prize: an IC-E91 dual-band radio donated by Icom |
| 1930 | DX Dinner. Booking essential. |
| 2130 | Hotel bar |

Card checking available for DXCC, WAZ, WAS, IOSA and RSGB awards.

Non-members are very welcome

The cost of the afternoon's convention is £8, which includes tea or coffee, whilst the dinner is priced at £20 per person. We would be grateful if you could pre-book to give us an idea of numbers. Booking your dinner tickets is particularly important as numbers are limited.

The King Robert Hotel has given us a special rate for Convention delegates. This is £60 B & B for a double room and £40 B & B for a single room. In the event that all single rooms are taken, the rate for single occupancy of a twin room is £45. If you would like to stay at the hotel, please contact them direct and mention that you are attending the GMDX Convention to get the special rates. We suggest you arrange your accommodation as early as possible to avoid disappointment. The King Robert Hotel telephone number is (01786) 811666.

DX an' all that

Don Field, G3XTT don@g3xtt.com

I am writing this with the VP6DX expedition still in full swing and into its second week, with UK stations having worked them on all bands except 10m. This really is turning out to be the finest expedition that I haven't been part of! That said, we mustn't lose sight of the fact that expeditions like VKØIR (Heard Island) or 3YØX (Peter 1) had to contend with living in extreme climatic conditions at the same time as trying to run a DXpedition. But there's no doubt that the VP6DX guys have done their homework, in terms of proper planning etc. and are turning in a stellar performance. 120,000 QSOs as I write this, with several days still to go. Those FSDXA QSO records could be falling! It will be interesting to see the presentations and/or video in due course.

Next one up is Clipperton and there are a few others in the pipeline, such as 9X, so it could be a fun year. And the VP6DX gang have shown what can be done even without sunspots (I seem to remember 3B7C pioneering that one!).

Meanwhile there have been fun and games over another possible 'new one'. Last time it was St Barthelemy, this time it's Kosova (YU8, or whatever it might become). This one is highly political and it may well take some time for the dust to settle. From a DXCC point of view we needn't worry here in the UK. Should it become a 'new one' it's right on our doorstep and will be easily workable. But if it does get international recognition as a nation state in its own right, then where will it all end? Many countries have potential breakaway regions – we could see places like Chechnya (currently part of Russia), Abkhazia (part of Georgia), Kurdistan (part of Iraq, Turkey, Iran and Syria) or maybe even Cornwall wanting self-government and an ITU prefix. The

next generation of radio amateurs could be needing over 400 'entities' to achieve Honor Roll! The latest word from the ARRL on Kosova concludes, 'Kosovo will be added to the DXCC list if it becomes a member of the UN, or (2), if it receives a prefix bloc from the ITU'.

DX Magazine's '2007 Most Wanted' survey results

The January/February 2008 issue of 'The DX Magazine' has the results of the top 100 'Most Wanted Countries' for the year 2007. The survey's breakdown and results were done by Carl Smith, N4AA (DX Magazine's Editor), Roger Western, G3SXW, and Tim Kirby, G4VXE (nice to see the gradual UK 'takeover'!). The 'Top Ten' countries (entities) in the 'World-Wide' ranking mixed modes are as follows (listed with last year's results):

| 2007 rank | DXCC entity | 2006 rank |
|-----------|-------------------------|-----------|
| 1 | North Korea (P5) | 3 |
| 2 | Yemen (7O) | 4 |
| 3 | Navassa (KP1) | 5 |
| 4 | Glorioso (FR/G) | 6 |
| 5 | Bouvet (3Y/B) | 7 |
| 6 | Marion Island (ZS8) | 9 |
| 7 | Desecheo (KP5) | 8 |
| 8 | Scarborough Reef (BS7H) | 1 |
| 9 | Crozet (FT8W) | 11 |
| 10 | Heard Island (VKØ/H) | 10 |

From the looks of the list, last year's top 5 entities have moved up two. Why? Two major operations in 2007 have caused this change in the list. First were the Lakshadweep (VU7) operations in late 2005 and early 2007. VU7's ranking last year was 2, but now it is 64. Then there was Scarborough Reef (BS7H) in May 2006.

BS7H went from a ranking of 1 to 8. Further details from the DX Magazine website (www.dxpub.com/), although for a full breakdown you'll need to beg, borrow or steal a copy of the magazine itself.

2007 DXCC Year End Review, by Joe Reisert, W1JR

Which leads us on nicely to the annual round-up of entities active during the previous year, compiled as ever by Joe, W1JR. This appeared in various publications (though primarily the Daily DX), so you may well have seen it already, but I feel it's a useful reference to have around, especially in terms of looking back in future years. This is what Joe has to say:

“DX wise, the year 2007 was just as challenging, if not more so, than 2006. During January 2007 we saw some solar activity, but it really tapered off by mid-February. A few small disturbances came in late April when 6m aurora was detected. June and July also saw some small disturbances, but by September the sun had really settled down. Solar flux numbers dropped all the way down to 65 in early October. Solar minimum had been predicted for early in the year. If in fact we did go through minimum, it may have occurred when the solar flux was 70 or below for most of October and November.

On 11 December a high latitude region of magnetically reversed polarity appeared on the sun. Although the region never became a sunspot, it is a possible indicator that Solar Cycle 24 is approaching. On 21 December NASA released a prediction that cycle 24, expected to peak in 2010 or 2011, may be ‘one of the most intense cycles since record-keeping began almost 400 years ago.’ Since smoothed sunspot numbers are officially released nine months after the fact, we will not know until at least mid-2008 if in fact we have already reached the end of Solar Cycle 23 and started Solar Cycle 24.

That being said, there was still plenty of DX activity in 2007, albeit mostly concentrated on 160 through 17m. 20m was the bread winner and 17m was not too far behind during daylight hours. 10 through 15m were spotty at best and then mostly on the North/South paths. We enjoyed unexpectedly good propagation during both days of the CQ WW Phone DX Contest with spectacular worldwide 15m openings and brief 10m openings to Europe, Africa and the Pacific and strong openings to the south.

Although no longer rare, the year started out with a large-scale effort from SMOM using the call sign 1A4A even workable on 160m. This was quickly followed on all HF bands with large-scale operations by XT2C, S21XA, VU7MY and VU7RG. I'd speculate that a DXer with a moderate antenna farm and a reasonable amount of effort could have worked as many as 200 DXCC entities during January [*Remember that Joe is looking at this from a US perspective! XTT.*].

February saw good activity from a semi-rare entity when ZK3RE operated on all bands and made an effort to satisfy the 160m gang. This was followed by 3B9/G3TXF, one of Nigel's several CW operations during 2007, most with Roger, G3SXW (1AØKM, FY, JW, OY, PJ2, V2). YWØDX came on from Aves Island, but this may be the last operation from there for some time as the island was severely diminished in size by hurricane Dean later in the year. DXØJP made an effort to put Spratly on the low bands. Also active in February were VK9DNX from Norfolk Island as well as 9UØX and 9UØZ by DJ6SI and DJ9ZB respectively. Other notable semi-rare DX entities made appearances early in 2007 such as J2ØRR/J2ØMM, J5UAR, 9M4SDX (Spratly), D6ØVB, XW1A, ZL1GO/8, ZM8CW and 4W6AAV.

In early April N8S made a big effort to work those who missed the first Swains Island (KH8SI) DXpedition. Conditions

were not great on the higher bands, but many worked N8S on the lower bands. In early May, after 10 years of waiting, BS7H came on from Scarborough Reef. Setting up the equipment on four rocks was difficult and propagation conditions were not the best. Many of the deserving made the grade, but many others did not and are hoping for a repeat operation. 3B7SP showed up in June followed by a large scale 3B7C operation in September. VP6TD and VP6AL from Pitcairn made it into many logs in between May and August, and FWØMO and FWØYL were particularly active on the low bands in July and August. On August 14th a station signing 7O/G4HCL used a local Yemen Communications station to activate that rare entity, but no documentation has been received by the DXCC desk at this time.

The later third of the year saw VK9WWI activate Willis Island mostly on the lower bands. Rare to semi-rare DXpeditions included 3C7Y, H4ØMY, 5L2MS (Liberia), 1A3A (during the SSB DX contest), VK9CCC, XF4s, TN6X and TN9Z, E4/OM2DX, 3D2AG/P (Rotuma), 9UØA, V8FDM, V8FWP, V8FWU and C91KDJ to name a few. A station is now on Bouvet using the callsign 3YØE, but has not shown much action as the year ends. Let's hope 3YØE makes it into many logs before they leave Bouvet in mid-February.

Many DXers got a rare Christmas present when St Barthelemy (FJ) was added to the DXCC list for contacts made on or after December 14, 2007. That is the date when it was added to the US State Department Fact Sheet. Martti, OH2BH, and Olli, OHØXX, came on the air on December 18 as FJ/OH2AM and operated through Christmas day, giving many of the Deserving a new one. Local FJ5KH was also activated. The addition of FJ to the DXCC list means that the current entities list was increased to 338. Stay tuned. There are several possibilities for more new entities in 2008! 60m also showed promise as more entities obtained permission to operate on that band.

Approximately 291 DXCC entities were activated during 2007, several more than in 2006. CW did not die since I worked over 250 entities on CW, about the same number as worked in 2006. Many stations with no code licenses, especially outside the USA, have been operating on CW and some have shown great CW skills. At the same time some SSB operators have noticed an increase in activity, especially during SSB contests.

Those entities that were not believed to have been active during 2007 (and are a useful guide to those planning future operations) are as follows:

Africa (11): 3CØ, 5A, E3, FR/G, FR/J, FR/T, FT/W, FT/X, FT/Z, VKØ (Heard I.) and ZS8.

Antarctica (1): 3YØ (Peter 1).

Asia (6): 7O (see editor's note below), BV9P, EZ (see editors note below), P5, VU4 and XZ.

Europe (1): R1M (MV Island).

North America (6): CYØ, CY9, FO/C, KP1, KP5 and TI9.

Oceania (17): 3D2/C, FK (Chesterfield), FO/A, FO/M, KH1, KH3, KH4, KH5, KH5K, KH7K, T31, T33, VKØ/M, VK9/M, VK9/X, VP6/D and ZL9.

South America (5): CEØ/X, HKØ/M, PYØ/S, PYØ/T and VP8/Sand.

(W3UR editorial note: Both EZ7V and 7O/G4HCL were QRV during 2007. EZ7V is a club callsign and was reported multiple times on the bands during 2007. However, amateur radio has been banned from Turkmenistan for over 18 months. 7O/G4HCL was operating from the airport in Yemen. However, no paperwork has been submitted to the DXCC Desk. Therefore both were listed as not active during 2007.)

A crazy hobby?

My youngest brother, who is a serious 'twitcher', was recently back in South America birdwatching and got talking to a friend of his who works as a nature guide on Antarctic cruise ships. This friend was commenting that one of the problem groups of passengers is that which consists of 'country collectors' who are desperate to go ashore at every new 'counter'. They seem to think they have a god-given right to priority over other, lesser passengers and also fail to understand if the captain declares that a landing would be unsafe at a specific location. But apparently the strangest passengers they get are the radio amateurs, who tend to use the satellite phone system on the ship to call one or more of their mates back home (USA, or whatever) so that they can then work them once ashore on whichever island it happens to be. The guy's comment was along the lines of "if they have just spoken by satphone, why do they need to do it again 30 minutes later over a noisy radio link?"

I must admit, I have some sympathy! I recall when I collected my VP9 licence some years ago, the lady in the telecoms office told me that most licences are issued to cruise ship passengers who have only a few hours ashore and end up working each other on handy-talkies just to say they have operated from VP9. Whatever turns them on, I suppose. I guess Roger/G3SXW's mini-expeditions to OM, SP, etc. are somewhat similar and I am sure Roger wouldn't rank them alongside his 'proper' trips with G3TXF to make tens of thousands of QSOs from a rare location. Oh well, at the end of the day we're all a bit mad, but what would we do otherwise. Watch daytime TV?

Sponsorship

A friend recently told me he would never join CDXC under its current sponsorship policy. He says, "IMO CDXC's philosophy on spending their funds is misguided. I am

vehemently opposed to huge single-entity DXpeditions such as D68C and 3B7C. The money would be better spent on assembling a team at a central jumping-off point and then sending small groups to large numbers of nearby entities. That way we would get more DXCCs per pound note. This could be especially effective in the Pacific. I do realise I hold a minority view here".

I don't agree with him, but there is always room for debate, of course. CDXC's funds actually sponsor quite a range of expedition types and sizes (as well as producing the occasional *Digest!*) but it does beg the question of whether several small expeditions are 'better' than one large one. I would argue that the former is more 'exclusive' in that only the 'big guns' will benefit from the multiple-expedition model, whereas with one large expedition (VP6DX is a classical case – 120K QSOs as a write this, and still almost a week to go) even the 'little pistols' (sorry, I have been hauled over the coals in the correspondence column before for using that phrase, but I didn't invent it and I actually find it quite descriptive!) get a look in – just read the recent postings on the CDXC reflector for evidence of this. VP6DX could not have happened without significant sponsorship, even though each team member is spending a very considerable amount of money on the trip. Hiring ships doesn't come cheap and false economies can be potentially dangerous (I recall one DXpedition some years ago to an Antarctic Island which simply didn't have proper survival equipment and endured some very serious hardships as a result). But I'm sure your Committee would always welcome feedback on CDXC's general policy with regard to expeditions and other activities.

Finally it's congratulations to Mike, G3SED, on working K9FD/KH6 for his last zone on 160m. It's taken a mere 45 years! What will you do now, Mike?

Don G3XTT

Borneo Bulletin

Steve Telenius-Lowe, 9M6DXX

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Borneo Hy-Power?

I am now the proud owner of a Tokyo Hy-Power HL-1.2Kfx linear amplifier, which I imported direct from Japan with the kind help of Kazu, JA1RJU. This particular amplifier was not originally my first choice, but what I was looking for was an amplifier that combined a reasonable amount of power output with light weight and small size. This model is listed as 750W PEP out, a little less than a couple of alternative models, but also only weighs 15kg, which is 5kg less than other amplifiers in what Tokyo Hy-Power themselves refer to as the 'quasi-1KW' class.

The saga of its importation is quite a story. The equipment left Tokyo on 25 December, spent a couple of days travelling around South-East Asia (Hong Kong then Singapore), before arriving in Kota Kinabalu on 27 December. Despite a couple of queries it was not processed by customs until 2 January, when DHL contacted me to say that customs required RM 1056 (about £165) to release it.

However, I had been told that amateur radio equipment is free of import duty in Malaysia, so I contacted Sangat Singh, 9M2SS, who kindly provided me with the necessary information to get it zero-rated - assuming it was classified as amateur radio equipment. Herein lay a small problem, for Tokyo Hy-Power themselves describe the HL-1.2Kfx as an 'RF Amplifier' or a 'PA', but do not mention the magic words 'Amateur Radio'. Customs therefore must be assuming it was some fancy piece of hi-fi equipment, I thought. So I downloaded as much information as I could from the Internet that mention 'ham' and covering 'amateur bands' in relation to the HL-

1.2Kfx and took the print-off to the DHL office.

On 7 January I had another call from DHL to say that customs had now agreed that there was zero duty to pay - but they required an Import Permit from SIRIM, the type-approval organisation here. DHL said they would arrange this for me and it would cost RM 75 (a lot better than RM 1056!), so of course I immediately agreed. However, they needed my signature on the form, so I had to go back to the DHL office to sign the form.

It then took another three weeks before customs eventually released the amplifier. Apparently there is only one SIRIM officer in Sabah who can issue the import permits and he was on leave when DHL applied for it on my behalf. When he returned from leave he had a lot of work to catch up with. Then when he got to my case he obviously knew nothing about amateur radio equipment because he had to go to his boss in KL to get permission. At least this is the story I was told.

There was no operator's manual or handbook in the box, so I assume the SIRIM people took it for their reference - this would almost certainly be the first Tokyo Hy-Power 1.2Kfx linear (legally) imported into Malaysia, as it is a new model.

UK amateurs can be grateful that they can pop into ML & S or call Nevada and have an amplifier delivered the next day, although the cost, including freight charges from Japan, was a lot less than you'd pay in the UK.

The amplifier gives around 600W on 20m (where my SWR is a bit high), but nearly 800W on 15m (where it is close to 1:1), as

measured on a Daiwa PEP power meter, so everything appears to be working well. It should run smoothly and cool at the 400W level.

Apart from adding a few dB to my signal from the home station, I do plan to use the amplifier on some DXpeditions from countries and IOTA islands around the SE Asia region. So far I have resisted doing this because conditions – on the high bands, at least - have been so poor, but is it my imagination or has propagation been slightly better since, say, mid-January?

SEANET 2008

Here in Kota Kinabalu we have had the second SEANET 2008 Organising Committee meeting and it is soon time for the third meeting. I have been tasked with organising the SEANET contest and sourcing locations for a possible IOTA DXpedition (to OC-133) for those who want to stay on in Sabah after the Convention finishes. I think this is an excellent idea, especially for those coming from further afield such as Europe or the USA, as few people would want to travel so far for just a three-day event.

The difficulty is finding a suitable location, as most of the islands that have suitable accommodation on them are incredibly expensive, certainly by local standards. You can pay as little as £40 per night for a room in a five-star hotel in Kota Kinabalu (corporate rate) yet the resorts on the offshore islands charge upwards of £80 per night for what is sometimes pretty basic accommodation.

As for the SEANET Contest, which is run on the first weekend in June, this is a very poorly supported event, with fairly complicated rules and with no obviously suitable logging program available for it. Although time is now running short to get the rules published around the world, I am attempting to re-write and greatly simplify the rules, hopefully to attract more entrants.

Unfortunately, the date clashes with HF NFD in the UK and IARU Region 1, which kind of explains the lack of support from Europe.

VP6DX

Probably everything that can be said about VP6DX has now already been said, but I would like to add my experience. I heard them on 20m SSB, not particularly strong but certainly at workable strength, on their first full day of operation. I turned down the RF output control on the FT-2000 so as not to overdrive the new linear and gave my callsign just once – but forgot to switch in the linear. Back came VP6DX with my full call, correctly, first time! I checked afterwards and found I was running about 30W out. And Ducie island is over 13,000km from here: further than from here to London!

Later I worked them, second call, on both 80 and 40m SSB, despite having only modest antennas on those bands (40/80m inverted-Vee dipoles on the same feeder at 40ft in the centre), and on 17 and 15m, although the QSOs on those two bands took around 5 minutes each. I have yet to hear them on 10m and have no antennas for 12 or 160m. But what a great job they are doing!

Visitors to Sabah

I have been in e-mail correspondence with three more amateurs who may or may not be coming to Sabah soon. One is a very famous DXpeditioner who is planning to settle here, like me, under the ‘Malaysia My Second Home’ (www.mm2h.com) scheme and hopefully I have been able to help him with answers to some of the numerous questions that one has before moving halfway across the world. However, he asked me not to let the ‘amateur radio world’ know of his plans, so his identity must remain a mystery for the time being!

Kosova: A new European country is born

Nigel Cawthorne, G3TXF

DXers don't often have the opportunity to be present when a new country is born. But on Sunday, 17 February 2008, a group of six DXers was in Pristina when Kosova declared its independence from neighbouring Serbia. Previously Kosova had been a predominantly Albanian speaking region of Serbia.

The DX team (led by Martti, OH2BH, and including Pertti, OH2PM; Juha, OH8NC; Wayne, N7NG; Bernie, W3UR and Nigel, G3TXF) had arrived in Kosova a few days before independence was declared. The exact date for the announcement was not known for certain, but was widely expected to be Sunday, 17 February.

Travelling to Kosova is easy enough. BA currently flies to Pristina four times a week from Gatwick. The local currency is the Euro (although in the Serbian parts of Kosova, the Serbian Dinar is used).

Two hotels – two locations

The DX team had set up stations in two separate hotels in Pristina, the capital of Kosova. One of the two hotels was the Grand Hotel. Not only was it a 13-storey building with a flat roof eminently suitable for the installation of HF antennas, but it was also the location of the main press centre. The area around the Grand Hotel was filled with numerous broadcast satellite vans, and the hotel itself was teeming with journalists all reporting back to their various countries on the birth of the new country of Kosova.

Prior to the announcement of independence members of the team got on the air using the licences and callsigns issued by the local Frequency Management Office, which is currently run by UNMIK (the UN Mission in Kosova). For example, YU8/G3TXF was

able to make some 1,500 CW QSOs mainly on 30m during the day prior to independence. Other team members also got on their air with the YU8/ callsigns issued by UNMIK.

Independence declared

The announcement of independence itself was made at 3pm on Sunday, 17 February. Within hours the US had recognised the new country of Kosova. Following his official announcement to parliament, the Prime Minister held a press conference in the Grand Hotel at which the new Kosova national flag was presented.

Then just a couple hours later from the same hotel, the first QSOs were made using the specially issued team callsign YU8/OH2R for the 'Goodwill Kosova' operation. The second station at the Victory Hotel also came on the air and the pile-ups began in earnest.

It had originally been planned to have three stations full-time, but it was a couple of days before the second station at the main hotel could be installed at the Grand Hotel. Every square foot of the hotel including the roof was being used for something or other in connection with the numerous press activities within the building. However a second station at the Grand Hotel was eventually set up. Two HF verticals (an R5 and a Stepp-IR) were installed on the roof of the Grand Hotel.

The YU8/OH2R station at the Victory Hotel (located about one mile from the Grand Hotel) consisted of a Stepp-IR 40m-10m vertical perched high on the roof with the base some 60ft above the ground and a station set up in one of the hotel rooms. The Victory Hotel station did only CW and the pile-up operating was shared between

Wayne, N7NG, and Nigel, G3TXF. SSB (as well as more CW) was handled from the other two stations in the Grand Hotel. Both locations suffered from a fair amount of local QRN, but despite this good pile-up rates were to be had from 40m to 17m.

A major independence day fireworks display was held in Pristina on the Sunday evening. This coincided with the first hours of operation of YU8/OH2R. We could still clearly hear the noise and loud bangs of the fireworks outside the hotel, even though there were huge pile-ups ringing in our headphones.

The YU8 prefix

YU8 had been the prefix used to designate the Kosova region when it was originally part of Yugoslavia, and latterly part of Serbia. Since no new ITU prefix has yet been issued for Kosova, the UNMIK licensing authority in the new Kosova had no alternative other than to issue licences with the 'old' prefix of YU8. Separately the Serbian licensing authorities in Belgrade are now issuing the same YU8 prefix for use within Serbia. This caused some confusion on the air during the operation from Kosova.

The operators at the two different locations quickly fell into the usual pile-up, sleep, eat mode of DXpedition operating. Despite relatively poor conditions every effort was made to provide contacts with Kosova. From the Hotel Victory location 40m produced good openings to JA for an hour or so either side of sunrise in Japan. This opening was markedly more predominant from the SE part of Europe than it is from the UK. The JAs were much less fluttery on this path than they would be from home.

The YU8/OH2R 'Goodwill Kosova' operation continued for about three days and some 11,000 QSOs were made, mostly on 40m, 30m, 20m and 17m. It was exciting not only to have been present when a new

European country came into existence but also to have made some of the first QSOs from Kosova, the world's newest country.

Local visits

Following the operation a courtesy visit was made to the UNMIK licensing authority offices. They were housed in stacked portable container type offices, which were all painted in the UN's familiar pale blue colour. Over recent years several YU8/callsigns have been issued. Even though it was limited in the choice of prefix available, the local licensing authority in Pristina was fully supportive of the multi-operator YU8/OH2R operation.

A brief side-trip was also made by part of the team (G3TXF, N7NG and W3UR) to the capital city of Macedonia, Skopje, which is about 85km from Pristina. The primary purpose of this side-trip was to add Z3-Macedonia to the respective DXFC (DXCC countries visited on foot) scores.

Kosova DXCC postscript

The status of the QSOs made immediately following Kosova's declaration of independence on 17 February 2008 is as yet unclear. There are just three possibilities: (a) they count as Serbia, (b) they count as nothing at all (ie they are in DXCC limbo, like Northern Cyprus) or (c) they count as the newly born European country of Kosova. Logic suggests that (c) is the correct solution, but only time will tell.

CDXC
CHILTERN DX CLUB
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CW pile-ups from St Barts: FJ/G3TXF

Nigel Cawthorne, G3TXF

St Barthélemy is one of the several French islands in the Caribbean. For DXers St Barts was, until recently, just a pleasant adjunct to French St Martin (FS) with its own individual prefix (FJ) which distinguished it from its larger neighbour. However, following a recent change of status from being part of a French overseas department (DOM) to a 'Collectivité Territoriale', St Barts became the latest addition to the DXCC list.

There were originally just two French overseas departments (DOM) in the Caribbean: Martinique (FM) and Guadeloupe (FG). Administratively, St Martin (FS) and St Barts (FJ) were both part of Guadeloupe (FG).

DXers with longer memories will recall that early operations from St Martin (and St Barts) used an FG callsign but with an unofficial FS suffix even though they counted as a different DXCC country. For example FGØZZ/FS7 was the callsign for a multi-op CQ WW SSB team (which included G3TXF) from St Martin in 1973. Eventually callsigns with the FS prefix were officially issued for St Martin. Prior to the official use of the FS prefix, several unofficial FS callsigns, eg FS7RT, had been used by the locals on St Martin for a number of years.

French overseas territories were previously split into two types: 'departments' (DOMs) or 'territories' (TOMs). However, there are now no more TOMs. All the old TOMs (ie St Pierre et Miquelon FP, Mayotte FH, French Polynesia FO, Wallis et Futuna FW) were converted into 'Collectivités Territoriales' in March 2003. This didn't change anything for DXCC. Then in February 2007 the French government decreed that both St Martin (FS) and St Barts (FJ) would each become separate

'Collectivités Territoriales'. It was not until later in 2007 that St Barts (FJ) was given separate DXCC entity status by the ARRL.

Following the most recent changes there are now still two French DOMs (FG and FM) in the Caribbean, plus the two new Collectivités Territoriales: St Barts (FJ) and St Martin (FS). French Guyana (FY) on the north coast of South America is also a DOM.

FJ: Getting there

St Barts has deliberately not set out to create a huge tourist infrastructure on the island. There aren't any high-rise buildings or any large apartment blocks, unlike on neighbouring St Martin. St Barts' wish to keep the island 'exclusive' (ie small and expensive!) is made all the simpler by the limitations of the airport. St Barts has become a holiday destination of choice for numerous glitterati. This category, however, does not include G3TXF!

Only small planes can land on the St Barts runway. There is a 200ft high hill literally at one end of the runway, which means that planes pass over the top of this hill (where there is also a main road) at no more than 40ft above the ground, which makes both for an interesting landing experience for those in the plane and for some dramatic views of low-flying aircraft for those on the road watching the planes land. The take-off direction at the other end of the runway is over the beach and is less dramatic. However, the continuous series of small planes taking off does provide some entertainment for those on the beach at the end of the runway.

Unlike in most of the rest of the security-crazed world, there are no perimeter fences at either end of the runway and there is none

of the usual ‘security nonsense’ at St Barts airport. It’s more like arriving and departing from a small local flying club rather than from an international airport.

Lost luggage

The majority of the scheduled flights to St Barts are the ten-minute commuter flights from St Martin. There are also flights to and from some of the other local islands including Antigua. Big time glitterati, of course, arrive in St Barts in their own planes.

The FJ/G3TXF operation started with a BA flight to Antigua (V2), followed by a flight and overnight stay in St Martin (PJ7/FS). Even though XYL Anneliese and I left Gatwick with four checked items of luggage, by the time we arrived for the overnight transit on St Martin there were only two items of luggage left.

The equipment case with the Acom 1010 linear had not got unloaded by BA at Antigua and was taken on to the BA flight’s next destination of Grenada (J3). It took a couple of days for BA to get the equipment case to St Barts. But at least BA’s luggage department had a good idea of where it was, even though it was missing.

However, the suitcase which contained the radio and all the other essential equipment had never made it onto the LIAT Antigua-St Martin flight. Although there are regular commuter flights across from St Martin to St Barts, we were not happy to book our onward flight to St Barts until LIAT had located the missing suitcase and got it to us at St Martin airport. Arriving in St Barts as a DXpeditioner without the linear is one thing, but arriving neither with the linear nor with any of the radio equipment is another! At least with BA there was a note in their computer to say that the missing linear had gone to Grenada by mistake, but I had no confidence at all in LIAT being able to successfully locate and onward-deliver such an important missing item of luggage. We

spent half a day waiting at St Martin airport continually hassling the seemingly somewhat dopey LIAT staff until the missing suitcase with the radio was finally located and brought from Antigua. So, some 36 hours after leaving Gatwick, we finally arrived in St Barts (FJ) on a commuter flight from St Martin. There were just three passengers on the 18-seater plane for the ten-minute inter-island hop.

Setting up the station

Although most recent DX trips have involved going to somewhere ‘new’, it is quite pleasant for a change to go back to a location that has been visited before. There are none of the usual unknowns of arriving in a new place. FJ/G3TXF had operated from St Barts nearly a decade earlier in October 1998. This time I booked exactly the same bungalow-style hotel as ten years earlier. It was located on St Jean Baie, which has an excellent take-off towards Europe. Like most of the Caribbean islands, St Barts is hilly and most beach locations are severely blocked in one direction or another. The QTH at Baie St Jean provides a clear sea take-off to the East Coast of the USA as well as towards all of Europe. The chosen QTH was also close to the end of the runway. The small planes taking off made quite a noise as they passed overhead. However, this was only during the day. There are no flights in or out of St Barts during the hours of darkness.

The antenna was a Stepp-IR vertical, which works from 40m to 10m. Given that St Barts (FJ) had only recently been elevated to the status of a DXCC entity, it was decided to focus on just a few bands rather than to spread activity across too many bands. By focussing on a few bands, a larger number of different stations could be worked during the short trip.

Making the QSOs

The weekend of the six-day visit to FJ coincided with the FOC Marathon. This was

unfortunate. Normally I'd be only too keen to take part in the FOC Marathon, particularly from an overseas location. But given that the demand for FJ was still so high, it seemed unfair to devote any of the limited time available to just working FOC members, rather than running the main pile-ups. If any FOCers called while I was running a pile-up on 40m during the Marathon, I would try to give them my

number to make it into a good QSO for the FOC's annual club contest. The powerbands were 40m and 30m. The Stepp-IR is a full-sized quarter-wave vertical on 40m and provided it is located in a good position it works really well. Especially on a beach! 3,800 QSOs (uniques) were made on 40m and 2,700 on 30m. As shown in the table a significant percentage (63%) of the total QSOs made were with Europe.

| Region | 40m | 40m % | 30m | 30m % | 17m | 17m % | Total | Total % |
|---------------|--------------|-------|--------------|-------|--------------|-------|--------------|---------|
| Europe | 2,470 | 65% | 1,430 | 53% | 1,110 | 74% | 5,010 | 63% |
| N America | 1,250 | 33% | 1,210 | 45% | 360 | 24% | 2,820 | 35% |
| Others | 80 | 2% | 50 | 2% | 30 | 2% | 160 | 2% |
| Totals | 3,800 | | 2,700 | | 1,500 | | 8,000 | |

Most of the operating was during local night-time hours, finishing at about 8am local (12z). On some days it was surprising to hear EU stations on 30m right up to 12z. Sleep was taken in short doses; usually not more than two or three hours at a time. This type of operating pattern with short sleep periods does tend to make you pretty tired by the end of the trip.

Although close to the beach, the installation of the antenna was far from ideal. The vertical ended up having to be close to the bungalow wall, which would not normally be too much of a problem in itself. But in this case it meant that my operating position was less than six feet from the base of the antenna. Fortunately I had brought a good selection of ferrite filters (an absolute must for any DX traveller's suitcase!) and was able to solve the majority of the 'RF-in-the-shack' problems. However, there was still some residual hash generated by one of the switch-mode PSUs, which meant that the odd noise birdy would be heard sweeping across the band.

And after five nights of operating exactly 8,000 CW QSOs (net of all duplicates) were in the log, and it was time to first of all re-pack the station into the three suitcases and

to put the Stepp-IR vertical back into its ski-bag ready for the journey home.

Returning home

In order to keep things simple (and avoid another transit through St Martin) it was decided to fly back directly from St Barts to Antigua in order to connect with BA flight back to London. Win-Air operates several short inter-island services. The Win-Air flight from St Barts back to Antigua was about 45 minutes in an ancient six-seater Britten-Norman Islander. We were the only two passengers. On this flight there was absolutely no concern about the whereabouts of the four large items of luggage. They were all clearly visible piled up in the tail of the plane right behind our seats. The Win-Air flight from St Barts got us to Antigua in good time for the flight back to Gatwick. In fact there was even enough time for a quick visit to a restaurant in St John's, the capital of Antigua.

FJ: recently new DXCC entity

Even though the French government had designated St Barthélemy (FJ) to be a Collectivité Territoriale in February 2007, it was only on 14 December 2007 that FJ was

added to the list of DXCC entities. The first operation was around Christmas time, with Martti, OH2BH, and Olli, OHØXX, operating as FS/OH2AM. The second major operation from FJ was by Paul, F6EXV, and Yuichi, JR2KDN, as TO5FJ in early January 2008. In between times there was also a small amount of activity from the one or two resident FJ stations.

The FJ/G3TXF CW-only operation which started in late January 2008 was therefore only the third operation from the new DXCC entity. However, given the relative ease with which it is possible to travel to this delightful (but extraordinarily expensive) French holiday island, there are likely to be numerous other DXpedition and contest operations from St Barts (FJ) during the coming months.

CDXC Local Hero Award 2008

Brian Otter, 9J2BO

There will be more on this one in the May *Digest*.

New Members

CDXC offers a warm welcome to the following new members:

| <i>Call</i> | <i>Name</i> | <i>Location</i> |
|--------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|
| EI2JD | Thomas Caffrey | Co. Louth |
| GØBNR | Nige Keightley | Huntingdon |
| G3RCE | Robert Allbright | Milton Keynes |
| G3SJH | Chris Eyles | Birmingham |
| G3VPW | John Wright | Wantage |
| G3WHK | Derek Poulter | Morden |
| G8MKO | Keith Pocock | Merseyside |
| GM4ESD | Geoff MacKenzie-Kennedy | Fife |
| GM4XMD | William McDicken | Logan |
| MØSCH | Christian Schreiber | Cambridge |
| MØTBF | Christian Mikkelsen | Cambridge |

Brunei 2007

Tom Wylie, GM4FDM *tom@gm4fdm.com*

Having done a search of the DX Summit for V8 cluster spots for the last five years, I came to the conclusion that there was mileage to be gained from an expedition to Brunei Darussalam, especially on the low bands where there have only been a handful of cluster spots each year.

It's interesting to note the philosophy of the 5 Star DX Group, who believe that they can get down the food chain to the dipoles and the G5RVs after all the kilowatts have come and gone. I think we also noted that in 2001 when we went to VP8, the Falkland Islands. Not a rare DX location, but the pile-ups never really faded. And so it would prove to be from Brunei. After my trip to Benin I swore I'd never remain in contact with a pilot station or have a log search or Internet connection. I'm of the opinion that this is a double-edged sword for a small expedition. But more of this later.

I sought travelling companions in early 2007 and Ronald, PA3EWP, who was with me in Benin - and Flo, F5CWU, who was on the same T33C expedition - answered the call.

The second rule of expeditioning is: find a local on the ground who can help. Again the Internet came into play and a search again of the most popular spots revealed V85SS as the most active ham in Brunei at the moment. V85SS replied almost instantly that he was actually in the process of building a shack for rent and offered to host our expedition. The fact that he had a tower and a 5-element tri-band yagi was the clincher. He also revealed that V85RH (known locally as Robin Hood) had contacts with the licensing department and he would take care of the V8 licenses. We decided to make a serious effort on 160 and 80m, which in effect meant a serious antenna.

Things moved very quickly after that and an early winter date was chosen between the CQ WW contests, as all of us like to participate in those. Everything was going to plan until we costed shipment to Brunei of my ACOM amplifier and Ronald's V160 Titanex vertical for 160 and 80m. DHL wanted £350 to ship my amplifier one way to Brunei, whilst Ronald faired little better with FedEx in Holland, who wanted around €1,000 to ship the Titanex and control box.

So it was back to the drawing board. We had not planned until that point to seek sponsorship, but if a serious attempt was to be made at 160 and 80m we needed both the amplifier and the Titanex. Fortunately sponsors came to our aid. Our principal one was the Battlecreek Special shipping and maintenance fund, who made the magnificent donation of \$1,000 which solved the Titanex problem overnight.

We took off from London's Heathrow airport on Saturday, 3 November, stopping briefly at Dubai in the middle of the night before landing at Bandar Seri Begawan on the morning of 4 November, to be met by Ambran, V85SS, and his daughter. Our only problem was Flo trying to tell the customs officer in Pidgin English why we had 6 x 12m fibre-glass fishing poles, but no fishing reels or tackle.

We were driven straight to the shack, which was in the grounds of Ambran's home. This had a reasonable size of garden with well trimmed grass. Sunday was spent assembling our four-square for 40m, erecting the 30m vertical in the jungle, preparing the Titanex for the next morning and building one station. We made a few QSOs on the beam on the Sunday night, but we were all pretty well bushwhacked, having been on the go for over 30 hours.

We rose at first light the next morning and, after a quick breakfast, finished assembling the Titanex. The Titanex was to be mounted on the edge of the jungle next to Ambran's property, which meant that the Beverages were also to be in the jungle. When I say jungle, I mean jungle. Ambran's house and roadway have been hacked out of the jungle. By the time we had added the radials to the 30m vertical, erected the Titanex, added the radials, darkness was again beginning to fall. It was a sight to see Ronald hacking his way through the jungle with his kukri, threading radials and pulling the wire of the beverage.

The weather at this point was dry, although it did shower a little in the afternoon. Both the temperature and the humidity was very high, necessitating a large intake of water. On the Monday evening we discovered a Brunei treasure – take-away. We had a choice of Italian pizza, Indian or Chinese cuisine, all delivered to our shack by moped, all very cheap.

Ronald started operating on 80m at 1100z or 1800 local time. The first station in the 80m log was JA2CXF. He was quickly followed by numerous JAs, UA9/Øs, 9V and HLs. The first W, a K5, went into the log at 1138z. By this time Flo was pounding 40m for all he was worth, working a mixture of JAs, other Asians, VK and also the strongest of the Europeans. 40m was to be one of the best bands and the four-square seemed to work nicely. Each of the verticals had 16 radials. This was all the wire we could find. We did purchase 200m of twin wire for the Beverages (which we split into single cables). This cost almost £80, as all wire and cable is imported into Brunei and is expensive.

A quick sample of the 40m logs shows the following contacts: SM3xxx, W7xx, BG7xxx, F6xxx, so you can see that propagation was wide and varied. In general signals on 40m were strong. GM3POI was the first UK station in the log on 80m – surprise, surprise! It was nice to hear old

Clive in there. How exciting it was to work FK8DD on 80m, along with XU7MDY, not your usual UK 80m QSOs.

Other notable GMs in the 80m log were GM3PPE, YTS, 4YSN.

We eventually got going on the 6th on 160m, as the previous night the band was too noisy without the Beverages. Fortunately Gavin, GMØGAV, had made us up Beverage transformers and end-terminating resistors. These proved a very valuable asset and meant we didn't have to fabricate something out there. Strangely enough Gavin was the first GM station in the log on 160m. The Titanex was right on the edge of the jungle. We had in excess of 40 radials on it (after 40 I stopped counting). We had a Beverage for North America, which doubled for Japan and another for Europe. It would be fair to say that without the Beverages we would not have been able to work on 160m. The second GM in the log on 160m was GM3POI, followed by GM4YXI, GM3YTS and GM3UA.

Operation on 160m and 80m were shared by Flo and Ronald, who are just gluttons for punishment. One night there was no propagation on 160m, so we stayed on 80m and either 40m or 30m. On nights when there was propagation we stayed on 160m, swapping over to 80m in the lulls. It would have been nice to have separate antennas for 80m and 160m, but we simply couldn't afford to ship a second Titanex.

After the second full day of operating we established a routine. In general the bands closed at about 0900 local time until just after lunch. During this time we ate, showered, washed our clothes, titivated the antennas, e-mailed our logs, checked the spots etc. We were seldom idle. After lunch we started on 17m, moving to 15, 12 and 10m if there was propagation. 10 and 12m only opened on a couple of days and the openings, although intense, tended to be brief.

We tended to concentrate on CW, as the majority of the active V8s operate only SSB, hence the reason we didn't make a vast number of QSOs on 20m. I began operating on RTTY on 6 November on 17m, with F5MOO being the first in the log. A run of Europeans was interspersed with the odd VK station. GMØUDL was the first GM station in the log on RTTY, followed by GM4FAM on 30m

I had been operating for most of the day on the first Friday, had handed over to Flo, eaten and gone to bed intent on an early start. At around 10pm I was awakened from a deep sleep by Ronald, who urged me to get up as we had visitors. After a few expletives I rose to be greeted by V85RH, V85TT and V8BDS. It transpired that BDS's daughter was married to the Crown Prince of Brunei, the Sultan-in-waiting. A very important man. He is also the President of the Brunei Amateur Radio Society. We sat and chatted, drinking copious amounts of tea and coffee until I noticed that it was almost 3am. Was there any propagation that night on 160 or 80m? We will never know.

Just before leaving, BDS announced that he would throw a barbecue in our honour. This was set for the Monday evening. Around 7pm on that day Geoffrey, V8ASC, arrived with a vanload of food and barbecues on which to cook it. There was enough food to feed the 5,000. He set to with great gusto and was soon joined again by V85TT, V85RH, V8BDS and a few other V8s whose callsigns I unfortunately did not record.

We enjoyed beef, chicken, fish and lots of seafood, all done to a 'T' on the BBQ by Geoffrey. Again we drank loads of Coke, Fanta, tea and coffee and enjoyed the hospitality. Unfortunately we missed yet another night of operating, as by the time they all left at around 4am we were too full up to even think about operating. Brunei hospitality was really enjoyable. Rahaman,

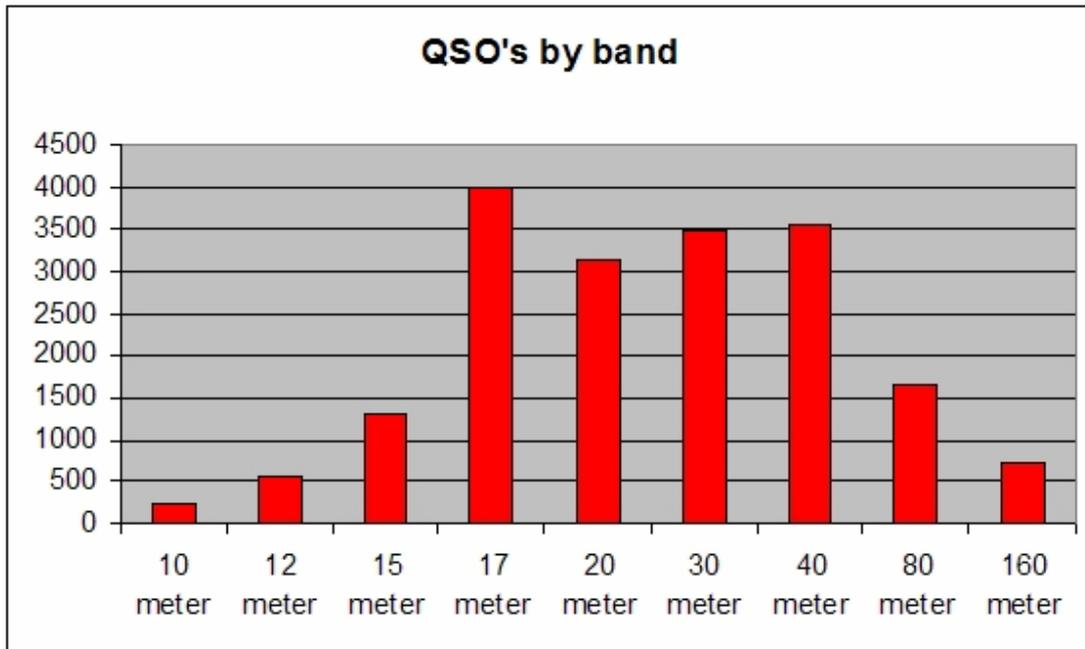
V85RH, arranged to pick us up in his 4 x 4 (everybody has a 4 x 4, and petrol is 50p a gallon). He showed us around the City of Bandar, arranging the time of our visit so that we managed a glimpse and a wave from the Sultan as he left his Palace for an engagement. This is the largest palace in the World and just oozes opulence. We visited the largest mosque in the region, the Omar Ali Saifuddin Mosque, which has a stone boat in the lagoon (a replica of a 16th-century *mahligai* barge) and also the water village - Kampung Ayer, home to some 30,000 local village people. We went up river in a water taxi to see the proboscis monkey, a very rare species only to be found in the wild in Borneo. We visited a real Chinese restaurant and enjoyed real Chinese food.

The weather of Brunei is completely different to anything I have experienced before. The humidity is always high. Brunei consists mainly of tropical rain forest and when I say rain, I mean rain. Some days it came down in vertical sheets for hours on end. The ground flooded and our vertical bases were under water. After the rain the humidity shot up and the air conditioning of the shack was a godsend.

Ambran, our host, was usually available to run us into town or to the supermarket as required.

All too soon our trip came to an end. We had almost 20,000 QSOs in the log. This was our target and I'm sure if we hadn't missed the two nights operating and had not spent so much time on 160 and 80m we would have broken the target easily, but I'm sure those stations who worked us on those bands were very pleased by our efforts. I don't think we made the East Coast of the USA on 160m, but nowadays it's hard to tell if that W2 is in New York or New Orleans.

Our results are as follows:



We made 722 QSOs on 160m and 1,673 on 80m – and over 1,550 QSOs on RTTY.

Back to the Internet. During the second week especially we received many requests for skeds, requests to QSY to a specific band or mode for a single QSO, repeat QSOs as perhaps our online log had not been updated for whatever reason. It's just not possible for a small expedition to accommodate every request at the drop of a hat, although we did try to work around the 160m requests. We just did not have the time to read a lot of e-mails.

QRM – yes we suffered from QRM. Some nights both 40m and 30m were totally unusable due to the 'Chinese radar' covering the whole band for what seemed like hours. In that part of the world, especially in the jungle areas where the Internet or even the telephone has not yet penetrated, radio is a valuable communication tool. During daylight hours 30m and 40m were full of stations conversing in USB. I'm told they were from Indonesia, but I couldn't decipher the language. But making QSOs on those bands was extremely difficult at times. On my last morning on 17m RTTY I was plagued by a station running a carrier either on my frequency or on that of the stations I was

trying to work. And a problem specific to RTTY: when using RTTY please do not tail-end QSOs. Two main reasons: I could not tell if the QSO was complete because of new callers overriding the station I was presently working. When people tail end at exactly the same time with a similar message in their F4 button, it is impossible to single out a callsign, even a partial. Stations were S3 or S4 at best and it was just impossible. QSO rates dropped to 1 QSO every two minutes. No amount of pleading 'spread out' or QSX UP, UP, UP made any difference whatsoever. It's a sad fact, but there were UK stations in there too.

The only fly in the ointment was when FedEx delivered my ACOM amplifier back to my home: it had suffered a major drop and the front panel was smashed. As I write this I am still arguing with FedEx. As we were leaving Bandar Seri Begawan airport we were met and taken for lunch by V85RH and V85TT, with whom we spent a very enjoyable afternoon. Have you ever tried to explain to a Brunei customs officer the purpose of a bandpass filter? Ronald and Flo were killing themselves at my puerile attempts. 20 hours later and we were back in London and Brunei 2007 was history.

All three of us would like to thank our sponsors: the Battlecreek Special shipping and maintenance fund, the GMDX Group, the Chiltern DX Club, the RSGB, BARTG, GDXF, EUDXF and the Clipperton DX Club. In addition we received several personal donations from MMØBQI, GØJHC, K4ESE, G4WFQ and last but not least Mr D. Kepkay.

Without all your help and support we could not have made it to Brunei. We just could not have worked on 160 or 80m with 100W and wire antennas. Thank you, everybody who supported us.

Our QSL routes have been well published: V8FWP to PA7FM, V8FWU and V8FDM to our home calls. All Bureau cards will be returned via the Bureau and we shall publish our logs on LoTW in due course.

Quick Flit to CT3

Roger Western, G3SXW and Lionel Parker, G5LP *g3sxw@btinternet.com*

What do we do when there are no sunspots? We pop off for quick trips, that's what! A dull January day was made much less dull by an overnight flit to Madeira when Lionel, G5LP, and Roger, G3SXW, flew off to Funchal and operated as CT3/G3SXW and CT3/G5LP. We had heard in September that easyJet were introducing a new route Stansted/Funchal. New routes usually mean cheap fares and it was indeed cheap: £51 all-in per person. Not bad for a four-hour flight each way!

Bookings

Having agreed the dates between us, we booked up the flights and then thought about hotels. Unfortunately there is only one flight per day, so we couldn't turn this into a day-trip; it required an overnight stay. How to find a suitable hotel?

A good friend José, CT1BOH, often operates contests from CT3, so we fired off an e-mail. He came straight back with two suggestions. First choice was on the north coast, but this was 1½ hours driving away. His second suggestion was Duas Torres Hotel (Two Towers), in Funchal, a mere 15 minutes drive from the airport. Google Earth showed us that this was on a

promontory sticking out into the sea, albeit facing south. We e-mailed our room reservations and were all ready to go.

Luggage

Two chaps, staying overnight in a hotel, only away from home for 24 hours really don't need much. A change of clothes, no razor. Besides, the easyJet rules these days call for only one carry-on bag, of limited size, but unlimited weight as long as you can lift it yourself into the overhead lockers. Airline rules about luggage keep changing, so it's worth checking. So we could each take one carry-on bag, plenty for what we needed: one station, one antenna, one spare shirt each. We each showed up with a 'roller board', as the Americans call it, one of those small wheelie things that airline crew favour.

We had checked in on-line with our broadband connections and printed the boarding passes. easyJet allow you to do so up to sixty days before flying. Unfortunately we were not allowed to also check-in on-line for the return flight. We had also pre-booked parking in the mid-stay car park at Stansted Airport, which saves a few pounds. So we duly met up at noon on 27 January 27

2008 at Zone C in Stansted departures. Our flight left at 1345. Security only took 15 minutes, so we had time for a sandwich and a pint.

Madeira

Our four-hour flight was somewhat ahead of schedule and Portugal is on GMT, so it is the same time as UK. (CT3/Madeira is part of Portugal, even though it is way out into the Atlantic Ocean) We arrived at our hotel at 6pm, just as the sun was setting. Taxis from the airport to the city are pre-priced, so we were delivered in no time at all by a driver whose idol was evidently Michael Schumacher. You will be relieved to hear that my knuckles eventually regained their pink colour.

Madeira is a huge volcano. It consists of vast hills jutting up almost vertically to great heights. To reach Funchal from the airport the highway runs through several tunnels. The whole place is built-up, with residences constructed in the most unlikely places, on steep hillsides. There's barely an inch of empty land. But the sun was shining and it was warm, so we were in the mood to party. In our case this means a) a slap-up dinner, and b) some gentle pile-ups. In that order!

QRV

Upon arrival the hotel allocated us two adjacent rooms on the third floor. Not good! This was a 12 storey hotel and we wanted height for the antenna. We wanted to string out a 20/40m trapped dipole, as a sloper. So we asked for rooms on a higher floor. We were told (but didn't really believe them, as we were well out of season) that they had only one other room, on the fifth floor. We took these two rooms.

So we set about stringing the dipole. The top end was tied to the fire escape outside the fifth floor room, then dangled down the building. Lionel then clambered down the fire escape and strung the bottom end out

across a flat roof. It was at roughly a 45° angle and fitted nicely in the space available. We closed our minds to the fact that this was sloping to the south, that the sea take-off was to the south, and that all the folks that we wished to hear were to the north, seriously blocked by mountains. Never mind! We found that the SWR was reasonable on both 40 and 20m, less than 2:1 anyway. After a really outstanding meal and one or three glasses of Madeira port, we fired up on 40m and had instant pile-ups. The signals from Europe were loud and there were even a few East Coast North Americans. We each had a bash for half an hour and then collapsed into bed.

Come the Morning

After breakfast we fired up on 20m. The band was open to Europe, but with much weaker signals than on 40m the previous evening. We also encountered a problem: the computer CW keying failed and the external computer mouse froze. We attributed this to RF in the shack. We were emitting only 100W, but the high-voltage end of the antenna was only a few feet from the laptop.

Anyway, we each made a few QSOs on 20m, then decided to take a walk and get coffee for elevenses. It was blowing a gale, but we were impressed with the local shopping arcade: everything was very neat and clean. On returning to the hotel we asked for a 3-hour late check-out, but were instructed in no uncertain terms that we should vacate by noon. Very odd, as the 300-room hotel was nearly deserted. Oh well, never mind - they had perhaps closed several floors for the off-season. So we coiled up the dipole and packed. This took at least 20 minutes! We then checked out and took the hotel bus into downtown Funchal and again were impressed with how up-market the place was. We hunted for the airport bus, but having found that it departs only every 90 minutes we hailed a cab. The rest is history, as they say.

Results

We each made exactly 55 QSOs on 40m and on 20m for a grand total of 220 QSOs. Our purpose had been served. We had had a lot of fun, we had seen for ourselves a new 'country' and we had played with the radio. This is hardly a 'Needed' country so we felt relaxed about enjoying ourselves, rather than slavishly running pile-ups for the duration of our visit.

It must be said that the airport at Funchal is a revelation. It sits on the side of a mountain, the runway at an angle of about 20°. But intrepid travellers do not fear - never! It does seem that every one of these little trips provides vivid experiences and memories, seeing new places. Every trip is unique. And we do laugh a lot. Where next? Well, funny you should ask. We intend to be QRV as 3A/G3RTE, 3A/G3SXW and 3A/G5LP in March. Just for a day or two. Oh La La!

Band Trashing

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Band Trashing is when a DXpedition operator spreads his pile-up across the whole band, filling it with QRM - so rendering it unusable by anyone else. My subjective opinion is that this happens less frequently these days, thank goodness, but it is still a problem that needs to be addressed. Recent DXpeditions have been guilty of doing this. People not chasing DX, or perhaps chasing some other DXpedition were drowned out and might feel justifiably irate.

Size of Spread

Various factors determine how wide the spread of receiving frequency might need to be. Certainly a Top Ten Country generates a larger pile-up and a wider spread may be needed. How wide is 'wide'? Roughly speaking SSB pile-ups require double the spread of CW pile-ups.

Now here's a personal opinion: on CW surely even a Top Ten Country pile-up requires a maximum of 10 kHz, and on SSB therefore a maximum of 20 kHz. The big majority of DXpeditions are NOT to Top Ten Countries, so their pile-ups might be smaller with proportionately a more narrow

spread. A typical small CW pile-up might require only 1-2 kHz. I have personally never used a spread greater than 7-8 kHz (on CW). But there is a direct correlation here: the rarer the country, the bigger the pile-up and the wider the spread required.

Who determines the amount of spread? The DXpedition operator, of course, and he alone. Skilled DX chasers quickly find the frequency of a station that makes contact with the DXpedition and efficiently tracks changes to the DXpedition's RX frequency. When the DXpedition keeps moving his RX frequency up the band, many callers know to start calling a little higher. This progressively spreads the pile-up across the whole band: not all callers are skilled at tracking the RX frequency, so they keep calling on the same frequency. If they were all skilled, then the pile-up would shift but not spread.

So the amount of split is not really the issue: it is the spread that is the problem. We sometimes transmit on 10.105 MHz, for example, but the only clear band segment to listen on is around 10.125. So the split is 20 kHz, but the spread is still kept to a couple of kHz.

Why Trash the Band?

That is a really good question. Surely on any band and any mode it is quite unnecessary to spread the pile-up across 50 or more kHz. I can think of three possible reasons:

- operator skill: the DXpedition operator simply cannot pick callsigns out of the QRM, so needs each caller to be on a clear frequency. He therefore keeps spreading his callers, usually further and further up the band. He has a problem with his ears and his brain. Maybe he is tired, but he needs to concentrate harder.

- ignorance: maybe it simply does not occur to the DXpedition operator that he is ruining a whole band. Allied to this might be arrogance: he is so self-important that he feels he deserves the whole band to himself. After all, he is the rare station that everyone is calling – right? DXpedition operators perhaps do not stop to sweep the band to even realise that he has filled the whole spectrum with callers.

- poor receiver: to be able to pick callsigns out of the pile-up you need to be able to hear them. RX filters and selectivity are crucial. The TS-930 in the old days, and now the Elecraft K2, are my preferred DXpedition transceivers mostly for this specific reason. Frequently these days there is more than one DXpedition on a band at the same time. The unskilled DXpedition operator who spreads his callers all over the

band is stomping on other DXpeditions. Not nice! I have suffered far too often: I am running a nice controlled pile-up, but suddenly my callers can't hear me because I have been covered up by stations calling another DXpedition who is transmitting further down the band. Those callers care not whether they are causing QRM to anyone else – they just keep hitting the TX button in a mad frenzy.

Action?

It is difficult to know how to cure this problem. But as with most things in life word of mouth and peer pressure usually help. When hearing a band being trashed, perhaps we all need to complain, on clusters and reflectors, and by sending e-mails to the operator and/or pilot station. We should not simply accept the situation. Besides, surely we all know that an uncontrolled pile-up dramatically reduces our thrill of chasing DX.

This is yet another way in which the success of a DXpedition can be measured. DXpedition operators presumably want to be considered successful, but they need to understand that there is much more to 'success' than simply the number of QSOs logged. It might be unfair to criticise a whole team: it is individual operators who use Band-Trashing tactics. The message needs to get through to them that we are NOT happy!

CW Skimmer

Roger Western, G3SXW g3sxw@btinternet.com

Well, it had to come: we now have a CW decoder program that renders the operator redundant! So they say. Hmm, but this new program does look powerful and it has the contesting community hotly debating the future of our beloved hobby.

With Software Defined Radios, good filters, sound cards plus powerful computing and such paraphernalia one can now monitor a whole band. It will fill a band-map of which stations (callsigns) are audible on which frequencies. Just imagine the

power of it! Real-time listings of signals audible at YOUR location, across a spectrum. Just think: whilst CQing in a contest and running stations you can now 'see' what else is on the band or any other band, to understand propagation, to identify needed multipliers or even just needed stations.

It does work but the real-life in-depth testing is yet to happen. Just download it from www.dxatlas.com/CwSkimmer/ and straight away you have up to 3 kHz of resolution, without any extra gizmos. You just need an audio feed between the transceiver and the computer. But how good is it at separating out multiple signals within a few Hertz, as in a pile-up?

This opens up numerous possibilities for the contester and the DX pile-up operator. It takes us one step closer to automated QSO making. Yukk!

But we cannot stop the march of technology and we certainly cannot uninvent stuff. So what do we do with it? At first, I suppose, we evaluate it and form opinions about

where it might take us. I, or one, am rather nervous! Let us firstly recall the Mario story: YU3EA (now S56A) is an extremely clever chap. Some ten years ago he developed software which would sample every 10 Hz and decode CW. In simulated trials he beat a real operator by a factor of 3:1 at decoding incoming callsigns in a pile-up situation. But he then totally ditched his work simply because if widely adopted it would damage CW operating beyond repair.

But now VE3NEA has launched 'CW Skimmer' on the world stage and it is available for all to use. It is shareware for 30 days, then US \$65. Is this good for contesting and DXing? Who knows. Our knee-jerk reaction must be that this is NOT good. But only time will tell. Technology is unstoppable. I tell you: the DX Cluster looks like 19th century technology compared to this. And we can only imagine where this might take us: interfaces to the real-time log to identify new multipliers or needed stations, comparisons with the winning log in that category last year...

Watch this space.

CU2/G7VJR

Michael Wells, G7VJR

Between 26 December 2007 and 3 January 2008 I took a short winter break to the Azores, an unusual but easily accessible location that I had been curious about for some time. I wanted to do a little touring, get away from the cold weather - and also I wanted to put my ultra-light portable station to the test. I took quite a lot of kit to try in the field, with future trips in mind.

The Azores are approximately 930 miles due west from Portugal, placing them quite a substantial distance from Europe and well on the way to North America (just another

2400 miles and you're there). The islands have volcanic origins, being on the Atlantic ridge, and there is evidence of this on most of the nine islands in the group in the form of dramatic calderas and distinctive black, porous volcanic rocks.

As the climate in the Azores is warm and wet, there is always a sense of abundant life, and indeed during my stay in late December the temperature averaged 20° during the day, and 18° by night. Frequently, though, the warm weather flowing with the gulf stream comes into contact with cold fronts

from the north, so if you like dramatic swings in weather conditions this is the place to go! High winds buffet the islands regularly and these knocked my antennas for six. I don't know how they manage a weather forecast: I just expected it to change every day, and was not disappointed!

There are nine islands in the Azores:

- CU1 Santa Maria
- CU2 Sao Miguel
- CU3 Terceira
- CU4 Graciosa
- CU5 Sao Jorge
- CU6 Pico
- CU7 Faial
- CU8 Flores
- CU9 Corvo

The distance from east to west is some 370 miles, more than you might expect. The majority of the islands are close together, but Corvo and Flores are more distant, so an internal flight is preferred to reach them (they are also a separate IOTA group). CU2 (Sao Miguel) is the notional capital, and is readily reached by flying from Heathrow to Lisbon, and then to Ponta Delgada on the island. Mind you, it takes a full day due to all the changes. The airport is small, modern and calm compared to the bustle of British international airports. My hand luggage was always searched, but I had no problems getting the kit through.

I rented a very pleasant wooden cottage near Ginetes, which was on the side of the volcano (Sete Cidades) on the very westernmost tip of Sao Miguel. With an altitude of 300m above sea level and an unimpeded take off towards the States, I was extremely pleased with this QTH. It was HF quiet, and there was an enormous space where I could erect antennas and lay radials.

Unfortunately, though, with the steep side of the volcano blocking the path to EU and to G, there would be a price to pay.

On the air

I am a fan of wire verticals supported on fishing poles (SOTA poles) of 10m length. I have found this is an ideal size for portability. It is a great benefit that the radial system can be used on any band once laid, provided it is pretty good to start with. I use 30 radials about 7m to 10m long, or for extra clout I use the spare vertical element for my 80m 'L' and 160m 'L' as radials when they are not in use.

Changing bands on a wire vertical is easy. Simply unscrew the element (bolted through a crimp connector on the coax feed) and bring the pole down, and you can change band in a few minutes with pre-cut and labelled elements. Extremely fine wire can be used to save weight – it is not structural. Wrapping the wire around the pole allows minor adjustments as it adds inductance, and a few wraps is sufficient to stop the wire flapping.

I used my trusty K2/100 and Win Test for logging, and had a Yaesu FT-857D with me as a spare, and for SSB. This is a very compact way of operating 100W on all bands, but I also with me for testing I had a 400W linear built by Mark, G4AXX (used for the first day).

Results

I had a go on 160, 80, 40, 30, 20, 17 and 15m, mostly CW (see chart). Trying lots of bands strikes me as a good way to learn the propagation of a location and it is also great fun when, as with the Azores, the location is not rare but collecting band/mode spots may be of interest or sporting fun for avid DXers. It also gives QRPers a good opportunity.

The big money band was 40m. I was taken aback by the exceptional propagation to NA on 40m, starting from around 1900z and lasting through till 1100z the next day. Stations on the East Coast were normally above S9, sometimes completely flattening

the AGC up to 40dB over S9. Good pile-ups ensued and some interesting DX slipped into the log when conditions were changing. Having a great site and using modest power gave me a balanced chance of working at least a little DX, and it was a pleasure to consistently work the West Coast from their sunset onwards.

I didn't spend a lot of time on 20m, as I suspect it has seen a lot of action, but 30m was in good shape and gave me many interesting contacts including ZS, ZL, ZD7, VP8, CE and, unexpectedly, EL. To the north, although I worked OHØ and TF, I couldn't seem to crack JA at all – all my low-angle gain was wasted on the volcano again.

17 and 15m were only open for a few hours in the afternoons, but I was pleased to give them a whirl (mostly NA and some G).

On 80m, the local QRN was quite strong and I felt my 'L' was quite deaf, and did not work a lot with 100W. When it came to 160m, I had even less efficiency – just 10m of vertical and the rest horizontal, and 100W is certainly not enough. However, the Stew

Perry contest was running and I was chuffed to work GM3POI (thanks for your patience, Clive!) as well as a string of East Coast stations and VE.

I closed the log at 2359 on 1 January 2008, having made exactly 2,008 QSOs after dupes. I felt this was a good time to stop (and a neat number for the new year!). As I had some more touring to do, I decided to dismantle the station at this stage. While on the air I had heard from Gary, CU2JT, and we had agreed to meet up for a beer and a chat about local conditions. Gary is quite an active CW op - and I narrowly missed meeting Frank, CU2DX, who has a 4-ele SteppIr on a substantial tower, not far from Ponta Delgada.

Break down of locations worked:

OC < 1%
 AS < 1%
 AF < 2%
 SA 2%
 NA 62%
 EU 34%

| BAND | SSB | CW | RTTY | OTHERS | DUP |
|-------|-----|------|------|--------|-----|
| 160 | 0 | 33 | 0 | 0 | 2 |
| 80 | 0 | 146 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 40 | 20 | 684 | 0 | 0 | 26 |
| 30 | 0 | 473 | 0 | 0 | 16 |
| 20 | 109 | 328 | 0 | 0 | 7 |
| 17 | 6 | 167 | 0 | 0 | 4 |
| 15 | 0 | 42 | 0 | 0 | 1 |
| 12 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 10 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| 50 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 | 0 |
| TOTAL | 135 | 1873 | 0 | 0 | 56 |

TOTAL QSO : 2 008

To anyone wishing to visit CU2 with radios I recommend the location I used provided you want to work mainly to the west. The

owners, Ricardo and Margarida are 'radio friendly'. See

www.vacationvillas.net/Portugal/holiday-house-Azores/p42407.htm

The logs are now in LoTW, and there is a log search at

<http://clublog.g7vjr.org/l.php?log=CU2/G7VJR>

VP6DX: Another rung up the ladder

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Most people recall where they were when President Kennedy was killed - I was in the kitchen. But, more importantly, I can remember vividly where I was when the terrible truth dawned on me that I had not only fallen from #1 slot; I wasn't even on the Honor Roll! I recall exactly - I was driving from Jim and Kirsti Smith's QTH on Norfolk Island back to our motel on 13 March, 2007. During a magic evening with them over a Chinese meal, Jim broke it gently to me that ten counters had been added while I had been 'elsewhere', but the gravity of the situation didn't dawn until later, in the car.

A cold hand gripped my heart; I'd never missed a 'new one' since I got my ticket in 1975. Top of Honor Roll had always been my amateur radio target and I was the first G4+3 to achieve it, back in '91. Now, all that effort had been wasted through a prolonged period of inactivity and the years had whizzed by. I once heard an elderly G station calling in a pile-up: "This is my last sunspot cycle". I know just how he must have felt. Plainly, something had to be done before it was too late.

Life was not going to be a bowl of cherries. It wouldn't have been quite so bad if the

missing countries were in Europe, but most were halfway round the globe and several were uninhabited islands which might be activated once every five years. Luckily one easy one was available for me to regain HR status. A contact with YT6A for Montenegro and exceptional help from the QSL Manager, who uploaded my QSO to LoTW, had me back in the Land of the Living. I worked E4 (the OM DXpedition) for a 'buffer' and the new FJ counter, but the first of the potentially difficult ones scheduled to appear since I got back on the air would be Ducie Island, VP6DX (I'd worked Scarborough Reef in the past, but had missed Swains as it had been aired whilst we were in ZL-land).

What little equipment remained from my once fairly substantial station had to be dug out from storage. Most items were OK, but the MLA2500 Active ATU had developed serious digestive trouble in the PSU. Things were fraught. Dentron was out of business and the capacitors and diodes I needed were not available from the usual sources. After some searching I found a source of capacitors and, as luck would have it, George Eddowes, G3NOH, heard my cries of distress and very kindly gave me the required diodes to carry out repairs. The old

beast was soon smoking merrily, every light in the neighbourhood dimmed, TV pictures the size of postcards and loud war cries emanating on 20m SSB. It was a bit like the old days!

Antennas were going to be a major problem. Back in the Golden Days I had a 5-band Gem Quad up over 60' that would take apart just about any pile-up and I cannot recall any DXpedition which I didn't work on day 1. It was like having Jodrell Bank in the backyard. The Quad was still in the garage, but the elements and switchery were gone and at my age I couldn't face tuning it again. I recalled winding the tower up and down 46 times to tune the 4-element Quad on 10m. but it was worth it to obliterate S-meters at 10,000 miles range just by clearing my throat! Now, all I had were nested dipoles for 10-30m at about 35-40 ft and an inverted-L for 80m fed against a single earth spike.

Unfortunately we are now surrounded by houses and one neighbour is a celebrity with a lot of security devices, so there is S9 QRN on most bands all day. The wire dipoles worked reasonably well, but VP6DX would need something better than some electric string for me to have even a slim chance of nabbing them. Our resident DX Guru, Don Field, suggested that LF would be the place to be as recent operations from that part of the Pacific had been very weak on HF. I did a spot of review-reading and soon headed to Nevada to purchase a Comet H422 rotary dipole. This is a strange antenna – it can be configured either as a horizontal dipole or as an 'upside-down inverted-Vee' with the elements pointing upwards. It's quite compact, but covers 10, 15, 20 and 40m more than adequately and I could get it much higher in the sky than my wire dipoles. I soon had it up on the tower with the elements pointing upwards and I was gratified to find the SWR curves as published. On-air it was pretty good and easy QSOs with ZL7/SP9PT and XW3DT on 40m convinced me that I had made a good choice. It was the first commercial

antenna I'd had for 40m and it seemed to work as well as my old G3HCT folded quarter-wave, which was unquestionably the best antenna I'd ever had for that band. For 12, 17 and 30m I built a fanned dipole arrangement on wooden spreaders. I hung one end from the top of the tower and the other end on the fence, firing straight at Ducie.

The folded quarter-wave for 40m had been so good that I decided to try and build an 80m version so I would have three LF bands covered for the VP6 operation. I'd long lost John Bazley's article from the January 1979 RadCom and tried to obtain a replacement without much success - RSGB HQ offered every possible assistance short of actual help and I almost gave up. However, another DXer heard my cries of distress and photocopied the article for me from his old RadCom.

Unfortunately John Bazley did not enter into scientific explanations of how he arrived at various measurements for the antenna and my technical ability is some way below zero. For years I thought a Smith's Chart was something to do with potato crisps, so I did not have a clue how to calculate the measurements of the co-ax stub match. I set about converting all the measurements of the 40m antenna to wavelengths and applied them to build a similar antenna for 80m. It was quite easy, except I have no way of supporting a 20m- high vertical wire antenna! All I could do was to pull as much of it as possible into the vertical using a lanyard on the tower. The remainder was pulled out on a string. Ideally it should have been horizontal, but it ended up pulled down to an anchor point on the side of the house. My 'earth' system was an old earth spike I had used many years ago, so I whacked that into the ground, connected the matching section of co-ax and ventured indoors to see the result. Incredibly it had a sensible SWR curve, so maybe some RF was actually getting out rather than microwaving the moles. I worked a few Ws in one of the contests and some other bread and butter

DX, but never heard any really long-distance stuff. Would I even hear VP6DX, let alone work them?

The VP6 gang arrived and were soon on the air. To everyone's utter astonishment, not only were they audible on 40, 80 and 160 in the UK, but they were loud! I decided to wait for a couple of days and on the morning of 13 February I checked the cluster at 0730 to find lots of reports of them on 40 and 80m. I switched on the FT-1000 and at the top end of 80m they were S9+. Surely this could not be? Despite having worked 39 Zones, Clipperton Island and G3OKQ/VR6 on 80m, I had never heard a genuine S9 signal on 80 from that area of the world. I listened – Laurie, G3UML went through (I swear I heard him fall off his chair from here!), hotly pursued by Eric, GØCGL. I popped in my call and back they came: "G4DYO 5 and 9". I was almost too excited to respond but concluded the QSO and immediately raced in to tell Ruth and to gaze in amazement at the folded vertical fed against an earth spike which had just busted the pile-up to work VP6DX nearly 9,000 miles away (OK, the Active ATU did help a bit).

Back into the shack and 12 minutes later they were again in the log on 40m SSB after one call, although their signals were slightly weaker than on 80m. 40m CW was unusable due to deliberate QRM so it was time for breakfast. An hour later I popped back to find the QRM gone and I soon had them in the log with S9+ signals on 40m CW. A totally incredible experience. I cannot recall, in all the years I chased DXCC, ever making contact with a new one on LF first. The vast majority of my first contacts were on 20m SSB, with other HF bands later. LF always came much later, if at all.

There is no question that most of the 'work' in the 80m contacts came from the VP6 end. Remember that if two stations are running similar power, it matters not how enormous one antenna might be, the signal strengths at

each end will be similar thanks to the gain of the bigger antenna. So even stations with G5RVs were probably S9 in Ducie and I wouldn't be surprised to hear of mobiles getting through... and even someone running a Partridge Joystick in a flower pot?

On the morning of 15 February I checked 80m CW and they were romping in. A couple of calls and I had them in the log. Far from being a difficult one, VP6DX was among the easiest new ones I'd ever worked. As I write, I'm still hoping to get them on HF, but they haven't been too loud up there yet.

So, the climb back to the top of Honor Roll is underway and my DXCC score is now 345/331 (E4, FJ and VP6 yet to be credited). Now I just need FO/A, FO/M, FK Chesterfield, H4 Temotu, KH8S Swains, P5 and 4W Timor Leste. I guess P5 may be the one which will forever elude me, but I live in hope – all True Blue DXers must be Believers – and we must always expect the unexpected... and the expected.

If anyone would like more details of the folded quarter-wave, please email me at g4dyo@aol.com. It really is a cracking design and given a reasonable earth would be a seriously competitive antenna.

Lastly, during the VP6DX operation it was interesting to read of Nigel and Laurie hastily re-vamping antennas to cover other bands. I know the feeling, folks – outside with a few yards of wire, couple of choc-block connectors and my 12-beam, 600-element EME array soon becomes a G5RV.

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Asus EEE PC Review

Michael Wells, G7VJR

Micro lite DXpedition logging

There are aspects of amateur radio that benefit indirectly from computerisation. The one area that I believe is not contentious is computerised logging, which relieves active stations of paperwork and greatly improves the QSLing process. It also opens the door to rapid, detailed analysis of logs, which is understandably a fixation for all contesters, and most DXpedition operators.

My preferred logging tool is Win Test, which has an exceptionally optimised log entry process (minimum of key strokes) accompanied by great, instantaneous feedback. I use it wherever the QSO rate is likely to be high. The challenge with something like Win Test is the need to run Windows, and this in turn means carrying a modern computer.

On a DXpedition every kilo of luggage needs to be justified and many modern laptops, while powerful, are actually quite heavy. It is certainly not the case that a glossy, widescreen panel with an advanced graphics adapter is going to add anything to your QSO rate, and you don't want it getting full of sand or water.

The EEE PC

Not long ago Asus released a very small, ultra-light and simple laptop called the EEE PC. Unlike many sub-miniature laptops it is not designed to be powerful or even especially advanced. It is designed to be cheap; just £199. It weighs 920g, much less than my CW paddle, and uses a 7" TFT display. It has WiFi and a LAN card, a modem card and sound card. Better still, it uses a solid state hard drive which makes it immune to shocks.

There is plenty of cause to get excited about this! It seems the cheapest laptop you can buy is also, on the face of it, the perfect laptop for a travelling radio amateur. Happy days.

EEE PCs are in short supply due to huge demand, but I was lucky to spot one in PC World, and snapped it up. I have the entry-level version, which has 512 MB RAM and a 2 GB drive. The processor is an under-clocked 900 MHz Intel Celeron M. It's a clever idea – under-clocking saves power, the full load being just 22W for the whole device, and it keeps the heat down more than proportionately.

After getting the laptop out I spent a while examining the default Linux operating system, which is pretty good, but lacks a shell and root login. It comes complete with Firefox and Open Office, and works just fine. However, while I am an enthusiastic Linux user, there is no denying that for amateur radio Windows is the platform of choice.

Installing Windows

Using the enclosed instructions from Asus I attached an external DVD drive to one of the three USB ports (yes, three!) and started the installation, replacing the Linux partition with Windows XP SP2, which is the earliest and therefore fastest Windows operating supported.

Surprisingly, the process for installing Windows is completely trouble-free. There are drivers on a CD with the packaging. Installation of these improves the screen layout, and adds support for the onboard network, sound and wireless card. It requires a number of re-boots to do the whole task, but unusually this is entirely

automated by the clever folks at Asus. Bravo – perhaps their Linux installation was not seriously expected to be retained.

Saving space

2 GB is not much space. The instructions include detailed - and quite expert - tips for recovering space after Windows is installed. For example, unnecessary recovery features are switched off and drive compression is enabled. Also, importantly, the size of the swap partition is fixed at 100MB. Installing Windows takes a while, as solid state disks are slow on write, which is also why they are not much use for swap files. They are super quick on read, by the way. Windows boots in just a few seconds.

After working through the instructions you get about 700MB of free space, which is plenty, provided you don't intend to run something bulky.

Pleasingly, there is an SD card slot on the right-hand side. This means you can easily add more storage and conveniently take back-up logs periodically to a removable media card. USB drives would also work fine.

Win Test

Everything works fine and Win Test does, of course, fit in the 800 x 480 pixel screen size, provided you shuffle the floating windows around on the screen. The ASUS drivers allow you to move within a 800 x 600 space if you want some extra space; the screen pans when you nudge the top or bottom edge. I found Win Test look a little while to sort out, but the results are certainly acceptable or better, and there is plenty of space to get SCP, rate graphs and logging into the display. Switching off the task bar in Windows helps recover some precious pixels. Don't forget to turn on log back-ups to use the SD card to full effect.

By the way - don't get caught like I did! I wanted to use my EEE PC for CU2/G7VJR,

but you need a new key for Win Test for each PC, so it had to stay at home while this was resolved.

Keyboard size

Having reached this point (and even having connected a WinKey to the USB port, and a serial USB adapter for CAT) I was feeling buoyant. Nothing seemed to have needed any special hacking. My final concern was that with a very small keyboard it could be difficult to get calls logged without making silly mistakes.

Let's be honest for a moment. If one takes miniaturisation to its natural conclusion, a Palm Pilot would do. Definitely not right. I think it is obvious to draw a line somewhere, and given the choice, the full size of a PC keyboard is desirable. Is the EEE PC's keyboard too small for logging? Aspiring to keep the busted calls to a minimum, I decided to test this keyboard out in AFS CW (13 January) - or accept the need to carry an external keyboard.

Good news. After AFS I don't think the small keyboard is a problem in the end. It is going to take about 30 minutes for most people to get used to the smaller layout. Touch-typing is impossible – it's too cramped - but picking away with a few fingers on both hands is quick and easy. Mercifully, the function keys are not underneath some kind of strange keyboard combination, and although page up/down etc. are hidden away, these are not part of the common key set for logging.

Lastly, without doing a detailed check, I found the EEE PC is HF quiet and does not suffer in strong RF fields.

Conclusions

Just as I had been hoping, the Asus EEE PC is ideal for portable radio logging. It is the smallest, lightest laptop since the venerable Libretto, but it's right up to date with USB, solid state drives, plenty of RAM and the

ability to run Windows XP. The fact that it is also incredibly good value at £199 is simply the icing on the cake. I would not

want to be a regular PC user with no other computer, but for the radio ham this is truly a wonderful piece of kit.

FT-2000 'quirks'

Steve Telenius-Lowe, 9M6DXX

The Yaesu FT-2000 is a good transceiver but, having now owned one for over a year, I have discovered a couple of interesting 'design features', or what might better be described as 'quirks'.

The first caused us a few headaches on St Brandon until we eventually realised what was happening, and it recently occurred with my FT-2000 here in Sabah. If there is a Morse key (or keyer) plugged in to the FT-2000 and if the power to the rig goes off (eg on St Brandon a generator failure, or here the power company's failure), when the power comes back on the FT-2000 will receive as normal, but will not go to transmit. The condition is fixed very simply by pulling out the plug of the Morse key and putting it back in again, and then everything is OK. If there's no Morse key connected to the FT-2000 at the time the power goes off or comes back on, this fault does not occur. It took ages to work out the cause and effect! When it happened to me last week I remembered the same sort of thing happening on St Brandon, but I had forgotten what the fix was. Cautioning myself not to panic while listening to VP6DX getting weaker by the minute on 15m, it still took 10 minutes of head scratching before almost randomly pulling out the Bencher and, hey presto!, the FT-2000 started to transmit again. Well, it's not the sort of thing that immediately springs to mind, is it?

Then, a couple of days later, I apparently had a problem with my new linear amplifier, which was less than two weeks old. When

calling someone using the amp, when I went back to receive, the receive sensitivity dropped by a huge amount, which meant it was impossible to receive anything but S9+ signals. Since I only need to use the linear when calling weaker stations, this effectively made the linear useless.

The fault condition was cleared by switching the amp off, then pressing the FT-2000's PTT once or twice. I thought it was a sticky relay, but found it difficult to work out whether it was in the amp or the FT-2000 - the fact that the fault only occurred when using the amp suggested it was there, but on the other hand the fault did not clear immediately when the amp had been turned off, but only after pressing the PTT on the FT-2000, which contradicted that and suggested that the FT-2000 was the culprit.

This time it took a lot longer to work out that this was another FT-2000 'quirk'. We had had several very short breaks of power on one day (a fairly frequent occurrence here), so I half pulled out the Bencher and left it half in, so the 'no transmit quirk' would not happen. Well, it certainly fixed that problem, but it led instead to the gross loss of sensitivity. Pushing the key fully in, or removing it altogether, fixes this little quirk.

Neither of these conditions are serious, but boy do they cause head scratching, anxiety when one assumes that one's new kit has already developed a serious fault, and general confusion for the operator!

IOTA News

Roger Balister, G3KMA

Update of data in IOTA Directory (2007 Edition)

New IOTA reference numbers issued

| | | |
|--------|----|---|
| AS-186 | YK | Syria group (Syria) |
| OC-283 | P2 | Tauu Islands (aka Takuu Islands) (Papua New Guinea) |
| OC-284 | P2 | Nukumanu Islands (Papua New Guinea) |

Operations which have provided acceptable validation material

| | | |
|--------|-----------|---|
| AS-186 | YK9SV | Arwad Island (November 2007) |
| EU-080 | EA1/EA7TV | Arosa Island (September 2007) |
| OC-186 | YB3MM/2 | Karimunjawa Island, Karimunjawa Islands (November 2007) |
| OC-256 | P29VLR | Kilinailau Islands (aka Tulun Islands) (October 2007) |
| OC-283 | P29NI | Tauu Islands (aka Takuu Islands) (October 2007) |
| OC-284 | P29VCX | Nukumanu Islands (September 2007) |
| SA-076 | OC1I | Lobos de Afuera Islands (January 2008) |
| SA-098 | OC6I | Blanca Island (December 2007) |

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.

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The RTTY Column

Phil Cooper, GUØSUP *pcooper@guernsey.net*

I have just completed the CQ WPX RTTY contest, and what an amazing contest that was! I generally enter a contest for fun, as I have little chance of winning, so I just amble along, making QSO's here and there, picking up new ones where possible, and also concentrating on the multipliers. It is usually quite difficult for me to get a run going with just 100W into modest antennas and I am frequently overpowered by the European big guns. That is why I spend more time in S & P mode rather than CQing.

Then again, there are just a few times when things go well and targets you set yourself before the contest have to be re-assessed and adjusted during the contest itself. WPX was one such contest. In previous WPX contests I have made in the order of 500 – 600 contacts and been very pleased with my score. This year, I set out to try and beat the 600 mark, but knew that with the solar figures the way they were, this wasn't going to be easy.

As I like my bed too much, I decided on an early start on both days, rather than staying up at night in a cold, unheated shack, and working around 15 hours each day, allowing some uncalculated time off for dinner, shopping etc. I was in the shack nice and early on Saturday morning and quickly logged YN2S, V31GW and NP3U on 80m for new band-slots for my RTTY DXCC. That seemed to be a good omen for things to come!

By mid-evening on the Saturday I had 400 in the log, which were almost all mults, and all the result of S & P. This seemed quite reasonable for me, but I was concerned that it wouldn't be so easy to find new ones to work on the Sunday, and a target of 600 seemed possible, but not a given.

On Sunday I was up and in the shack for 0600 and it did seem harder to find some new ones to work. 80m wasn't open to W/VE anywhere near as well. However, I did pick off one or two, so I tried 40m for the next few hours and managed quite a few new mults, but very little DX. 20m started to open a little more by about 0930, so I moved there and bagged a few JAs and one ZL.

Just after my nice Sunday roast I hit the 600 mark and so I set a new target of 700. A nice surprise in the shape of NP3U on 10m completed a 5-band contact with that station and was my only 10m contact of the whole contest. I then hit the 700 mark at 1613 UTC and at that time I was close to 1 million points, so I set yet another target of 800 and to hit 1 million points.

Somewhere around 1740 UTC I went to 40m and called CQ, just to try and pick up a few more, and the pile-up that ensued was staggering. I worked over 100 Qs in about 80 minutes and passed the 800 mark at around 1830. By now, I was way over the 1 million points, so I had achieved that particular goal, and as I still had some time left before my 30-hour limit ran out I just went for it, simply to see where I could end up.

Tea meant a short break for me, and after that I could not get a run going anywhere on 40 or 80m, so spent the next couple of hours simply in S & P mode and picking up any new mults that I could find. I finished up with 852 QSOs for 1,163,988 points, which I was more than pleased with. Also nice was to find QSL confirmation for YN2S and V31GW on LoTW on the Monday morning!

It was also very pleasing to see so many Gs on the bands too, ie

2EØWPX, GØHDV, GØMTN, GØRIF, GØVAX, G3KNU, G3LHJ, G3PSM, G3RWF, G3UHU, G4DBW, G4DBX, G4SGI, G4WGE, GMØNBM, GM4KLN, GM7UTD, GU6EFB, GW4SKA, MØCHK, MØGBP, MMØBQI, MWØCRI.

I also saw many more that were trawling around the bands and doing quite well from the serial numbers they were giving out. I keep thinking that the increased activity must be down to the RSGB Club Championships, but I wonder if it is just that? Or is it maybe that many of you already have Honour Roll on CW and SSB, and now want to try something different? Please let me know what has inspired some of you to take up RTTY. I would be interested to know.

So what is next in the calendar? Well, my next RTTY contest will be the BARTG HF Contest on 22-23 March. For the full rules see www.bartg.org.uk, seeing as there are a number of different categories, including a 6-hour session, if that is what you prefer. The exchange includes the time as a 4-digit number as well as a serial, so please make sure your shack PC clock is set correctly! For those of you using MMTTY please note that you MUST select the correct contest – BARTG HF, and NOT the Sprint! If you don't, then you will not have the RST column.

It also appears that MixW can cause problems for the contest manager, so please do check your Cabrillo file fully before submitting it. And don't forget that you can use your BARTG contest log to claim for the BARTG awards. Simply e-mail me a list of claimed calls and your Cabrillo file, and the BARTG contest manager will verify your claim after the contest closing date.

At the time of writing VP6DX is doing great stuff on RTTY, but seems to be concentrating on 30m. I do hope they get a little more serious on 20m! For me they have been much louder on 30m and 40m than the higher bands.

Did anyone manage to work TI9KK on RTTY? I missed out on this one, but I did work it as TI9M back in 2002 and managed to bag them on 10m and 15m RTTY, plus 15m CW. I tried to work TI9KK on 20m RTTY this time, but failed to make it. The only time I heard them on 30m was when they and VP6DX were both on and the two piles were just too confusing. Some of those calling TI9KK were being called by VP6DX and vice versa. The resulting mess slowed both DX stations down considerably.

So far in 2008 there have been quite a few serious DXpeditions, and this trend looks to continue for the next few months. Clipperton, TX5C, looks promising for an RTTY contact, as the three listed W operators all do RTTY, so we can but hope. This is on from 7 – 17 March. A large multinational team are going to Rwanda as 9XØR from 16 – 27 March and a group of DLs will be in Mauritania from 16 – 30 March. Finally, for those of you who still need GU, Glyn, GWØANA, along with MWØUSK, DL9RCF, DL8RBL and DJ9ZB will be in Guernsey and operating as GBØU.

Here is a list of upcoming RTTY contests:

| | |
|-------------------|---------------------------|
| BARTG Spring HF | 22-24 March |
| EA-WW (Spain) | 5-6 April |
| SP (Poland) | 26-27 April |
| ARI (Italy) | 3-4 May |
| VOLTA (Italy) | 10-11 May |
| ANARTS (VK) | 14-15 June |
| Ukrainian DX Digi | 21-23 June (RTTY and PSK) |
| DL-DX RTTY | 5-6 July |
| SARTG DX | 16-17 August |
| SCC RTTY (S5) | 30-31 August |
| Russian WW | 6 September |

For all rules, dates and records, check out www.rttycontesting.com.

Good luck in the pile-ups, and I hope to see more of you in the RTTY contests.

73 Phil GUØSUP

Contest

Lee Volante, GØMTN

It's been a very busy couple of months, both on and off the air. The first couple of months of the year certainly fall into the 'there's something interesting to take part in every weekend' category. Off the air the popular Internet contesting websites and public forums have been very busy with allegations about cheating, and also a technological innovation that may just change the face of contesting as we know it.

On the Air

Domestically, the RSGB 80m AFS contests represent the start of the contest year for many people. The new rule change to harmonise the CW and SSB team sizes at four seems to have been successful, with activity levels similar to previous years. The intent was to make more CW teams feel able to be competitive if a '5th man' was sometimes difficult to find, and to be consistent between the two events. For some entrants this may not fit with their personal circumstances, and indeed finding an extra '4th man' for the SSB contest may prove difficult, but it's impossible to please everyone all of the time.

For the SSB event Don, G3BJ, appears to have set the bar with a record 473 QSOs. The previous few years had seen much lower winning totals, with us needing to look back to Andy/G4PIQ's scores in the mid 1990s to find QSO totals above 400. As well as fortuitous conditions, evidence of increased UK activity is encouraging. Let's hope this is maintained in future. In the CW contest, moving from UK QSOs to DX ones, some contacts were made with central and western USA. I remember working JA myself a number of years ago during AFS – so a keen ear for the exotic is a must, as well as for the expected G*, M* and 2* calls.

During the ARRL RTTY Roundup I experienced some form of echo of my own transmission for a few minutes whilst operating on 80m mid-evening. I was calling CQ and became aware of a momentary 'beep' at the end of each transmission. The first time I noticed it I incorrectly assumed that another station was perhaps calling me during my last CQ call, and we had finished transmitting almost at the same time. After a few more similar beeps, without any sign of another caller, my next thought was that I was being interfered with. I finally realised I was listening to my own transmission, as the near perfect timing meant it could be nothing else. The effect lasted just a few minutes before disappearing. In my excitement of experiencing a novel propagation mechanism (or alternatively alien contact, depending on what you believe) I didn't check to see if the effect was in evidence at both ends of the 80m band, or elsewhere. The delay of a few hundred milliseconds ties in with round-the-world propagation, rather than recorded 'Long Delayed Echoes' of a few seconds. But I doubt that my 100W of RTTY into a window at less than 30ft AGL would generate an approx. 5/7 signal. Any thoughts?

Diary of a Serial Contester

To demonstrate a little of the breadth and variety of different HF contests, on 1 January I wrote a small article for my local radio club newsletter about contesting. Here is an abridged version...

0000 Happy New Year. I am at a New Year's Party, but return home soon after the clock struck 12 for some sleep.

0730 Climb out of bed bleary-eyed. It's cold, dark, and too early to be up on a holiday.

0800 SARTG Happy New Year Contest starts. This is a short three-hour RTTY contest on 80 and 40m. I know I must spend the first hour on 80m before the sun comes up and I lose propagation. This is a friendly contest, with the exchange including the operator's name, and a 'Happy New Year' greeting in the local language. I do better on 80m than last year's total before propagation fades, and QSY to 40m. 40m is very crowded, so it's easy to search for new stations, but I struggle to find anywhere to call CQ. Near the end of the contest I work K4GMH on 40m, and my last QSO is at 1058 with QSO number 100. That was fun, but I'm far behind the leaders in Scandinavia and central Europe.

1100 AGCW Happy New Year Contest. Immediately I switch over to CW and start working stations on 40m. The AGCW is a German CW enthusiasts group and the band is full of stations to work. The rules of their HNY contest say that all keying must be done by a manual key or paddle – no computer-controlled sending. I soon realised how cold it was in the shack as my hand was too cold to send accurate CW. The contest has already been running for a few hours and I'm joining in for the last hour. I stay mostly on 40m, although the contest runs over several HF bands, switching between calling CQ and looking for others. The final tally is 52 QSOs in the hour.

1200 My local radio club runs its own Christmas Contest between Christmas and New Year, so I work some club members on 2m FM and on 80m SSB.

1300 A very brief lunch and shopping trip – the clock is still ticking!

1400 IRTS Counties Contest. This is a relatively new contest on 80m, where stations in Ireland (EI and GI) work each other, and everyone else. All 'DX' entrants

can work only EI and GI. I work 20 stations on SSB in 30 minutes, not finding any on CW, before leaving to see my family for some New Year's celebrations.

2218 144 MHz UKAC. OK, so CDXC members aren't primarily interested in the world above 50 MHz, but I mention it here to round off '5 contests in a day'. The last 12 minutes of the contest during which I was QRV are quite frantic, even with a vertical antenna hidden away in the loft.

2230 Time for bed and a well-deserved rest.

Whilst I'm not a fan of weekends with many overlapping contests vying for your support, and sometimes leaving little choice for anyone not wishing to participate, short events like these, on limited bands and modes with a medium level of support, are not overly disruptive. Don't forget to look at the contest calendars and try some new events this year. You may be pleasantly surprised at their format and activity.

Split Operating During Contests

I received some comments from Roger, G3SXW, following the mention of operating split during contests in the last *Digest*. Roger writes:

“Contesters generally say that this is an unacceptable practice. Broadly speaking I agree: spectrum is limited and during the major contests (eg CQ WW) the main bands are full of signals. However, let's also consider the other side of the argument, just to play devil's advocate. Firstly, receivers are far better at coping with multiple signals these days, so the spectrum seems 'wider'. Mostly, though, the issue is that really rare stations attract huge pile-ups which, when they all call co-channel slows the QSO rate dramatically. I estimate that our rates (VooDoo Contest Group) on 40m are no more than half of what they could be if we operated split, simply because continuous callers cover up the frequency - we frequently have to send the callsign and

exchange two or three times before he hears us.

Forty is 'The Zoo'. The possibility of operating split really applies mostly here. If (an impossible 'if') it could be contained to 40m only and if (likewise, impossible) it were only the really rare stations with the massive pile-ups, then I would suggest that split-operating is beneficial to all concerned. The callers get through more quickly when the QSO rate is higher, indeed more callers would get into the log. Also, the DXpedition operators have a lot more fun and are more likely to go back next year. It is SO frustrating running on 40m at 90 QSOs an hour when you know that you are capable of double that rate.

The amount of split need not be much. If the pile-up were even to spread between 0.2 and 1.0 kHz above the TX frequency this would make a big difference. Several times this year (3X5A) I tried intentionally to spread the pile-up just a little, by working stations who called fractionally higher. But it didn't work: everyone kept calling exactly on my frequency, no doubt because that's what everyone does in contests. We did occasionally make an exception to the rule on 160m this year, asking for 'up 1'. We did have a bigger TX signal from 3X5A on 160m this year than usual, but we are sure that using split did improve the QSO rate. Our usual 300-400 QSOs on this band increased marvellously to nearly 1,000. That's many hundreds of contesters who would not have otherwise got this multiplier.

On balance our group would dearly love to operate split, especially on the LF bands, but we recognise that it is a slippery slope which could turn the bands into chaos during the major contests. Non-rare stations with big signals could start using this technique inappropriately even when they have small pile-ups.”

Thanks Roger. Having been on the sharp end of CQ WW CW with the Voodoo team

for a couple of years, I can certainly understand the frustration of single frequency operating when the number of callers gets very high. Congratulations on a winning multi-multi score, guys!

Cheating

Cheating in contests is an emotive subject for many serious contesters. It's often difficult to discuss and difficult to prove because of the amount of trust and honesty that has traditionally been expected of entrants. As a part of our hobby, traditionally for the purpose of 'self training using radio', to acknowledge cheating threatens the image of contesting as a worthwhile activity. But ignoring signs that cheating is not noticed or dealt with appropriately by contest sponsors may be even more damaging.

The most recent discussion on the CQ-Contest reflector concerned instances of claimed scores being announced after DX contests for a particular 'single operator unassisted' category, whilst in the results published much later it emerges that the entrant submitted their entry as 'multi-operator' or 'assisted'. Sometimes claimed score postings are made with errors – we are, after all, only human. The concern remains that entrants who may cheat see their claimed score as being suspiciously 'too good' compared with other submitted claimed scores for the same category, and so enter in a different category in an attempt to avoid disqualification.

The CQ WW Committee do disqualify entrants where their logs and scores don't stand up to scrutiny. I'm aware suggestions are sometimes made to entrants to re-submit for a different category if suspicions are raised. Several other contest sponsors have come forward saying that they are taking an active stance in spotting and taking action against cheaters. Part of the frustration from the contest community appears to be with contest sponsors' apparent lack of action. But as it has been difficult in the past to find

probable cheating, and almost impossible to prove, it is easy to understand the difficult position which the contest organisers find themselves in.

The RSGB Contest Committee also takes rule infringement seriously. One aspect is of operating outside the frequencies specified in the rules. In all but the largest of HF worldwide events, contest activity is not curtailed by specifically leaving segments free for non-contest activity. This helps to maintain relations with non-contesters.

After this furore had died down further revelations showed that a number of stations were using Internet chat rooms to assist their entry in the CQ 160m CW contest. Whilst commonplace at VHF and above, *and importantly in some circumstances allowed in the rules at higher frequencies*, it was perhaps not realised the same was happening at the other end of the radio spectrum. Some of the information being passed would classify as assistance disallowed by the rules.

Making more contest logs public would seemingly help – as everyone has their log open to scrutiny by their peers. The ARRL have said QSOs from full public logs would be invalid for DXCC credit, but hopefully this is a position that can be reversed, or a suitable compromise found.

Where public contest logs are available, analysis has been run by several individuals. There have been investigations into the probability of working multipliers soon after they have been spotted on the DX Cluster network. The findings can be used to identify which stations may be using DX Cluster spots when they claim to be unassisted. Other, more recent analysis by VE5ZX and CT1BOH look at two-radio activity, which amongst other things may help contest organisers understand when a ‘single operator 2 radio’ entry may realistically only be achievable with a second operator present. Contest organisers routinely monitor Internet chat rooms and

DX Cluster logs as well. And contest adjudicators are gaining more tools and skills in finding entrants who decide not to play by the rules. We all know this is ‘only’ a hobby, and even without cheating there is no level playing field, but with the investment in time and money spent on contesting by the top tier of players, the last few months’ discussion have proved there is a great desire to only see those who deserve the top places in the results also achieve them.

CW Skimmer

With the relaxation of the requirements for HF operation in many countries, there is a growing number of HF operators who are starting to use CW, but without any proficiency in Morse code themselves. Similar to other data modes like RTTY or PSK, computers are commonly used to decode accurately sent CW. Many contesters already use PCs for some or all of their sending during contests of course. If CW contesting is to continue to thrive, whilst we encourage the ‘PC CW’ operators to learn to receive the code for themselves, it is realistic to assume that a proportion will continue to rely on the computer.

Whilst I am a fan of RTTY contesting, I have struggled to enjoy PSK contests so much. As a result I’ve not spent that much time investigating the best PSK software to use. It was at a special event station run by my local club where I saw for the first time multiple PSK signals within the audio passband of a radio being decoded simultaneously. The implications for improving rate whilst contesting were obvious. No more manually selecting which PSK QSOs to listen to. Never miss when a station calls CQ or QRZ? etc. With the increasing use of Single Op 2 Radio techniques, multiple CW, SSB and RTTY signals can also be detected at once.

To sum up, it seems commonplace and allowable for automatic CW or datamode decoders to be used in contests, and to allow

simultaneous reception of multiple signals using several radios and/or use computers to decode signals. Hold that thought for a moment.

Now, let me introduce you to CW Skimmer. Written by Alex, VE3NEA, CW Skimmer is a piece of software that uses the output of a receiver to decode Morse signals. Whilst it works over a typical receiver bandwidth of 3 kHz, maybe picking up tens of signals in a busy contest, the most impressive results are gained when connected to a Software Defined Radio (SDR) receiver allowing decoding of signals across a wide bandwidth. Up to 700 signals can be decoded at once, with the software presenting callsigns against a waterfall display. Effectively replicating a DX Cluster, it does not take much imagination to see how contest software could integrate such an idea to populate a live band map of every station on the band. The present debate is whether contesters using CW Skimmer or similar innovations should be classified in an 'Assisted' category. The benefits it provides are almost identical to that of the DX Cluster, so on the one hand it makes sense. But on the other it's just an expansion of the code reading and

simultaneous signal reception I mentioned above, which don't actually rely on any 'external' assistance from other people. There are many people who are concerned that the skill set required of searching for stations would be eroded – similar to the growing number of contests that permit DX Cluster assistance and make no differentiation between assisted and unassisted entries. But just like SO2R has become established as a necessity for top scores, in the future maybe an SDR with suitable software will be similarly integrated into contesters' stations.

But it's not all concern and confusion. One of the other applications of CW Skimmer could be to record an entire contest, which with enough post-processing could find anomalies with stations' operating patterns, and more easily out-of-contest-band transgressions. There are certainly benefits for adjudicators and sponsors too.

Have a look at www.dxatlas.com to judge for yourself. Certainly something to think about!

73 Lee, GØMTN

E-mail to the Editor

from G3TXF

Thanks, Mr Editor, for another whopper issue [*Digest*, January 2008]. Thanks in particular for the info on the new dyslexia contest in 'Not the GB2RS News'. Unfortunately your summary of the rules omitted to mention the possible QSOs between YJ and JY, or indeed those between TJ and JT. Suitably sponsored operations will be planned for this event. We look forward to reading the results of

the contest in the next (or was it the last?) issue.

[Nigel: yes, there are many other possible combinations I simply didn't have the space to include. Anyway, I'm glad to hear about the 'suitably sponsored operations'. Further information on this one will be forthcoming as soon as the mini-skirted maidens let me have it. RFX]

Not the GB2RS News

- Budget airlines cash in on amateur radio holiday trade
- Kosova cashes in on newly independent status
- Another major DXpedition to Middle-earth

In the UK the budget airlines, including Ryanair and easyJet, continue to cash in on the lucrative amateur radio holiday trade, with new airports being built at destinations such as Andorra, San Marino and Mount Athos. What the airlines are not making sufficiently clear to customers is that on arrival at their chosen destination they haven't got a hope in hell of actually being issued with a reciprocal amateur radio licence. So the best they can do is notch up such trips as new ones for DXFC and then get on the next flight home.

In the Balkans Kosova is cashing in on its newfound independent status. Property prices have gone sky high after it was announced that with a bit of luck Kosova could soon be a new one for DXCC, with hundreds of radio amateurs descending on the capital, Pristina, with a view to staking their claim to a foothold in the area.

Another major DXpedition is planned to Middle-earth, ME-land. This time the multinational team will be based at the Mordor Marriott Hotel. There has been no amateur radio activity from Mordor since the evil warlord Sauron banned such pursuits all those years ago. With him now gone, the knob twiddlers can return.

Even though Middle-earth is still high on the DXCC 'Most Wanted' list, it's likely that the team will be applying for a special prefix for this expedition - on the basis that the common-or-garden prefix for Mordor, MEØ, simply isn't good enough.

Special Event Station News

The latest exciting addition to the amateur radio scene is Filling Stations On the Air, or FSOA. There are three basic categories: Five-Star, Diesel or Unleaded – all depending on what you normally fill your petrol tank with. The on-air exchange will consist of the usual 59 report plus the number of gallons of the above you still have left in your tank. Participants attempting to use spark transmitters will be automatically disqualified.

The very latest solar forecast.

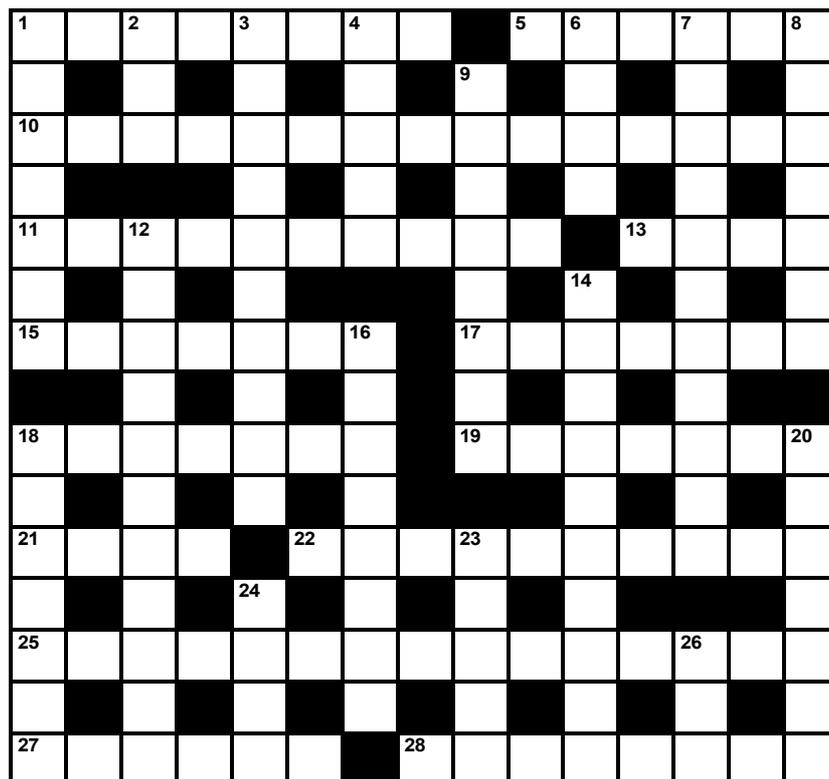
During the coming week solar activity will continue at very low levels. There again it might not. Paths this week to the Pacific should have a maximum usable frequency, with a 50% success rate, of around 21 MHz. There again, they might not. The best sort of time to point your beam in the direction of down-town Tuvalu, Tonga and Tahiti will be between 0800 and 0805 hours UTC. If you don't have a beam: forget it.

Solution to Prize Crossword 26

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

Digest Prize Crossword 27 *by RFX*

The winner of Prize Crossword 26, January 2008, and that legendary £10 note: Peter Hart, G3SJX, Medstead, Alton, Hants.



ACROSS

- 1 Having means to follow match that's appropriate (8)
- 5 They can be obtuse, these foreign invaders (6)
- 10 Part of the UK in which whites are unwelcome? (3,5,7)
- 11 Full-length, German and about a spanner (10)
- 13 Old dyke-builder no longer keen to join head of army (4)
- 15 The animal inside can't be a rat! (3,4)
- 17 Musicians originally born on Italian soil teach symphonies initially (7)
- 18 Drug provided by old killer in central Austria (7)
- 19 Edith, don't slump! (7)
- 21 Order in the French capital (4)
- 22 The Rev. Spooner's assessment wrong? That's totally crazy! (7,3)
- 25 Amazingly wow, the hit ending! That's novel! (4,4,3,4)
- 27 Naval officer hauled up on deck? (6)
- 28 Lawn Tony dug up in an unrestrained manner (8)

DOWN

- 1 Healthy snack a must, as seen from the south (7)
- 2 Diamonds seen turning up in Sadler's Wells area (3)
- 3 European capital affectionately represented by Lake Erie duo with nothing to lose (4,6)
- 4 Readily understood Argentinian detectives (5)
- 6 Part of speech negating peacekeepers (4)
- 7 Give vent to one's feelings like Thomas the Tank Engine, say? (3,3,5)
- 8 Broadcaster having means to display aircraft routes (7)
- 9 Doctor Len chose military formations (8)
- 12 Affections that are conveyed by e-mail (11)
- 14 England in Europe, say? That's uncertain (10)
- 16 Revolutionary art scene performs again (2-6)
- 18 German city that smells nice? (7)
- 20 Christian festival dedicated to Sir Robin's wife? (4,3)
- 23 Girl picked up in Queensway takeaway (5)
- 24 Get a bit of wood (4)
- 26 Local river (3)

Deadline for entries: 20 April

DX and Events Calendar

Compiled by G3XTT

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

| | |
|---------------|--|
| till 31/03 | J2ØMB: Djibouti |
| till 31/03 | LZ13ØLO: special callsign |
| till 15/04 | 6W2SC: Senegal |
| till 15/04 | J5UAP: Guinea-Bissau |
| till 23/04 | UN/4J9M: Kazakhstan |
| till April | VQ9JC: Diego Garcia (AF-006) |
| till April | ZD7X: St Helena (AF-022) |
| till 07/05 | VP5/WA1UKN: Grand Turk (NA-003) |
| till May | V73RY: Kwajalein (OC-028) |
| till 15/05 | YI9MI: Iraq |
| till 30/06 | VR1Ø: special prefix (Hong Kong) |
| till August | C91R: Mozambique |
| till 30/09 | 9A73AA: special callsign |
| till November | YE2IPY: special callsign |
| till 31/12 | AYØDX: special callsign (Argentina) |
| till 31/12 | C4EURO: special callsign (Cyprus) |
| till 31/12 | DR8M: special event station |
| till 31/12 | HG1848I: special call (Hungary) |
| till 31/12 | HG55ØREX: special call (Hungary) |
| till 31/12 | ON1ØØØNOTGER: special call (Belgium) |
| till 31/12 | ON4ØBAF: special event call |
| till 31/12 | SB1658OZ and SC1658OZ: special callsigns (Sweden) |
| till 31/12 | SH1658DK and SH1658OZ: special callsigns (Sweden) |
| till 31/12 | SK1658DK and SK1658OZ: special callsigns (Sweden) |
| till December | HFØPOL: Henryk Arctowski Station (South Shetlands) |
| till ?? | LU1ZA: South Orkneys (AN-008) |
| till ?? | R1ANR: "Blue One Runway" (Antarctica) |
| till ?? | VE2XB/VYØ: Southampton Island (NA-007) |
| 06/03-20/03 | CT3/DL3KWR and CT3/DL3KWF: Madeira (AF-014) |
| 07/03-17/03 | TX5C: Clipperton Atoll (NA-011) |
| 15/03-23/03 | HQ8R: Swan Island (NA-035) |
| 16/03-27/03 | 9XØR: Rwanda |
| 20/03-23/03 | 3W3M: Con Co (AS-185) |
| 22/03-30/03 | 9MØ: Spratly Islands (AS-051) by N1UR and KB1PQN |
| 23/03-30/03 | VK9ALH: Lord Howe Island (OC-004) |
| 25/03-28/03 | 3W3M: Phu Quoc (AS-128) |
| 27/03-01/04 | 7P8FC: Lesotho |

| | |
|-------------|-----------------------------------|
| 27/03-08/10 | JX9JKA: Jan Mayen (EU-022) |
| 29/03-02/04 | 3W3M: Dao Con (AS-130) |
| 29/03-12/04 | TM2I: special event call (France) |
| 16/04-24/04 | P4ØZB: Aruba (SA-036) |
| 19/04-25/04 | GBØU: Guernsey (EU-114) |
| 02/05-23/05 | A52TL: Bhutan |
| 16/05-18/05 | Dayton Hamfest |
| 24/05-07/06 | TM7S: special event call (France) |
| 11/06-23/06 | FH/DK7LX: Mayotte (AF-027) |
| 27/06-04/07 | JX/G7VJR: Jan Mayen (EU-022) |
| 28/06-05/07 | HBØ/ON4IPA: Liechtenstein |
| 09/10-27/10 | VK9DWX: Willis Island (OC-007) |

GØVJG in Antigua

I am off to Antigua, NA-100, for a second time. My callsign will again be V25V. I will be active in WPX SSB from 28-30 March 2008.

I will be using the V26B contest superstation. In WPX I will be SOHP on 20m for 36 hours. My radio will be an FT-857D with an ACOM 1000 and a stack of two 3-element monobanders for 20m .

I have a special picture QSL card. See qrz.com. QSL manager is Owen, G4DFI .

Nobby, GØVJG

Chiltern DX Club - Aims and Objectives

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

- Membership** Full details are available from the Secretary.
- Subscription** £15.00 for UK members, £20.00 for overseas members (US\$40 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>

