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Club News and Views

Editorial

Martyn Phillips, G3RFX

You'll read much in this Digest on 3B9C. Thanks to Don, G3XTT, for his extensive report on this one. You'll also find additional material from some of us who stayed behind and worked 3B9C on far more bands and modes than my neighbours would have been happy with at this particular down-town location. Either way, there's bound to be plenty more to come on 3B9C.

Not to be outdone, that well-known globe-trotting duo of Roger, G3SXW, and Nigel, G3TXF, tell us all about their latest DX-pedition, this time to Cameroon and TJ3G. I wonder where they'll be jetting off to next week? But then maybe I'm just envious, dammit.

Hans-Rainer, DL7CM, fills us in from Berlin on his second – and decidedly scary – trip in January to Haiti and 4V2ØØYH. In fact he only got back across the border to the Dominican Republic next door by the skin of his teeth.

Last, but by no means least on the DX-pedition front: Mike, G4IUF, gives us a report on his most recent trip to the Galapagos Islands. Yes, it was 'turtle' dedication to the pile-ups on his part too!

Talking of turtles (sorry, totals...), the CDXC membership total continues to increase by leaps and bounds. I'm still not quite sure where Neville gets his thumbscrews from, but you'll find a list of the latest recruits on page 9. And what an international line-up of new members it is too! Robert Morley, in 'Those

Magnificent Men in their Flying Machines', would be most impressed.

You'll see that there's no 'Contest' column this month. Unfortunately Tim, G4VXE, has had to stand down from this role, due to pressure of other commitments. We have, though, been very fortunate in acquiring the services of Lee, GØMTN, as our regular contributor on the subject as of the July Digest. Meanwhile it's many thanks to Tim for doing such a grand job up to now. It's much appreciated!

It's IOTA's 40th birthday this year, of course. And how are they planning to celebrate it? Well, for starters: on 26 June, the Saturday of the Friedrichshafen Hamfest, a 'buffet dinner cruise' aboard one of the famous steamers on Lake Constance - ze Bodensee, jawoll! The new IOTA Directory is just out too. In fact Roger, G3KMA, assures me that it's the best one ever! You'll find out more about these things in the obvious place, really: our IOTA News, this month on page 38.

Finally, on a personal note, just to say that it was great to work so many of you in March from Gibraltar and ZB2FX in the RSGB Commonwealth Contest (BERU)! It was only a pity that I couldn't hear most of the VEs and Caribbean stations. This was mainly due to the rather large, 1,400' Rock in the way directly to the W of my QTH.

73 Martyn, G3RFX

www.btinternet.com/~g3rfx

Chairman's Chat

John Butcher, G3LAS

As I write these notes on 19 April there is no doubt that the big news of recent weeks has been 3B9C, the latest epic of the Five Star DX Association. As you will know, most of the operators were members of CDXC. In fact I believe that, thanks to the remorseless recruitment policy of President Neville, they all are now. They clocked up over 153,000 QSOs, not quite the record they were hoping for – this is still down to D68C – but a great effort nevertheless, in view of the noticeably poorer conditions on air at this time in the solar cycle.

An expedition of this magnitude gives everyone a chance to philosophise on various aspects of our hobby. For example, 3B9C no doubt did great things for the Rodrigues brewing industry, but what has it done for poor old Robert, 3B9FR – another CDXC member? He'll probably have to scratch around for his QSOs like the rest of us, at least for a year or two.

The search for band-mode slots reminded me that long shots are always worth a try. My 160m wire had been a victim of the winter gales, but after listening to the lads on that band for a night or two I could bear it no longer. With a single bound I shorted the bottom of the coax on my 80m inverted-V, tuned it against a few elevated radials and worked them on both CW and SSB. Well, it wasn't quite that easy, but it shows that you never know your luck.

Talking of luck, I wonder why my linear stopped working on 20m the day 3B9C started up. Have I offended someone up there?

A more serious aspect of the experience, but sadly not a new observation, concerns the

operating standards of the chasing pack. The appalling behaviour of some operators never ceases to amaze me. Even leaving aside the few malicious idiots who do it on purpose, there seem to be many who just don't realise that continual indiscriminate calling, minimal listening and 'policeman' activities actually reduce their, and everybody else's, chances of making a contact.

I confess I take rather a hard line on these examples of bad operating. I have some friends who tend to make excuses for it, in terms of people's inexperience or sometimes by quoting unfamiliarity with the English language – although presumably not on CW.

I'm afraid I don't accept this at all. If a person has enough intelligence to gain a licence (assuming they have done so), erect a good aerial (which they must have done, judging by the strength of some of the signals) and radiate several kilowatts (same evidence) without killing themselves, then they should be able to work out when a DX station is working split frequency, that if he says "ending in ...AB" he's probably not listening for OP3XYZ and that if anyone keeps blasting the channel with cries of, "What is the DX?", "Please QSL manager?" and "Good morning, idiot", it's not going to do much for the QSO rate.

We often hear the above behaviour associated with geographical regions generally to the south and east of the UK, presumably because these are the areas from which we tend to receive the strongest signals. However, one evening I was listening to 3B9C on 80m SSB for a couple of hours and was amazed, although perhaps I shouldn't have been, at the antics of a number of UK stations, not all of

whom by any means were recent licensees. In fact almost none were in that category.

I'm sorry to mount one of my hobby horses again, but the real question is, 'What can we do about it?'. Certainly not go on the DX frequency shouting, "Idiot!" at the offenders. In the words of the Immortal (or so it seems) Blair, it's all about "Education, education, education...". One of CDXC's primary objectives is to promote good operating practice, so for a start let's make sure we practice what we preach. Have you ever knowingly transmitted on the frequency of a DX station operating split? Be honest!

Good operating is contagious, but not aggressively so. We also need to be more proactive. Many of the offenders who perpetrate the behaviour I've described must be known to some of their close neighbours. Tempting though it may be to take an axe to their aerial masts or a hammer to their rigs, why not try politely letting them know that you know who they are and what they're doing. Anonymity is likely to be important to them. You may get a punch in the eye, but it would be worth it to the rest of us.

For the innocent but inexperienced, why not be pre-emptive and offer to give a talk on good operating practice to your local club - or take a new licensee under your wing in his formative days. The US tradition of the 'Elmer' is a good one which many of us were grateful for in our early days. I was lucky to have several, first at G8FC, the RAF HQ station, and later by hanging on to the coat tails of people like Gerry, G2XV, and John, G3AAE, both now sadly deceased.

I must not fail to mention the very high standard of operating demonstrated by the guys at 3B9C. Why was this, you ask? First of course, many of them were very experienced, good operators. But most importantly, the group thought about how it was going to work

and how to maintain the desired standard - and the less experienced people were expected to, and did, follow the guidelines laid down.

If only more people in the wider world would engage the brain before the PTT switch. There are a few really good DX chasers around whom you rarely hear in the pile-ups, but who work almost everything. They are listening and lying in wait until they work out the best strategy for the occasion. Then they pounce and are gone to the next challenge.

That's it, folks. I promise not to climb on that particular horse again - at least, not for a few months. However, I would like to hear what you are doing or indeed what you think the club might do to promote that CDXC objective of encouraging, nay demanding, the highest possible operating standards on our bands.

73 es gud DX John, G3LAS

The New West of England Radio Rally

organised by the Severnside TV Group

Frome, Somerset

(close to Longleat)

Sunday, 27 June 2004

For full details of both the rally
and the venue please visit

www.westrally.org.uk

President's Patter

Neville Cheadle, G3NUG

Having returned from Rodrigues a few days ago after one month on the island, it's time to reflect on the highlights. The main highlight for me, perhaps somewhat surprisingly, has nothing to do with amateur radio and everything to do with the island and the people of Rodrigues.

What a wonderful place, with perhaps the most hospitable people in the world! The island itself is very beautiful, rugged and unspoilt, with many very attractive landscapes, bays and a huge reef. There was lots to see and explore and many of the 3B9C team took the opportunity to do this. Port Mathurin, the island's capital, is a bustling town, but quite unthreatening and very clean. The container port is very well run; there is a Barclays Bank with an ATM and some really interesting shops, stalls and markets. A new airport terminal has just been opened and the main road across the island was resurfaced last year.

I think my most enduring memory relates to the people of Rodrigues. Everyone, everywhere, was so helpful and friendly – I cannot think of a similar location anywhere in the world. The Rodriguans are very welcoming, with huge smiles and they really try to make you feel at home. Their approach is universal, whether you're dealing with the Chief Commissioner or a small shopkeeper, the Island Chief Executive or the hotel room cleaner, the Chief of Police or the hotel gardener. The Rodriguans are a truly wonderful people.

We must hope that, as Rodrigues develops in years to come, these characteristics remain. There are three main hotels at present, of which the 48-room Cotton Bay is by far the

largest. There are plans to build another five or six hotels, but the locals are determined to restrict development to small hotels built to match the character of the island. I hope they succeed. It would be a great shame if this beautiful island were to be spoilt by excessive tourism. The development of tourism is a must for Rodrigues because so little is produced on the island - it is heavily subsidised by Mauritius. Plans are in place for restricted development aimed at maintaining the character of the island.

Another remarkable aspect of the island relates to the approachability of the senior officials. You can call the Chief Commissioner, Mr Serge Clair (the senior politician) and the Island Chief Executive, Mr Claude Wong So (the senior civil servant) and speak directly to them on the telephone. We did just this and invited them to visit our operation. Both of them came to see us and, as you will see from the 3B9C video, they were delighted with our efforts to put Rodrigues on the map. Both are charming, relaxed men who are very easy to talk to. They share a common vision as to how the island should be developed.

If any CDXC member or their family want a really relaxed, un-pressured holiday for a couple of weeks, Rodrigues is the place to go. There are two to three flights each day from Mauritius, which connect well with the flights to Europe.

We set up at the Cotton Bay Hotel, a superb location, with an ideal take-off to the north (Europe and most of the USA) and to the north-east (Asia).

Much will be written about the operation later in this Digest, but here are some personal reflections.

- All the team members got on very well together. This was excellent, seeing as less than half the team had been DX-peditioning with the FSDXA before.
- The weather was very kind to us, with only one very wet day: the first day we started to take down the antennas. There was always a breeze with temperatures around 30°C (around 86°F).
- The antenna farm was massive, with 11 Yagis at 30-40' and verticals of various types for the three LF bands. Being so close to the sea all the antennas worked like a dream – we received huge signal reports on many occasions from all over the world.
- The Yaesu radios all worked very well indeed, despite the fact that all 12 main stations were located very close to each other.
- 10m and 12m were open for much of the day, starting with Asia and eventually reaching Europe and the US. The bands would appear to be completely dead until we started calling CQ.
- The Top Band operation was a real success, with some contacts with California which in theory should not have been possible.
- Despite the fact that we were well down the sunspot cycle, propagation was pretty good to most parts of the world, with well over 200 DXCC countries worked. Our 153K QSOs compared favourably with our D68C

record of 168K at the peak of the cycle. We broke six of our own band-mode records, with particular successes on 40m and 80m, and we came close to breaking the 160m record. No other DX-pedition team has yet broken the 100K barrier.

- During the final part of the operation we had two major solar disturbances which affected the operation quite seriously. We were fortunate that these flares did not happen during the first 2½ weeks when the large team was there, otherwise we would have had quite a few operators hanging around.
- The Star Software Suite developed by John, G3WGV, worked like a dream and was a real asset, with over 20 PCs networked together.
- The web pages proved to be very popular indeed, with more pages being read than ever before. Thanks to Webmaster Nigel, G4KIU.
- Many, many new licensees on HF were worked - including G1s, G6s, G7s and lots of M3s. It was good to see hundreds of similar stations from Germany, Holland and similarly enlightened nations. Quite a few commented that 3B9C was their first real DX contact. A surprisingly large percentage used CW.
- The most difficult operators to work are the 80m SSB gang. They call and call and do not listen. I operated this band quite a lot; a real test of patience. I tried the technique of mentioning a specific frequency just once, ie “try 3.785”. I remember three of the Gs who popped up on an absolutely clear frequency with no other takers – and they were all CDXC members. The

first was Darren, GØTSM, then Andy, G3AB, and Mike, G4IUF. Good ears guys - well done!

- Moonbounce was fun on 6m and 70cms, with quite a few firsts.
- Kazu san, JA1RJU, worked many hundreds of stations on 6m. Unfortunately there was no propagation on 6m to the UK.
- SSTV was painfully slow. Some new software for DX-peditions, perhaps even for black and white pictures rather than colour, may be the answer. DX-peditions will not commit to SSTV when it takes 3 to 5 minutes to make a QSO. That deprives around 20 stations of a QSO on other modes.

- My final reflection is all to do with the hotel staff. They were superb. Nothing was too much for them and we were really looked after. They were simply charming. We could not have found a better location from which to play radio for an entire month.

Now for the QSLing...

Neville

73 Neville, G3NUG

CDXC 2003 Challenge

Position	Callsign	Recruits
1	G3NUG*	25
2	G3LAS	21
3	G3SWH	9
4	MØBJL	7
5	GU4YOX	4
6=	G3ZAY	2
6=	M3SDE	2
6=	MØDXR	2
6=	G3AB	2
6=	G4IRN	2
6=	G3TXF	2
7=	G3VXT	1
7=	G3RSD	1
7=	GØPSE	1
7=	GW3JXN	1
7=	G3TXZ	1
7=	GØKRL	1
7=	GØMSM	1

*Neville declined to take up the offer of two free places at the CDXC Dinner on 24 April.

Secretary's Update Shaun Jarvis, MØBJL

CDXC offers a warm welcome to the following new members:

Call	Worked	Name	Location
4Z5SG	322	Savelij Furer	Israel
DK7YY	331	Falk Weinhold	Germany
GØCHQ	100+	John Pepper	Pinner, Middlesex
GØHGA	120	Angie Sitton	Stevenage
GØLGJ	186	Mark Taylor	Norfolk
GØMRF	180	David Bowman	Middlesex
GØPZA	100+	Garo Molojian	Sunbury-on-Thames
GØUQR	120+	Tom Cannon	Reading
G3RWL	100+	Richard Limebear	Middx
G4CVC	100+	John Everist	Dartford, Kent
G4KLF	100+	Tony Selmes	Hastings
G4LRQ	100+	Roy Collett	Oxon
G8VHB	100+	Mike Fitzgibbons	S.Yorks
OE1ZKC/JH4RHF	305	Jun Tanaka	Austria
K3NA	275	Eric Scace	MA
KF7E	299	Jim Henderson	AR
MØBEW	300+	Tim Elwell	West Midlands
M5ADL	100+	Adrian Lambert	Dorset
RD3AF	285	Valery Komarov	Moscow
SP9BS	100+	Stanislaw Czempiel	Poland
V85GD	100+	Greg Donovan	Brunei
ZS6ME	200	Eric Meyer	RSA

Chiltern DX Club - Aims and Objectives

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

Membership Full details are available from the Secretary.

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

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

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

DX an' all that

Don Field, G3XTT g3xtt@lineone.net

Those Brits have been busy again! 3B9C, organised and heavily populated by UK amateurs, made 153,000 QSOs to take its place as the second-largest DX-pedition ever (in QSO terms) and, indeed, only the second to exceed 100,000 QSOs. While 3B9C was QRV, those stalwarts G3SXW and G3TXF popped up from Cameroun as TJ3G and knocked off a quick 25,000 CW QSOs, no doubt giving many of the 'deserving' a new one. And as I write this, a UK-team is bashing away from Malawi as 7Q7MM, with some pretty heavy pile-ups. So plenty to be proud of. It's worth bearing in mind that the heavily-promoted 5V7C (Togo) operation earlier this year, with a strong team of French operators, made just 17,500 QSOs, which helps to put the various other DX-peditions into perspective.

Talking of which, T33C (Banaba, with Scotsman GM4FDM holding up the British end) made a very respectable 75,000 QSOs from an extremely remote location, although this one was a tough call from the UK. On paper they had a perfect greylines to the UK, so I would have expected some decent signals on the low bands (we had some amazing greylines openings to the US West Coast from 3B9, an equivalent path), but it just didn't seem to happen.

How Many QSOs?

In my January column I raised the issue of whether it is reasonable for those who already have a particular DXCC entity in the bag on a particular band and mode, to work it again when another DX-pedition appears from that location. Owen, GØPHY, responds as follows, "Dear Don, I write in response to *DX an' all that* in the CDXC Digest, January 2004. As a

'Little Pistol' I would endorse your comments about competition only being an issue with the really rare ones. It is particularly galling trying to get through a pile-up to hear a successful hunter say to the target station: "Thanks for this QSO. I have now got you on x number of bands". I read with amazement (and a bit of envy) our Chairman's Chat, where he said he had eleven QSOs with TO4E. I only heard them once, very faintly! To be fair, their restricted operating times did not coincide with my free time. I would also point out that if the DX-pedition is for a reasonable length of time, then I feel that I have a good chance of bagging a new one. The recent operation of 1AØKM is a case in point. This time the operation was over one weekend and although I did not seriously try to work them I did not get through. In 2000, the last time there was an activation, the operating period was a lot longer and working them on the final weekend was relatively straightforward. After the disappointments of 3CØV and TO4E it will be a relief to try and work 3B9C. I don't need 3B9, seeing as I worked 3B9FR recently, and received the QSL card two weeks to the day from the QSO, but it will still be great to try and break the pile ups." [*for the record, Owen appears to have worked 3B9C on 12 and 15m*]

Well, Owen, this raises some interesting points. The TO4E operation was the first significant operation from Europa for a long time, and even the most experienced DX-ers would almost certainly have needed that on several band/mode slots. So it's probably not a case of them working something over again that they have in the log from years ago. Of course some would argue that, with the restrictions placed on TO4E in terms of operating time (power only available at certain

times of the day), they should have been allowed only to work those who needed Europa for an all-time new one (But what does even that mean? Does it mean one QSO, maximum. Or one per mode?). If that's what the TO4E guys had been setting out to offer, I venture to suggest they would not have even bothered with 160 or 80m, for example, but would have focused all their operating on two or three of the 'money' bands, say 40, 20 and 17m. With a final tally of 32,000 QSOs, there will certainly have been plenty of disappointed DX-ers. It's an interesting conundrum. At 3B9C I felt that it was around the 120,000 QSO mark that we really started to get into the law of diminishing returns where, at least on some bands and modes, we were starting to run out of callers. Mind you, the pile-ups on LF, for example, were still fierce, although many of the callers were inaudible at our end – we were only aware of the size of the pile-ups by reports from Europe and the USA. It does beg the question of how far a DX-pedition should go to satisfy demand. There were those even at that stage, I see from the PacketCluster, who were putting out comments like "listen for QRP" or "listen for general class licencees above 025". Well, we worked plenty of QRP stations (even at the 1W or less level) and we worked plenty of General class licencees. But I began to feel (being the old curmudgeon that I can sometimes be!) that if these folk really wanted to chase DX, then they should (a) get themselves more power and/or (b) upgrade their licence! Surely DX-ing is an activity which requires some commitment at both ends of the pile-up; it is unreasonable for the DX-er to expect to be spoon-fed.

But the 1AØKM example raised by Owen is an interesting one. Getting permission to operate from 1AØKM is very difficult. This DXCC 'entity' is, quite literally, just one building, and it is there for a very specific purpose: to house the worldwide headquarters

of the Military Order of Malta (a venerable institution with hundreds of years of history). Occasionally, radio amateurs are allowed to mount a limited operation, usually for no more than a weekend, and often only with 'near-invisible' antennas. It is extremely rare for an operation of longer than one weekend to be authorized. Actually, in the UK we are very fortunate, because the path from here to Rome is excellent on most bands, and those of us who have been around for a few years have 1AØKM on all HF bands and modes. But from, say, West Coast USA or Japan, working 1AØKM on anything but the 'money bands' is probably just wishful thinking. The same almost certainly applies to Mt Athos (with the best will in the world, SV2ASP/A, the only active station, probably makes no more than a few thousand QSOs a year). Should 'entities' such as these remain on the list, or should they be deleted because their very existence is 'unfair' to many of the world's DX chasers? My own view is that the existence of some tough ones is beneficial, or we'd work everything on every band in our early years on the air, and then lose interest in DX-ing and take up competitive tiddleywinks (or whatever) instead. Personally, I'm glad that after 35 years on the air, there is still plenty left for me to chase, even though it does get frustrating at times to see cries from the US for XF4IH (to cite a recent example) to come up on 160, when here in the UK I had yet to hear them on any band at all! Your views, as ever, are most welcome.

There are very few 'big ones' in the pipeline for the next few months. As always, major expeditions tend to be organized around the solstices, as that maximizes the propagation opportunities on all bands. But there's still plenty to look forward to, by way of IOTA operations, the IOTA 2004 Challenge, some 6m Sporadic-E to add to your Kenwood Challenge totals, etc.

Happy DX-ing.

The Kenwood Challenge

Objective:

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

The Prize:

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

Eligibility:

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

Scoring:

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

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

Modes:

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

Dates:

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

Awards Manager and postmarked 31 January 2005 or earlier.

Log:

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

Decisions:

Decisions of the CDXC Committee are final.

Updates:

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

Note: CDXC Committee members are eligible to participate.

G3NUG



Out and About

3B9C, Project Star Reach

The Five Star DXers Association DX-pedition to Rodrigues, March-April 2004

Don Field, G3XTT

Tune the HF bands nowadays and you will almost always find DX-pedition activity of some sort. This may be someone doing a little operating while on holiday, or a large group who have braved the high seas to activate a remote island. The smaller efforts make maybe a few thousand contacts, while the larger ones make tens of thousands. But to what extent do any of them satisfy the demand for different bands and modes, driven by the huge variety of operating awards currently available and by the sheer excitement of the chase?

With Project Star Reach, we wanted to explore the limits of what is possible. Our D68C expedition to the Comoros, at the peak of the sunspot cycle, had made 168,000 contacts and the pile-ups were still intense when we finally closed. And we had not even activated some specialisms such as satellite, moonbounce or SSTV (Slow Scan Television). Yet no other DX-pedition had passed the 100,000 contact threshold, so there really is very little data about just what could be possible and just how big the potential demand is for a major effort from a reasonably rare (say, 'Top 100 Most Wanted') location. Our experience with D68C was exactly the right background to mount a 'no holds barred' expedition and, in doing so, to gather useful information on the relative demand by band, mode, continent, etc. By taking enough equipment, manning it with enough operators, and being active for long enough, could we actually run demand dry from certain areas or on certain bands and modes, or is there always

another layer of would-be DX-ers patiently waiting their turn? At the same time, we wanted to understand to what extent we could broaden the experience for the folk back home, making it possible for them to participate in a variety of ways, through pre- and post-expedition articles and presentations, through an extensive website, through chasing a series of awards, etc.

The location

Firstly, a few words about our chosen location. To achieve our goals we wanted to activate a rare one, but one with container-handling facilities, as we would need to ship out something like four tonnes of hardware, far too much to send by air. We were also looking for a location with good propagation to the major population areas of the world, which tends to point to somewhere in the vicinity of Africa or South America, somewhere south of the equator. The island of Rodrigues in the Indian Ocean fitted the bill in all respects, having seen very little activity for several years. Yet, at the same time, the island has good infrastructure and a well-educated population. Politically, Rodrigues is part of Mauritius, but is unfamiliar to most holidaymakers to Mauritius, as it lies about 600km and one and a half flying hours to the northeast.

In fact, despite having seen photographs of the island, most of our team were surprised by their first impressions as we landed on the newly extended runway and were bussed

across to the island to our hotel. Indeed, Paul EI5DI, was heard to remark that he was reminded of his native Ireland, with the rugged coastline, a pervading smell of peat and dry-stone walls. The main difference was that the rain was somewhat warmer!

Rodrigues is volcanic, rising to almost 400m at its highest point. Vegetation is sparse over much of the island as there is only the thinnest layer of soil over the volcanic rock, but herds of cattle and sheep eke out an existence and provide meat for export to Mauritius. The land area is almost exactly the same as the island of Jersey (11km x 8km). The population of Rodrigues is around 35,000, of whom 5,000 live in Port Mathurin, the island's capital and major port. The main sources of income are agriculture, fishing and handicrafts. Unemployment runs at around the 25% level and the Mauritian government is keen to develop tourism to help increase employment and to generate the funds necessary to maintain and improve the island's infrastructure.

It is clear that Mauritius subsidises Rodrigues quite heavily. The roads are good, facilities such as schooling and health, are excellent, and the whole island exudes an air of prosperity. Not everyone on Rodrigues welcomes the idea of more tourism, but economic necessity suggests there is no alternative. Right now there are four hotels on the island, and the majority of visitors come from Réunion or from France. This has involved travelling via Mauritius, but the runway on Rodrigues has recently been extended, and direct flights are being opened up to a wider range of destinations. The two main hotels have their own watersports facilities, including diving centres. The foundation stones have already been laid for a few new hotels, but care is being taken to avoid overdevelopment. The local inhabitants speak competent French and English, their local language being a French-derived Creole, but schooling is in English.

We had selected the Cotton Bay Hotel at Point Cotton (Pointe Coton) as our base of operations, for the principal reason that it is on the north coast of the island, with an uninterrupted sea take-off to Japan, Europe and most of North America. This was an excellent choice in all respects. Throughout our visit, the hotel staff were happy to cater to our every need, and many of them came to visit our stations and follow our progress. A blackboard in the bar area was kept up-to-date with the QSO totals so that guests and staff alike could follow our progress!

You might be wondering why, given that this is obviously a perfectly civilised location, Rodrigues is so rare in amateur radio terms. There is one resident amateur on the island, Robert 3B9FR, but obviously he cannot meet the world's demands single-handedly. Licensing is reasonably straightforward, although there have been occasional hiccups in recent years due to reorganisation and other priorities in the licensing administration on Mauritius. Perhaps one of the biggest obstacles, though, is that the island is served by relatively small aircraft, with a standard baggage allowance of 15kg. This doesn't allow much scope for radio equipment and antennas, even if you restrict yourself to a single change of clothing and a toothbrush! We got round this restriction, of course, by shipping the majority of our equipment by sea, but that's obviously quite expensive and also means that your equipment is on the high seas for maybe six months or more from leaving home to arriving back. Not so good if you have to ship your one and only transceiver, for example! There is some fascinating history on our webpage about previous amateur radio activity from Rodrigues, going right back to 1957 and including the 1967 Don Miller operation.

The above gives you some of the facts and figures about Rodrigues, but doesn't really do justice to the experience of being there. Neville's piece earlier in this Digest will have

given you a taste of the people and the welcome we received. This really is a wonderful place to visit, with a genuine welcome from everyone, without the jaded cynicism which seems to pervade many more developed tourist destinations. And despite its small size, there is plenty to see and do. Not so much in the way of nightclubs and discos, but if you enjoy exploring a truly unspoilt island, with its own unique flora and fauna, or snorkelling or diving on one of the most extensive reefs in the Indian Ocean, then Rodrigues is truly a tropical paradise.

Getting Started

Thirty of us flew into Rodrigues on 16 March, most having taken the overnight flight from London to Mauritius, followed almost immediately by the onward hop in a small turboprop aircraft. We were 23 operators, plus an assortment of wives, partners and children. Robert, 3B9FR, was waiting for us at the airport, along with Maury, W3EF, who had flown in earlier. It was almost dark by the time we arrived at the hotel, but first order of the day was for a small team to survey the proposed antenna field and start to consider where everything should be sited. We were also delighted to see that, in anticipation of our visit, the hotel had put in an additional power line to the two chalets we would be using as our shacks.

The following morning the team split into two halves, with half going to town to empty the shipping container and supervise the loading of our equipment onto trucks (there were no facilities to ship the container directly to the hotel), while the remainder stayed at the hotel and started preparing the shacks and marking antenna locations. The container team encountered our first problem at this stage, in that the local customs staff were unfamiliar with the *carnet de passage* documentation routinely used for shipping freight around the world. Fortunately they were quickly able to locate the necessary procedures and

unpacking began in earnest in the hot morning sun. By early afternoon most of the equipment had arrived at the hotel, and we could start collecting together what was needed for each individual antenna, mast, cable run, etc. For simplicity, everyone had been allocated to a team. One team set up the stations (some sixteen in all), one set up the computer network (one per station, plus server machine, and additional PCs in the team room, making 20 PCs in all), and three antenna teams set to work outside.

QRV

Station build went reasonably smoothly, although we had to relocate some of the antennas even before operations started, in some cases because it became clear that we would suffer from interactions - and in the case of the 160m vertical because we were warned that that the seafront location we had chosen would probably result in it being washed away!

We had told the waiting world that we hoped to become active on the bands at midnight local time on the Friday, and this is exactly what we were able to achieve. Every HF band was open, and we started simultaneously on all of them. It wasn't long before the PacketCluster system was alive with spots, and the pile-ups at our end were quite incredible. The best way to review the weeks that followed is probably band by band, but a few general observations might be of interest at this point.

Some of us have likened this and our previous operations to a swan, swimming serenely on the surface but paddling furiously underneath. A successful DX-pedition is like a good film or play: it entertains its audience, drawing them in, getting them involved, but hiding all the legwork that goes on behind the scenes to make the whole thing possible. Hopefully we were able to present a seamless face to the world, but there was certainly plenty to do behind the scenes! At the daily meetings, for

example, we usually managed to draw up a list of several antenna projects, which often involved taking down one of the antennas to fix a feedpoint problem or maybe a loose clamp (as in all seaside locations, we were subject to continuous winds, sometimes quite strong).

We also had to re-stake many of the guy ropes, as the force of the wind plus the effect of rain in softening the ground meant that the pegs we had originally used started to work free. We got some longer stakes made up locally, from angle-iron. They certainly did the trick, but proved well-nigh impossible to remove when the expedition wrapped up. Indoors, the technical team were faced with continual problems of interactions between stations, requiring them to make up stub filters, re-route coaxial feeders, and whatever else might help to effect a cure. This was a moving feast; it seemed that whenever such a problem was solved, a change of operating frequency or antenna heading could easily bring a whole new set of headaches.

We also had to abandon our plans to operate simultaneously on SSB and CW on 80 and 20m, inter-station interference being too much of a problem, although we did manage this on 10 and 15m, albeit with reduced transmit power. On the computer side, although the Star Software suite of programs had been Beta tested before heading out to Rodrigues, it is only when software is used in a live situation that some of the incipient bugs come to light, and G3WGV was kept busy, at least in the early days, in tracking them down and recompiling the code. It must be said, though, that the system was robust enough to allow logging operations to continue throughout, and continued to give us management statistics on a regular basis.

Rather more of a problem was that our network became infected at one stage with a virus, apparently finding its way in via our Internet connection. This took two team

members the best part of a day to isolate and fix, and could easily have had major implications for our operation. Truly a modern-day scourge. There were occasional non-radio problems to be solved, too, such as keeping cows and horses out of the antenna field. In this we were only partially successful, but at least we always managed to shoo them away before serious damage was done!

6m and up

When we planned the 3B9C operation, our hopes for 6m were limited, as we were outside the Sporadic E season and some way down the sunspot cycle. Nevertheless, we had been determined to install a very effective antenna system (a 6-over-6 stack, right on the water's edge) in the hope that some openings might occur. The results, though, were beyond our wildest dreams, with daily trans-equatorial openings to Japan, Central Asia and southern Europe. Kazu, JA1RJU, our 6m specialist, was absolutely delighted, as indeed were the rest of us. This excellent propagation, as it happens, had an adverse effect on our plans for 6m moonbounce; when signals are being reflected back to earth from the ionosphere, they are not going to head off through the atmosphere to be reflected off the moon. We also had a hill blocking our view of the moon at moonset. However, in the end we did achieve one 6m EME (Earth-Moon-Earth) contact, to great rejoicing all round, this being a 'first' from Rodrigues.

Later, we were able to install our 70cm EME equipment, and this gave us several EME QSOs on that band. We were also able to make a handful of contacts via FO-29, which went a little way to offsetting our disappointment over the unavailability of AO-40, which we had originally planned on using extensively during our expedition. But the satellite and EME activities were new ventures for our team, and we are pleased to have been able to offer these capabilities from such a rare location. Of course, you can never

win. One amateur had plagued us with e-mails requesting an EME sked on a particular band which, to our delight, finally came off. When his next e-mail arrived we confidently expected it would be a 'thank you'. Wrong! It was a request for an EME sked on another band!

10 and 12m

When we operated from D68 (Comoros) in 2001, it was at the peak of the sunspot cycle and 10m was in excellent shape. We ended up with over 40,000 contacts on the band. We knew this wouldn't happen from 3B9, but just what did those high bands have in store? To be sure of maximising any openings which did occur, we had three antennas for 10m, all of them long-boom monoband yagis, two at 40' (for CW and SSB) and one at 30' (for FM). As expected, the going was tough, especially to the USA, but there were some surprising band openings which a smaller DX-pedition might well have missed out on.

One of the best was a long-path opening to the US West Coast shortly after our dawn. Our 17m station had been enjoying the opening, then the 15m station started to get propagation and, to our astonishment, the MUF kept rising until both 12 and 10m got in on the act. It was amusing when the 17m operator was called by one of the US stations, asking if it really was us on 10m, as many operators were convinced that such an opening was impossible at this stage in the sunspot cycle!

Once again 10m FM proved to be a hit, with about 1,200 QSOs on that mode. It's good fun for everyone involved, and the nature of FM meant that it didn't detract from our other activities on the band. 12m followed a similar pattern to 10m, with our final QSO total down on the record we had set from D68C, but nevertheless we believe the 3B9C total is the second highest ever recorded by a DX-pedition for 12m.

15, 17 and 20m

We had expected these three bands to carry the bulk of the traffic and, to a large extent, that was true. However, 20m was a little disappointing in that it closed for part of each night due to the MUF dropping below 14 MHz, and closed during the middle of the day due to absorption. We were even accused by some of not being sufficiently active on the band, but we really were there whenever it was open. Unfortunately, as mentioned earlier, despite having two full-size monoband yagis, well-spaced and with their elements end-on to each other, and despite having taken special high-Q filters optimised for the CW and SSB ends of the band, we simply could not operate simultaneously on both modes. This turned out to be a good idea too far. 15 and 17m worked very well for us, and our 17m QSO total is a new all-time DX-pedition record, exceeding the earlier record we had set from D68C.

30m

30m deserves its own special mention for several reasons. In terms of propagation, it seems to enjoy the best of both HF and LF characteristics, being open from well before dusk until well after dawn. We felt this was a band that deserved special focus and had taken with us a full-size 2-element yagi, which we installed at 40'. The results were nothing short of spectacular, and this is a band which we truly can say we worked dry, setting a new QSO record in the process. Towards the end of the expedition, many stations were working us for the second or third time, but with QRP, often 5W, but sometimes as little as 1W or less. It's a pity that the band is too narrow to permit an SSB allocation, as it really does have valuable propagation characteristics, and the openings we enjoyed, both long- and short-path, were there reliably on a daily basis. We did, though, manage to successfully run RTTY on the band from time to time.

The LF bands

On 40m we relied yet again on our tried and trusted elevated 4-square antenna. We had a few mishaps due to faulty connectors and arcing between the elevated radials, but for most of the time it performed as well as we have come to expect. The band was in excellent shape throughout our time on Rodrigues, starting an hour or so before our dusk each day with a long-path opening to the West Coast of the USA (and sometimes extending much farther inland), working its way through Japan and Europe, and giving us short-path contacts well into the USA until an hour or so into daylight once more. We ended with a new record for 40m QSOs, and it's probably true to say that we pretty much worked the band dry on CW. However, SSB results were a little disappointing and this appears to have been due, at least in part, to deliberate interference in Europe on a number of occasions. This was obviously outside our control and our only recourse in such situations was usually to move to CW. We hope that those of you who wanted an SSB QSO were able to catch up with us at some stage.

On our last two expeditions we had used a ground-mounted 4-square array for 80m, but were never entirely happy with its performance, although we know that many successful 80m DX operators use such a system. Before heading to Rodrigues, we had experimented extensively with different 80m antenna systems and had decided to use our four full-size verticals in the form of two pairs, one optimised (in terms of height, spacing and phasing) for the CW end of the band and one for the SSB end. And rather than try to lay out a multitude of wire radials, we elected to roll out four quarter-wave lengths of chicken wire under each vertical. The results were nothing short of amazing, and 80m became yet another band on which we set a new world QSO record. The difference between the two pairs of verticals was

astonishing. CW signals were a good 10dB louder on the CW pair of verticals than on the SSB pair, and vice versa. Signal reports from Europe and North America suggest that the transmit performance was equally effective. We had also run out Beverage receiving antennas towards Japan and Europe/N. America, plus K9AY receiving loops, but the verticals usually gave us best results, except when the band noise was high (from the occasional tropical storm).

160m proved to be a voyage of exploration in its own right. Once again we used a Titanex 87' bottom-loaded vertical near the water's edge, and had several Beverage and loop antennas available for receiving. The Top Band team, a dedicated bunch of specialists if ever there was one, exploited every band opening and achieved some remarkable results, especially to the US 6 and 7 call areas. Several QSOs were made around 3B9 sunset with the US West Coast, while on several days around our dawn we were able to work into W7 (Arizona, Utah, etc.). In both directions there was minimal common darkness, and some of the QSOs took place when it was daylight at one or both ends of the path. We used ray-tracing software to try and understand how these contacts were possible, and it is clear that some of them were truly pushing the limits of 160m propagation. Our final QSO total on 160 was about 100 short of the world record, held by XZØA.

In fact, our 160 and 80m QSO totals probably give a good idea of the maximum possible on those bands from a remote location. We are aware that many were still chasing a contact on those bands, even as our expedition drew to a close, but we simply weren't hearing them. We can only assume that most of those still hoping for a contact had some sort of capability for local working on those bands, but were not really equipped for DX working (which generally requires an efficient vertical radiator and something approaching maximum licensed power). The good news is that those

who made the effort were, for the most part, rewarded with a contact. We were particularly impressed with the W7 who, realising that we were actually managing to work into his neck of the woods on 160m, strung a two-element yagi between the walls of a local canyon, setting up his station in his car. Now that's dedication! And he worked us, too.

Datamodes

Even in the three years since we activated D68C (which set new DX-pedition records for RTTY and PSK QSOs), we were aware that interest in datamodes had continued to grow, based nowadays of course on PC sound card technology and the wide availability of excellent software such as MMTTY and MixW. We had taken soundings among the data fraternity, and realised that many RTTY operators are no longer content with a single RTTY QSO with a rare entity, but now expect to work it on several bands.

Fortunately we too benefited from modern technology. Our first DXpedition (9MØC in 1998) used a PK-232 terminal unit for RTTY, which had to be physically moved from station to station. Our Star Software suite of programs at 3B9C allowed each and every station to select from a wide range of datamodes (RTTY, PSK31 and PSK63) and to use them seamlessly via a common interface, built in to the main StarLog logging programme. We didn't start datamode operations until the demand for CW and SSB had started to decline but, once we began, we were able to do so on several bands simultaneously. The pile-ups were intense, right from the start and, as expected, the D68C records quickly became history.

We also activated SSTV, a first not only for us as an expedition team but, we believe, a first from Rodrigues. In a sense this is just another datamode nowadays, no longer requiring cameras or other optical equipment. However, it has its own band of dedicated followers and

hopefully we were able to make many of them happy with a 3B9 contact. It is a pity, though, that the protocols used for SSTV make for rather lengthy QSOs, fine for everyday working, but not ideal in a DX-pedition situation where each SSTV QSO takes the equivalent of several SSB, RTTY or CW QSOs.

CQ WPX Contest

Before heading for Rodrigues we had debated how to handle the various contests which would take place during our stay. There is never an ideal solution. On Spratly (9MØC) we had avoided participating in the ARRL CW contest, which took place while we were there, on the basis that we felt it would lead to duplicate QSOs with the 'big guns' while distracting us from working those who still needed Spratly.

This approach drew criticism from some heavy hitters in the US but, in the circumstances, was probably the right decision. In the Comoros (D68C), where we had many more stations and longer on the island, we quite deliberately took part in the very same contest (ARRL CW), as a multi-two entry. We actually set a new African record for that category, and found that the contest generated a significant number of unique QSOs, so it wasn't quite so much a case of reworking the same old stations as we had thought it might be. However, setting up for the contest was a major overhead in reconfiguring the station, which was rather unfair on those members of the D68C team who were not serious contesters.

Fortunately, with the advent of the Star Software suite of programs, the station could be reconfigured for contest working in a matter of minutes, mainly through the software, although we would have to reroute a couple of the antennas if we wanted to maximise our contest capabilities. On this occasion the main contest would be the CQ

WPX SSB event at the end of March. We felt that a serious multi-multi effort was justifiable, as this contest draws many operators, both serious and casual, onto the bands and unlike, say, the ARRL events, is an 'everyone works everyone' event, so there would be no added complications on that front.

As it happened, the first weekend of our expedition coincided with the Russian DX Contest. Although we had decided not to participate, we soon realised that the contest would, nevertheless, have quite an impact on us. It is multimode, so we couldn't avoid it, given that we had the capabilities and intention of operating all bands simultaneously, so we couldn't just move off to the WARC bands. But on many occasions contest stations landed right on top of our transmit or receive frequencies without so much as a by-your-leave and made life very difficult. The contest undoubtedly had a significant adverse effect on our first weekend QSO totals.

As far as the WPX Contest was concerned, we had assumed that we would need to focus on SSB on the main bands, accepting that CW would only be possible on the WARC bands. We planned the weekend shifts on this basis, the serious contesters being allocated to the main contest bands, and the non-contesters to the WARC bands. After a tough first night, though, we realised that a change of plan was called for, requiring some rapid re-scheduling. What happened was that contesting on the low bands proved all but impossible. We weren't loud enough to hold a frequency and, for much of the time, couldn't even make ourselves heard when calling loud contest stations who were commanding a frequency. This was obviously a pity, as the WPX scoring system gives double points for lowband QSOs. But, on the other hand, we were certainly a popular contest multiplier on the high bands, where the problem was rather different, maintaining high rates in the face of

huge pile-ups (which, in a contest situation, you cannot easily solve by using split-frequency operation). In the end we more or less threw in the towel on LF, and reverted to CW for the weekend. To our surprise this even worked on 160m, where SSB contest activity inevitably spreads way down the band into what, at non-contest times, is the CW end of the band. On the high bands we allowed the operators flexibility to revert to CW if they felt it would increase overall DX-pedition QSO rates, even if this would inevitably reduce our overall contest score. In practice, most of our high-band operators persevered with the contest and we ended with what looks like being a pretty respectable multi-multi score (as I write this the final log has to be extracted from the overall 3B9C log, but will be somewhere well in excess of 20M points from over 8,000 contest QSOs).

Non-radio activities

These DX-pedition write-ups almost invariably manage to give the impression that life is one long round of eating, sleeping and running pile-ups. It's certainly true that some of the hotel staff and visitors found it hard to comprehend why we would come all that way to do something we could equally well do at home! But we did manage to enjoy ourselves in other ways too. The ladies, of course, managed many excursions, but were frequently joined by other members of the team, whether to ramble to the next bay, to take a boat to one of the local snorkelling sites, or to catch the local bus into town for some shopping.

Unfortunately one of the knock-on effects of a cyclone near Australia was that we had some large breakers outside the reef for the first ten days or so of our trip, which meant that scuba diving was restricted. Most of those who wanted to do some diving did manage to do so in the end, but a group of French tourists who had come specifically for the diving were frustrated for several days, in having nothing

to do but sit at the bar and exchange diving stories.

For those who had been largely confined to barracks, we did organise a minibus tour in the third week, taking in the major sights of the island, leaving a few hardy individuals to keep the radios manned. On other days, the entertainment was largely what was available on site. There was music and dancing most evenings, and GU4YOX our 'entertainment king' took his role seriously enough to MC, sing and even spend some time on the drums! After the second team had flown in, but before the first leavers flew out, the hotel laid on an excellent buffet supper, and we closed down the station for a few hours so that we could all enjoy this together. There was champagne to celebrate our achievement (well over the 100,000 QSOs by then), great local food and, of course, musical accompaniment. Those who stayed until the end of the trip enjoyed a similar, farewell banquet the evening before they left. Indeed, throughout the whole expedition the Cotton Bay Hotel staff treated us royally.

This is perhaps also the place to mention the high level of local interest in our expedition. Local press and TV came to cover our activities, and we were also visited by several major local dignitaries including the island Chief Commissioner, its Chief Executive, and others in high office. They were all delighted to hear that tens of thousands of people around the world now knew of Rodrigues and many would be receiving a commemorative QSL card with more information about the island.

Website

Which also brings us on to the 3B9C website. Set up by Nigel, G4KIU, this exceeded our wildest expectations. By the end of our operation it had grown to some 150 pages or so, with daily updates posted from the island (including pictures) and we were seeing anything up to 55,000 page views a day. By

the end of the trip the total had reached over 500,000 page views, and continues to increase. This level of interest is well above even the successful D68C website, and is no doubt an indication of how Internet usage has become so much more pervasive, even in the past three years.

Reflections

Having set out to 'push the envelope' and see where the limits might lie, can we draw any conclusions? If one were to merge the D68C and 3B9C logs, given that D68C worked significantly more North American QSOs and very many more 10m QSOs (both due to D68C taking place at the sunspot peak), the resulting log would show well over 200,000 band/mode/callsign combinations. Maybe this begins to define the limit of what might be achievable by a big enough expedition, from the right location, at the sunspot peak. It certainly seems that there are enough DX-ers out there, well enough equipped, that the 100,000 QSO level is very achievable on a routine basis (though maybe not from more isolated locations – the recent T33C expedition managed a very creditable 75,000 QSOs, given that they had an extremely tough path into Europe, where the largest population of DX-ers exists). It is also clear that nowadays there is a very substantial demand for datamode QSOs (mainly RTTY and PSK), with datamode DX-ers increasingly wanting to work a rare entity on several bands, rather than being content with a single QSO. In contrast, the very specialist activities (EME, satellite, SSTV) appear to be very much more resource-hungry (manpower, equipment) relative to QSO numbers than any of the other bands or modes.

The Team

It is also worth a moment to consider the team itself. Putting a team together for an operation of this sort is one of the most challenging aspects. It goes without saying that everyone

is expected to be a competent operator, able to maintain good rates while at the same time upholding the best operating standards, even when tired or faced with an unruly pile-up. We also need other skills, too, ranging from specialist technical skills (RF, PCs, electrical) to those Field Day skills of erecting antennas with ropes and pulleys. Operators must also be available for a minimum of around three weeks and, ideally, able to put in effort both before and after the trip to help with packing, unpacking and a multitude of other tasks including local fund-raising. We also like to have a wide range of nationalities, which is important for many different reasons, and were delighted this time to have representation from seven DXCC countries and three continents.

Everyone must obviously be happy to accept their share of the costs. But at the end of the day the crucial aspect is that everyone must be able to get along together as a team, prepared to accept the team ethos and, if necessary, accept a degree of compromise (most will inevitably be strong personalities in their own right!). The planning team spend a lot of time trying to get this right, and all team members will be known personally to at least one of them or will be able to provide references from one or two amateurs who are. This may seem overkill, but there are plenty of horror stories of DX-pedition teams arriving on remote islands and then facing major personality conflicts. As Neville says in his piece, the whole team got on extremely well together, despite around half being new to a Five Star DX-pedition. The oldest was in his seventies, the youngest in his early twenties, but the team dynamics were excellent, so it looks as though all the effort in team selection was well worthwhile.

Thanks

The 3B9C team extend their thanks to all who supported them and made this expedition possible. This includes our major sponsors, of

course, headed up by Yaesu but including many others, some of whom are listed in the table. Thanks are also due to all the local clubs and individuals, too numerous to mention here, but listed in full on our webpage and recognised on the 3B9C QSL card. Naturally, all the participants paid for their travel and accommodation, as well as making a contribution to shared expenses. Our thanks, of course, to the management and staff of the Cotton Bay hotel, to Robert, 3B9FR, Jacky, 3B8CF, to the various officials who were involved in arranging permits, custom carnets, etc. and, of course, to our families who allowed us to take part in this unique experience. The team also wish to thank Neville, G3NUG, Don, G3BJ and John, G3WGV, our co-leaders, who collectively put in a huge amount of effort to make Project Star Reach a reality.

Aftermath

Of course, a DX-pedition doesn't finish with the last QSO. Those who remained on the island until the end of the expedition had the unenviable task of dismantling all the equipment and antennas, rolling up several thousand metres of co-ax, and packing the shipping container in the sweltering heat. There are articles such as this to be written, final statistics to be prepared and circulated to the amateur radio media as well as posted on the website. The CQ WPX log has to be submitted, and the expedition log as a whole will eventually be posted to Logbook of the World (in time for the September annual DXCC listings deadline). And, most importantly, QSL cards to be mailed by the same deadline. This time we had much of the artwork for the QSL card prepared beforehand and the actual QSL-ing will be handled by a team of around ten volunteers, using StarQSL, a QSL management program developed by G3WGV, which allows the process to be managed centrally, labels for Bureau cards to be printed on a shared printer at a location convenient to the Bureau, plus a wide range of

other useful facilities. We are also hoping to do some propagation analysis of the logs, especially the lowband ones, as we believe there is enough data to provide some fascinating insights. G3BJ is already at work on the video, for which we have a remarkable number of advance orders. And G3WGV will be returning to the whole StarSoftware suite, which has already been selected by at least one major forthcoming expedition as their preferred logging and management software. In June the container will arrive back and need to be unpacked, antennas cleaned up (it's amazing how much salt they accumulate in just a few weeks, when erected in close proximity to the sea), and everything checked and carefully put into storage for the next time it is needed. There are presentations scheduled for Visalia, Dayton, Friedrichshafen, the RSGB Convention, etc. There will need to be a final reconciliation of the finances. It will be a year or more before we can finally close the door on 3B9C and start to think about the age-old question, "Where do we go next?"

Trophies and Awards

Finally, don't forget to apply (and encourage your local club to apply) for the various Nevada trophies and awards which are available for working 3B9C on different band/mode slots. Details have appeared in many places including, of course, the 3B9C website.

As a final, final, I have just worked Robert, 3B9FR, with a big 15m signal and an even bigger pile-up. It just goes to show that, however many contacts you make, the demand never actually goes away!

WWW

3B9C Web site: www.fsdxa.com/3b9c

About Rodrigues:

www.eng.uct.ac.za/~chnste010/rodrigues.html

References

'Project Star Reach: How to work the 3B9C Rodrigues DX-pedition', RadCom, March 2004.

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Some statistics (numbers in bold are new all-time records)

Total QSO count overall	153,113	21 MHz	29,920
		24.9 MHz	16,858
Unique calls in log	37,040	28 MHz	23,535
CW total	77,610	50 MHz	1,448
SSB total	66,826	70cm EME & Satellite	66
RTTY total	5,280		
PSK-31 total	2,172	Africa	1,001
Others (FM, SSTV, EME, Sat.)	1,225	Antarctica	3
		Asia	27,609
1.8 MHz	2,288	Europe	92,099
3.5 MHz	7,509	North America	29,809
7 MHz	18,366	Oceania	1,866
10.1 MHz	11,375	South America	670
14 MHz	21,594	United Kingdom	8,582
18 MHz	20,154		

Breaking the 3B9C pile-ups with 1W – a self-imposed frustration

Stan Rudcenko, GØKBL rudcenko@aol.com

Having worked Robert 3B9FR with one watt on 20 metres CW last year, I felt confident it should be possible to work the 3B9C superstation QRPP with relative ease. So it proved on higher bands, with 17 to 10 meters one watt CW taking on average less than 20 minutes to get through the pile ups during the second week.

No such luck on the lower bands, despite their frequent 58/599 strength on 20,30 and 40 meters suggesting that even a one-watt signal should be at least readable there. The pile ups were simply too big to break, even towards the end, despite a total of over ten hours of calling - legal power got them on first call on the last day on all the three bands. Conditions were not good enough on 80 meters to even think about QRP.

Despite the self-imposed frustration, I support the 3B9C policy not to run any special operations for QRP. A good operator often looks for the weakest signal in the pile-up anyway and there was plenty of evidence of that at 3B9C. In any case, we know that there is virtually no lower limit to the power needed to make a QSO, given the right conditions. It is pure magic when it happens, but the QRP challenge in the circumstances was about breaking a pile-up, or sneaking in before a pile-up becomes too big. The nearly ten-hour-long overall chase itself was every bit as exciting as if there was a P5 at the other end.

Overall, the 3B9C operation was a pleasure to listen to, and it was nice to hear the unmistakable fist of Robert, 3B9FR, taking part as well. The only jaded comment I have seen on the cluster was that this was a Stakhanov-style operation. Stakhanov was a

propaganda figure in Stalinist Russia made into a hero for breaking all records in mining coal in the 1930s, who became symbolic for that regime's obsession with targets, many of them meaningless.

Such a comment in this context seems pure sour grapes, and is patently unfair. I believe the 3B9C operation was in its own way as important as Danny Weil's single handed DX expeditions over forty years ago in stimulating interest in DX-ing. But even Danny had its critics, if memory serves me. The Stakhanov jibe could perhaps be a useful reminder not to get too carried away by record-breaking QSO targets which could at some point become themselves meaningless to anyone but the sponsors.

from G4FKH

From 26 June to 3 July 2004, along with GM3SWK, it is hoped to operate a special event station from the Isle of Skye.

The callsign GB4SKO has been applied for, SKO standing for Isle of SKye open Opportunity.

We will be putting on a station to which everyone is invited, especially the young aspiring amateur.

We will have two stations working HF, CW and SSB - depending on who turns up!

Gwyn

CW DX-pedition to Cameroon: TJ3G

Roger Western, G3SXW, and Nigel Cawthorne, G3TXF

g3sxw@compuserve.com

nigel@G3TXF.com

Callsign TJ3G
Location Résidence Jully, Kribi, Cameroon, West Africa
Lat/Long 2°54' N, 9°54' E, Grid JJ42
Borders Nigeria, Chad, Central African Republic., Equatorial Guinea, Gabon, Congo
Dates 21 March - 1 April, 2004 = 11 days, QRV for 10 days
Operators G3SXW (traditional HF bands), G3TXF (WARC bands)
Mode 100% CW
Stations Two TS-570S transceivers, barefoot
Antennas One WARC ground-plane, one Butternut HF6V-X
Logging Two laptop computers, running CT in DX-pedition mode

seriously rare. The 2003 survey, published in early 2004, showed:

Rank	All Modes	CW
World	39	29
Europe	69	>50
USA	49	43
Asia	29	21

On CW it is shown as more rare than Malpelo, Pratas, Conway Reef and even Macquarie. Cameroon needed activating very badly indeed, especially on CW. Apart from a Spanish group (TJ2RSF) in October 1998, no DX-pedition had been mounted to Cameroon for many years.

Licensing

There is usually one key reason why a country becomes rare. In the case of TJ this was licensing. It took about eighteen months to get our TJ licences. The initial contact was made by Dennis, G3MXJ (F5VHY), during a business trip to Yaoundé, the capital of Cameroon. Following Dennis' visit the applications were lodged. There then followed a steady stream of faxes and phone calls to Yaoundé to try to get the licence issued. However, there was not any real progress until G3SXW and G3TXF went on a trip to France specifically to meet the person concerned with the licensing, who was himself on business in France. Once we had had the meeting and had outlined our 'Projet Cameroun 2004' in detail, the issue of the TJ3G licence soon followed. Face to face contact, as well as dogged persistence, were the keys to the eventual issuing of TJ3G.

QSOs (no dupes)

80m	900
40m	2,000
30m	4,000
20m	4,162
17m	4,530
15m	3,785
12m	4,270
10m	1,853
Total	25,500

Most Wanted Country

We are always on the look out for DXCC countries which are climbing the 'Most Wanted Country' tables, but which are relatively 'easy' to do. TJ was becoming

Cameroon (not ‘Cameroons’ as many people think) was two separate countries before independence in the 1960s. British Cameroon to the North and West (bordering Nigeria) and French Cameroon. The country is officially dual-language, but the two areas are quite distinctly either English- or French-speaking. In addition there are, of course, a multitude of local languages. Yaoundé, somewhat inland and at about 2,000’ altitude, is the capital, while the main commercial city is Douala, near the coast. There is a long Atlantic Ocean coastline (actually the Gulf of Guinea) and the sandy beaches are spectacular. The tourist industry is barely present (credit cards are not accepted anywhere), but the main resort of Kribi, in the South West of the country, has a number of holiday hotels. Being on the equator it is hot all year-round, only cooling off around sunrise. They have four seasons: two hot and dry, and two hot and rainy. The currency is the Central African Franc (CFA) which is tied to the Euro.

Propagation

Our visit coincided with the spring equinox. Apart from a minor disturbance towards the end of the operation, we were blessed with average to good conditions. As always on the equator, the best of the conditions were at night because absorption attenuates the daylight paths, especially in the middle of the day. From around 1100 until 1500 the bands were only open to Europe (North-South), with much weaker signals. We also found the pre-dawn period (0400 – 0600) rather flat. The rest of the time we could generate pile-ups according to the ebb and flow of the MUF:

80m – 900 QSOs. Excellent openings to Japan at their sunrise for half an hour, around 2100 GMT and strong signals from Europe between 2200 – 2400 GMT. North America also had excellent openings around 0100 – 0200. We were very pleased with the number of contacts on this band, with just the HF6V vertical and barefoot.

40m – 2,000 QSOs. Superb propagation from 2100 to 0400 GMT, especially to Europe and North America and with loud JA signals on much shorter openings. The problem with this band is the ‘European Zoo’ syndrome. Many times in the first few days the vandals completely wiped out the operation for long periods.

30m - 4,000 QSOs. Open to Europe for about fourteen hours a day, this was the night-time workhorse band. However, finding a clear spot was not always easy. We were grateful to cluster-spotters who found us when we had to use unusual frequencies such as 10.119 or 10.122 MHz. Dramatic, but relatively short, openings to JA. Thanks to the EUs who QRX-ed during the periods of ‘JA only’ operation!

20m – 4,162 QSOs. If anyone had worked TJ before on any band it would most likely have been on 20 or 15m, and therefore these would be the least needed band-slots. However, for the very many DX-ers who had never worked TJ on any band this would be perhaps the best chance to find suitable propagation. It provided long openings to all areas. Especially enjoyable were the US pile-ups at around 0100 to 0400 GMT, with snappy operators on a completely quiet band.

17m – 4,530 QSOs. The high-volume daytime band for Europe and the night-time band for the USA. Dramatic short openings with enormous signals as the MUF collapsed at the end of the day. The 10m/15m and 12m/17m operators would be leap-frogging each other down through the spectrum as the MUF collapsed at around sunset.

15m – 3,785 QSOs. Another ‘bread and butter’ band, along with 20m, with good openings to all areas.

12m – 4,270 QSOs. 12m was the optimum daytime WARC band, but as conditions varied, the WARC operator would have to switch back to 17m to keep the rate going. As

an illustration of the difference that ‘just 4 MHz; can make, over 100 JAs were worked on 12m, but none were worked on 10m.

10m – 1,853 QSOs. Shorter openings, but very good for the stage of the sunspot cycle. Good to Europe in the late mornings and to USA in the late afternoons, but no openings to JA at all.

Pile-Ups

The pile-ups of callers were amongst the most ferocious that we have ever experienced, especially in the first few days. Presumably this reflected the extent to which TJ was badly needed by a large number of DX-ers. There were occasions when we had no choice but to grab callsigns from 6, 7 or even 8 kHz above our TX frequency. Usually 3-4 kHz is enough. We also had to contend with several other DX-peditions running simultaneously and try to keep pile-up separation. Heard on the bands were pile-ups for 3B9C, R1FJ, ET3TK. As always, almost all callers were very skilful; only the occasional European insisting on sending redundant information like his name and QTH. Very often we found that we had copied the callsign of the calling station the first time and started to reply, but he then went on to send his call the second time without first listening. This would be the main suggestion for improving QSO rates, to

everyone’s increased enjoyment: send your call only once, listen briefly, then send it again if nothing heard.

QSL-ing

Hopefully there will not be too much confusion. We sent an information message very often to say QSL via G3TXF and to explain that G3SXW was operating on the five traditional bands and G3TXF on the three WARC bands. Cards were printed within two weeks of our return (thanks to Gennady, UX5UO, for the excellent service!) and the majority of the initial wave of direct requests were replied to within three weeks of our return. Bureau cards are welcome and may be requested by e-mail to nigel@G3TXF.com. TJ3G QSOs can be checked on the online QSO database at www.G3TXF.com.

QSOs by Continent

Propagation to Europe favoured the HF bands, whereas North America had the best of it on LF. Asia (mostly Japan) was best on 20m, but with those strong sunrise openings on 80m as well. The very few VK/ZL QSOs were mostly on 30-15m. The very loudest signals were from South America, but there are fewer DX-ers in that continent.

TJ3G	80	40	30	20	17	15	12	10	All
Europe	409	737	2289	1393	3002	2833	3210	1322	15195
N. America	362	1013	1104	1914	817	564	782	453	7009
Asia	118	196	550	754	632	291	187	18	2746
S. America	8	48	36	74	46	65	56	49	382
Africa	3	6	10	12	19	20	27	9	106
Oceania	0	0	11	15	14	12	8	2	62
All	900	2000	4000	4162	4530	3785	4270	1853	25500
Europe	45.4	36.9	57.2	33.5	66.3	74.8	75.2	71.3	59.6
N. America	40.2	50.7	27.6	46.0	18.0	14.9	18.3	24.4	27.5

Asia	13.1	9.8	13.8	18.1	14.0	7.7	4.4	1.0	10.8
S. America	0.9	2.4	0.9	1.8	1.0	1.7	1.3	2.6	1.5
Africa	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.5	0.4
Oceania	0.0	0.0	0.3	0.4	0.3	0.3	0.2	0.1	0.2
All	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

QSOs by Leading Countries

The number of different DXCC countries worked was as follows:

Band	DXCC
80	48
40	71
30	86
20	89
17	89
15	85
12	96
10	65
All	124

The leading twenty countries in the TJ3G log were rather predictable, but with an especially large contribution from Germany and only 9% of contacts coming from Japan. In terms of contribution from countries with smaller populations, the Czech Republic scores highly.

Country	80	40	30	20	17	15	12	10	All
W	343	958	1,039	1,791	765	524	733	426	6,579
DL	82	111	432	264	615	557	681	295	3,037
JA	110	160	473	661	532	210	97	0	2,243
SP	17	59	194	101	254	222	293	125	1,265
UA	33	111	186	152	231	235	185	84	1,217
OK	23	44	195	89	237	182	256	103	1,129
I	26	46	171	109	204	248	231	88	1,123
UR	22	67	138	66	147	140	151	71	802
G	41	47	110	61	153	108	182	62	764
F	18	22	97	68	148	125	168	69	715
OH	30	38	81	60	120	125	109	48	611
SM	18	19	94	41	102	97	116	37	524
EA	3	14	48	47	70	80	87	23	372
HA	15	24	43	35	72	72	74	33	368
VE	18	44	47	93	36	33	28	20	319
OM	9	8	53	23	54	54	61	31	293
UA9	4	21	42	48	54	48	48	6	271
PA	6	8	40	23	64	40	55	30	266
ON	6	10	34	26	52	47	50	33	258
S5	4	9	35	31	43	57	51	25	255

Eight-Banders

TJ3G was active only on eight bands (80 to 10m) and only on one mode (CW). So the maximum possible number of contacts (without duplicates) is eight. We were delighted that we were able to work so many DX-ers on all eight bands. This includes 183 stations, of whom the following 19 are in the UK.

GØTSM	G3TBK	G4PTJ
GØWMW	G3WPH	G4SOZ
G3AB	G3WVG	G4WFQ
G3IAF	G4BUE	GM3UA
G3LAS	G4ELZ	GM3YTS
G3LZQ	G4IRN	
G3PLP	G4OWT	

UK Stations

A total of 318 UK stations were put into the TJ3G log:

Bands	UK Stations
8	19
7	13
6	13
5	13
4	26
3	42
2	63
1	129
TOTAL	318
Total QSOs	871

Average 2.7 bands per station

Travel and Thanks

We were met at Yaoundé airport by David, TJ1AD, his son Einstein and other members of the IARU affiliated ARTJ society. The distance to Kribi on the coast was some 300 kms from Yaoundé. Thanks to David/TJ1AD's organisation of the transport, we were able to get on the air as TJ3G from Kribi within 24 hours of our arrival in Cameroon. Once we were installed in our hotel in Kribi we spent the next ten days operating, eating and sleeping, interspersed with just the occasional

dip in the ocean. We are grateful to François, TJ1KF, for the help with the TJ3G licence as well as to David, TJ1AD, for logistical support and for arranging the transport to Kribi and back. We also thank the members of the Cameroon ARTJ for meeting us at Yaoundé airport. The ten days' operating and making 25,500 CW QSOs as TJ3G from Cameroon's excellent beach resort of Kribi was a great experience.

Haiti - the Second Trip

or

Enjoy it, it could have been worse!

Hans-Rainer Uebel, DL7CM

After my first Haiti trip to Ile à Vache in the south of the island at the same time last year, when everything ran smoothly from propagation conditions to logistics, it would be Haiti again. I decided that because of the demand. But the somewhat exhausting journey needed to be simplified if possible. This time we would go to the north for the sake of simplicity, I hoped. Everything looked fine for the new route

Apart from myself, Sid, DM2AYO, came again - and also Manfred, DK1BT, and Juergen, DL7UFN. Both had enough experience from other DX-peditions and it was really not a beginners' team.

Then there was still the matter of the callsign, 4V2ØØYH. Very distinctive and also possibly difficult to get used to, but I think not more difficult than a reciprocal call like HH5/... etc. 4V is a special prefix for Haiti, last assigned in 1995 and then only to native Haitian operators. Haiti should this year be celebrating the bicentenary of its independence. However, at the moment this looks unlikely.

The flight was with the holiday carrier LTU. They took the amateur radio equipment as special luggage and the flight was problem-free... if one overlooks the customs officers who wanted to see all nine items of luggage unpacked and X-rayed. We took off against the earth's rotation. Wonderful, time simply goes more slowly. Take-off was on 27 January at 0900 Berlin time, and arrival in Puerto Plata in the north of the Dominican

Republic was at 1400 local time on the same day.

However, the planned overnight accommodation in Puerto Plata failed to materialise. In the Dominican Republic a general strike with roadblocks was announced for the 28 and 29 January. This meant that we had to leave right away, on the 27th, by car to Dajabon on the Haitian border. However, since the border was open only from 0800 to 1700, we had to spend the night there. No matter, we passed the evening by having a few beers. With only 72 kms remaining to our destination, Cap Haitien, we were timing our arrival at the hotel to begin transmitting in the evening with all three stations. No-one suspected that the NE route from Cap Haitien to Ouanaminthe, the border city on the Haitian side, was only a dirt track - or, to be more exact, a series of connected pot-holes with dirt underneath. It took us six hours to travel those 72 kms!

Finally we arrived at our hotel. It made a favourable impression, so 'Enjoy it, it could be worse!'. But things did soon did take a turn for the worst! Although the hotel was reasonable and the management was friendly and helpful, the hotel was not on the top of the hill, as described. It was on the southern slope - and the top of the hill was directly towards the north. North is USA, NE is Europe and NNW is Japan. Thus our full power output was directly into the mountain and specifically into a plot of land with an iron fence and a guard, which lay directly above us. The situation map pulled from the Internet (see

www.qsl.net/dl7cm/haiti2.htm) shows a compass rose rotated by 90°. Who could have suspected such a thing when planning the trip?

A propos power: with the unpacking of the station we found that all three linears had transport damage. Out of the three we made two - and one day later they were up and running, as far as that was possible. But more on that later.

First, the antennas had to be put up. That was the next problem, which we had to nibble at for days. We could only find extremely small areas and even then still in unfavourable places. Four antennas were to be put up. The beam was installed on the 9m mast we had brought with us and fastened to a palm in the inner court. At least it looked over the top of the hotel roof. However, it still pointed into the mountain. The low-band ground plane wire antenna should have been fastened to a 10m speed mast - and the mast to the top point of a palm tree. That would bring the top to the appropriate height and make a rather nice vertical antenna.

However, nobody wanted to climb up the palm tree. After a long palaver with the staff, the speed mast was finally tied to a mangrove tree. The HF9 went up on the other side of the house. There was a 2m-wide strip before it went steeply downhill. Everything was clear between E and SW, but who is there in that direction? So far things weren't too happy, but they could get worse... and they did get worse. Static and only weak signals on the HF9 - and the low-band antenna was simply useless on 160m, with an S7 noise level. Only the big guns came through. Thus we could not continue. Each antenna, each piece of wire within the hotel complex picked up this noise, at least on 160m. A new location had to be found.

We decided to go to the Cormier Plage, a hotel nearby - only 6 kms away, but that meant a one hour travel time. This hotel could

already have been 'it' if the owners had bothered to respond during the planning phase. Yes, indeed, the situation here was better. It was located on the beach, with a clear take-off in the right direction - the mountain was to the S - but there was no generator... and there were no guests. The hotel was as good as closed. Thus we had to make do with what we had.

The HF9 was moved and it looked good, seeing as it was 10m higher than before. Expectations were high, the transmitted signal was much better, but the noise, the noise! A little transmission cabin of Radio Cap Haitien was next door with all kinds of thick cables which disappeared inside. This wouldn't do either. We found a suitable place two days later at the upper boundary in the middle of a shrubbery which seemed to be far enough away from all the interference sources, so one could regard it as acceptable. It was the only antenna with a bearable interference level.

We then invented a technique to listen with the HF9 and to transmit on 160m with the low-band ground plane. And it worked! A lot of stations went into the 160m log. Also, a further antenna was established, running up the steep, rocky slope. It was a wire about 35m long, which was tuned on the bands from 40m upwards. The further the antennas were apart, the better the parallel RX-TX operation.

After much effort we finally came to the operation itself. The propagation conditions were not good. Openings on the upper bands were short. One had to work hard. 10 and 12m were always dead bands. I cannot remember a DX-pedition ever having to call CQ so often. Finally, somebody notices you. At last, we are on the cluster and... the band is alive!

Into bed at 2300, wake up at 0100 for the greyline into Europe on 160, 80 and 40m, back into bed at about 0330, wake up again at 0600 for the local grey line, and then two

hours sleep sometime in the afternoon. Not too bad, we found. What can go wrong now?

Oh, just the beginning of a rebellion in the country! Once at night-time we heard some shots. Otherwise there was nothing to notice in Cap Haitien, or was there? By the second day the air conditioning system was not working. There was no diesel fuel to be bought. The hotel generators – of which there were five - were now being operated on low power. The AC supply was so ‘soft’, ie if two of us keyed the ‘ØØ’ of our callsign at the same time, the lights went out and the relays in the linear dropped out. Could things get even worse? They could!

On Sunday, 15 February, we began to take down the antennas. On Monday morning we needed to be back in Puerto Plata, since our flight was in the afternoon. We had not yet finished packing when our Haitian guide appeared and explained that the vehicle which was supposed to fetch us could not come over the border from the Dominican Republic. In addition there would be road blocks everywhere. We had to start immediately. Somehow, via a secret route to the north, we came to a road block – with burning cars across the road. There we stood, all of us with our luggage. And we would still be there, if it hadn’t been for our Haitian guide.

We carried our luggage through the road block and, believe it or not, on the other side we had to continue on motorcycles. Each of us on a pillion seat, with two suitcases and across them an antenna bag. Five kms further on we unloaded in a village: four white people with a lot of interesting luggage amongst a whole crowd of black people. It got dark. Finally, after various negotiations, we got a car. It was a local transport minibus. Up and away, together with five local people.

The driver took us along the dirt road at 80 km/h towards Ouanaminthe, the city on the border. He probably knew why. We didn’t, at

least not yet. Then suddenly we hit the back of the driver’s seat. A road block - and slowly we moved sideways into the bushes. What a night! When I knelt down there I had never seen the stars as clearly as on this evening. Nevertheless, everything was pitch black in the middle of the bushes: only twinkling flashlights and the harsh, albeit hushed, words of command. Hands above your heads. A body search. Afterwards the luggage came off too. Money - and everything else which seemed saleable - was confiscated. The IC-706 transceiver was probably regarded as a radio.

A white is a ‘blanc’. Every ‘blanc’ is immeasurably rich. Before God it is legitimate to decrease his wealth somewhat. After one hour the nightmare was over. We were nevertheless glad, because we had come away with our lives. It was bad enough, but it could have been worse still.

At 80 km/h, with both baggage and humans ignoring the speed on this ‘road’, we continued to drive towards the border. Finally we reached a hotel in Ouanaminthe. The next morning the luggage was loaded on to a cart and we pushed it towards the border, right through people swarming like ants on an anthill. After some hours we were then actually on the Dominican side of the border and we managed to get our scheduled flight.

We had sweated and we had suffered from mosquitoes, but even after so much effort, our goal of 30,000 QSOs had not been achieved. Only 16,500 were in the log. Nevertheless, we are proud, because we believe that we gave our best under these adverse circumstances. Despite the strains and the losses, despite the question, “Why don’t you operate there and not here at this and that time?”, comments like “You probably were in the pool” - and letters from a certain DL with 12 QSOs and only one SASE, DX-peditioners are a hardy bunch and soon ask the same question again, “Where do we go next time?”.

Return to Paradise

Galapagos DX-pedition, December 2003 – January 2004

Mike Parker, G4IUF

g4iuf@yahoo.com

In October 2002 my wife and I satisfied a long-awaited wish to visit the Galapagos Islands. We spent two weeks on the island of San Cristobal, at the home of Don Guido Rosillo Ojeda, HC8GR, and his family.

The visit came about through a QSO I had with Don Guido in 1982. His QSL card had long adorned the shack and, being newly retired, the time seemed right to satisfy ambitions not possible when working.

I wrote to him, and received an invite to visit his newly established DX ham shack in Puerto Barquerizo Moreno, the provincial capital of the Galapagos.

From a holiday view the visit was a great success: lots of exotic wildlife only a few hundred yards down the hill at the port, sea lions, marine iguanas, blue footed boobies etc. just sat posing awaiting our camera.

From an amateur radio view it was also moderately successful. In the two weeks I made 4,754 QSOs, mainly on HF, even though the ship's dipole put up for LF seemed to bring in QRN from every neon light and machine on the whole island. Despite this, some QSOs were managed on 40m, but none on 80 or 160m.

In 2003 we thought about where to go, and – yes, you've guessed it – we decided to return to the Galapagos Islands. This time I took an LF antenna with me, the My-Del Megatrap, which seemed like the best for the space available at Don Guido's QTH.

Martin Lynch & Son had a couple in stock, so another bag made the flight with us.

After picking up the licence from the Quito Radio Club we flew down the avenue of the volcanos from Quito to Guayaquil, and then on to the islands. Flying in low over the bay towards the airfield we could see the town, with the harbour and beaches laid out to one side, bathed in the noonday sun. It was great to be back. Don Guido met us with his family, with hugs and good wishes.

That afternoon we unpacked the LF antenna and Don Guido climbed up the tower and secured the centre, with the two ends going to trees to form the classic inverted 'V'.

With great speed we raced upstairs to the 'shack' (our lounge) and switched on 40m. Silence greeted us ("It doesn't work!" Guido said), but then I tuned around and suddenly clear, loud CW burst from the speaker. The noise level was S2, down from S8 with the ship's dipole. 80m was about the same, and on 160m it was, S3. Very much impressed we tied everything down and went to have our evening meal – tired and hungry, but happy.

The equipment at Don Guido's holiday shack is a TS-850S, a C3S for HF, and the newly installed Megatrap for LF. The output was 100W, but with a call like G4IUF/HC8, and a clear over-water take-off to the USA, Europe, JA and the Pacific it's amazing what 100W will achieve. South America and Africa are straight across the width of the island, and southern Africa was extremely hard to work

on my previous visit. In fact only one Z2 was worked at 33 both ways. One thing that surprised me was that there had been no other visitors in the 15 months since I had last stayed there, but at least I didn't have to re-programme the keyer memories !

That evening after our meal I opened the station, tried out the new antenna, first on 30m, then as sunset approached, 40, 80 and 160. The results were amazing. On 40m QSOs with the US and Europe were easy and the pile-up was huge. On 80m my first QSO was with a G, and on 160m all across the States and Canada. Wow! What a kick I got from that! From then on things followed the sort of routine I had got into on the previous visit. I operated most mornings and evenings, concentrating mainly on the WARC bands - seeing as the contest group which also operates from San Cristobal (although inland, at the highest point on the island), should, I figured, have taken care of the demand on the normal HF contest bands.

In the afternoons I went out with my wife to see the wildlife and to do a bit of exploring along the various paths from the town to the beaches and also along nature trails.

Conditions on HF were down on the 2002 visit. 10 and 12m were only open occasionally; 15m was roughly the same; 17 seemed to carry a lot more traffic - and 20m was, as usual, full! This time I had some very good openings to JA, especially on 17m just after their sunrise, and a couple on 12m. I also picked up some SE Asia at the same time.

On LF the 40m pile-ups never let up. On all the other bands I could work out the pile-up in a few hours, but 40m just got bigger. You would not believe that HC8 could be in such demand. Sometimes the pile-up got to be 15 kHz wide and wall-to-wall. 80m was good on and off - on some nights almost as full as 40m, on others I only worked a few stations - and

160m was similar: only three really good nights, on the others just one or two contacts.

Altogether I made 6,026 QSOs:

North America	3811
Europe	1256
Asia	649
Africa	20
Oceania	41
Antarctica	3

At least two ZS stations got in the log this time, one on 80m and one on 40m. Of the total, 2152 were on SSB and 3,874 on CW. The breakdown by bands:

160	33
80	297
40	1118
30	713
20	335
17	1481
15	908
12	703
10	438

On the social side it was great to spend Christmas and New Year on the island. You won't believe it, but for Christmas lunch we had turkey and trimmings, chased with champagne. New Year was like a combination of Halloween, UK Guy Fawkes night and New Year all rolled into one. Kids with masks tricking or treating, effigies of the previous year's problems burnt at midnight, fireworks and an open air disco. I don't know what the sea lions thought of it; they usually haul out and sleep in the square where the disco was, but not on New Year's Eve A great night!

Finally it was time to head back to Quito. We said our goodbyes at the airport after one last look round the harbour, then back up the avenue of the volcanos for our fourth time. Each time we never saw a thing, seeing as there was thick cloud.

Back on the mainland we spent an enjoyable four days at an Andean Spa 11,000' up in a valley looking towards the Antisana volcano and had some good views of its snow-capped peaks. Finally, four days in the cloud forest, watching the humming birds feeding at the jungle lodge, and walking in the area. Then back home from a rainy Quito - and surprise surprise! As the aircraft rose above the low cloud there were the peaks of the volcanos glinting in the sun; truly a memorable experience, and one neither of us is likely to forget.

My thanks to Sandy, my wife, who puts up with my hobby; Don Guido and his family for a memorable month sharing their home; Martin Lynch & Son for the LF antenna, and last but not least to all you guys out there who worked me and put up with some terrible CW when sweat dripped onto the key. Yes, that's why it went berserk every now & then! I hope worked you also from 3B9, but that's another story.

References: www.donguido.com

Member Profile

Vince Shirley, GØORC *vince@blackboy1.fsnet.co.uk*

In line with your Digest Editor's wish to encourage those of us to attempt to belie the myth that you can't be a DX-er without 3 cwt of metal in the sky, I offer this tale of wonder, piracy, success and failure. It's worth saying that it's not from choice that I don't have a vast antenna farm here at the Cat's Whisker [*House name! Ed.*]. The world of planning consent is filled with lie and duplicity, but that story is best left between our local council and my (normally very helpful) neighbours.

The 'wonder' part of the story started when I was ten years old. My Uncle Ralph lived in Liverpool and I always looked forward to being invited to watch him operate his mysterious radio equipment. The smell of hot valves, burning rubber insulation and the sound of VK-this and W-that crackling out of the old speaker (in a wooden 'sunrise' cabinet - remember those ?) still makes me feel very nostalgic.

My uncle (G8AZ, I learnt later) was a mysterious man too. He did a very hush-hush job for the MOD and the strange garbled

telephone conversations he used to get still remind me of that old 'Round The Horne' sketch about Brown-Horrocks at MI5 having his secretary on the scrambler (but that's another story).

So I guess the radio bug started there. The piracy bit came around the 1960s when I spent ages listening to Radios Caroline and London late into the night under the bedclothes and even visiting both ships as well. Sad times when they were forced off the air and plastic clones replaced them at the BBC - but again, that's for another time.

In around 1970 I was given a Trio 9R59DS and that really started me on the way. Short wave was fascinating and I loved listening to the Paper-Tiger Show on Radio Peking (as it was then), Radio Australia from Melbourne and WNYW from New York.

Other things intervened and it wasn't until 1987 when, at an army surplus store deep amongst the piles of junk, I discovered an old Eddystone 670 receiver. I bought that and a

bag full of valves for a fiver and was amazed when it eventually worked. All the magic that had lain dormant for a number of years returned.

Courtesy of my wife, who rescued a large scaffold pole from oblivion, and members of now sadly defunct Matlock Radio Club (where are you, G8ROU?), I took the RAE in 1989 and became G7ENF shortly afterwards.

I spent a year or so running 100W on 2m and working most of Europe from this lofty spot in Derbyshire. When I heard my first aurora, the big one in 1989, I decided I must learn Morse code, because that was the only way to work more DX on VHF – and so by 1990 I was GØORC (not an inspired choice, too many dahs and not enough dits).

Me, my scaffold pole and my 17-element Tonna became very close friends and I worked loads of 2m DX on CW and phone. I well remember my first pile-up during an aurora in 1991. It really blew me away to be called by half of Eastern Europe from KP12 to KO23 - at the same time all with that wonderful, rough auroral tone. Magic!

I didn't really turn to HF much until around 1995, when my fascination with VHF DX-ing began to fade. I made a few tentative contacts on a variety of dipoles and long wires, but it wasn't until G8ROU, GØFQB and myself stuck a mini-beam on the top of my trusty scaffold pole that things really took off.

A vintage year in 2000 gave me around 240 countries running 100W from a TS-940, mainly on CW with a little phone thrown in. All that was to end very abruptly in 2001 when my trusty scaffold pole came crashing down in a storm at 2 o'clock one morning. The guys hadn't failed – the metal around the guy lug had simply peeled away like opening a can. I just can't imagine the force required to do that!

That rather knocked my enthusiasm for a while, but I eventually installed a square section Tennamast and a Cushcraft A3S, which really started the problems with my neighbours and planners. Twelve months without a large lump of metal in the sky had put them in a comfort zone they wouldn't relinquish easily – and so my retrospective planning application was turned down. I could have a mast, but I couldn't attach any aerials to it. Hmm!

I decided to try and make the best of a bad job. Thanks to my late Mum and Dad I still had my FT-1000MP Mark V (a radio the likes of which I'd only ever dreamed about) and decided I could either sell it, or make the best of it.

I searched around for a solution and eventually found one. You may have read the article in the March 2004 digest by Stan Rudcenko, GØKBL, regarding the Carolina Windom. I heartily concur with Stan's review of it and it is a revelation on every band from 80m to 17m. Mine is not too bright on 15 and 10m, but I can live with that. It is 37' high at one end and 27' at the other and works really well. It certainly seems the ideal solution in the long, narrow garden with which I have to contend. I've since added a Heatherlite Explorer amp and a few digital modes to my shack - and all the fun I get from this wonderful enduring hobby has returned.

QSL-ing and awards? No I don't bother. I know in my own mind whether I've worked the DX and I don't need a card to prove it. Here I'm reminded of a comment I heard recently from Bob, AP2JZB, who at 85 years of age told me that he doesn't collect QSL cards, just friends. What a refreshing sentiment.

You see, you can be a DX-er without metal in the sky. You just have to be persistent, patient and resilient.

IOTA News

Roger Balister, G3KMA

IOTA Directory – 40th Anniversary Edition

The 40th Anniversary Edition of the IOTA Directory was published on 18 April and will be available from RSGB HQ (see www.rsgb.org/shop/ or telephone sales at +44 (0)1707 659015). Larger than ever, with 136 pages, this anniversary edition features an historical review, much of which has never previously been published, as well as Geoff Watts' original IOTA list of 1964, fascinating for what it includes - as well as for what it omits. It includes all you have come to expect of the Directory - the latest IOTA island listings, DX-pedition stories, the Most Wanted List, and articles on how to get started in IOTA.

Readers who have been active on the bands for several years and want help in identifying operations that count, will find the listing of operations accepted for credit quite invaluable. This list was first introduced in the 2002 Directory and is now updated and expanded to cover the 650 rarest IOTA groups. Using it could save you hours in preparing your application. And for the first time the Directory includes the current year's Honour Roll and other performance listings.

IOTA Anniversary Celebrations

The first of two major events to celebrate IOTA's 40th Anniversary will take place at Friedrichshafen in southern Germany during Ham Radio 2004. We cannot offer an IOTA operation there, but we can do the next best thing and celebrate IOTA's 40th Birthday Party afloat on the Bodensee (Lake Constance). We

have chartered one of the Lake's famous steamers for a Buffet Dinner Cruise on Saturday, 26 June, to a nearby port. Participants will assemble at 1900 hours at Friedrichshafen Harbour, ready to set sail at 1930 – and with an expected return time of around 2230. It will be a real occasion to remember!

Tickets are GBP 24.00 or 35 Euros each, a price that covers the cost of the meal and the cruise. Payment in Dollars will be charged at the equivalent exchange rate on the day of payment. We prefer you to book on-line via the RSGB website at www.rsgb.org/shop/. Those of you paying in Euros may be able to purchase tickets via your Eurozone checkpoint.

This is an ambitious event for the IOTA Committee to organise, with significant cost liabilities up front. To assist proper planning we need to have a firm idea of the number of people wishing to participate by the end of May. We cannot leave the sale of the bulk of tickets to the time of the show in late June. Those of you wishing to join us should book early to avoid disappointment. There may only be a limited number of tickets left for sale on the RSGB stand in the Convention Hall. At this stage, even expressions of intent are welcome. Please address these to IOTA.HQ@rsgb.org.uk for the attention of Teresa Baker. Book early, get your tickets and come and enjoy the party with us.

The second major celebration will be at the RSGB HF and IOTA Convention to be held at a hotel near Gatwick Airport on 22-24 October, 2004. More on that later.

Monthly update of data in IOTA Directory, 11th Edition

New IOTA reference numbers issued

AS-169	VU	Maharashtra State group (India)
NA-226	XE1	Colima / Michoacan State group (Mexico)

Provisional IOTA reference number as at 14 April 2004

AF-095/Pr	TJ	Cameroon group (Cameroon)
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Operations which have provided acceptable validation material

AS-017	JL3SIK/6	Zamami Island, Okinawa Islands (November 2003)
AS-049	JA6PSE	Takara Island, Tokara Islands (February/March 2004)
AS-049	JA6PSI	Takara Island, Tokara Islands (February/March 2004)
AS-147	JA8DZV/8	Yagishiri Island (August 2003)
AS-147	JR8KJR/8	Yagishiri Island (August 2003)
AS-169	ATØBI	Elephanta Island (March 2004)
NA-128	N1VF/VE2	Orleans Island (September 2003)
NA-189	XF1/F5TY Y	Las Tres Marietas Island (January 2004)
NA-189	XF1/F6AOI	Las Tres Marietas Island (January 2004)
NA-189	XF1/F6BFH	Las Tres Marietas Island (January 2004)
NA-189	XF1/F9IE	Las Tres Marietas Island (January 2004)
NA-226	XF1/F5TY Y	Pena Blanca Island (January 2004)
NA-226	XF1/F6AOI	Pena Blanca Island (January 2004)
NA-226	XF1/F6BFH	Pena Blanca Island (January 2004)
NA-226	XF1/F9IE	Pena Blanca Island (January 2004)
OC-026	N1VF/KH2	Guam Island (November 2003)
OC-137	VK2IAY/4	Lamb Island (December 2003)
OC-160	VK2IAY/4	Hook Island (November/December 2003)
OC-171	VK2IAY/4	Dunk Island (December 2003)
OC-258	P29VVB	Karkar Island (August 2003)
SA-032	CE6TBN/8	Wellington Island (January 2004)
SA-091	CE6TBN/8	Riesco Island (January 2004)

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

Operations from which validation material is awaited as at 14 April 2004

AF-095/Pr	TJ3MC/P	Mondoleh Island (April 2004)
SA-074	OC3I	Los Chimus Island (February 2004)
SA-089	YV5ANF/1	Sal Key (April 2003)

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

New IOTA Checkpoint

After more than ten years of checking cards Phil, G4WFZ, has relinquished his post as checkpoint for England (prefixes GØ & MØ), the rest of the UK, Channel Islands, Isle of Man and all British SWLs. Thanks, Phil, for all your help over the years. We welcome as his replacement John Butcher, G3LAS, who is well-known as currently the Chairman of the CDXC - The UK DX Foundation. His appointment takes effect immediately.

Members are asked to note the new checkpoint details:

John Butcher, G3LAS
Westlands
Westland Green
Little Hadham
Ware
Herts SG11 2AJ
E-mail: john@johnbutcher.net

IOTA and Antarctic bases

The WABA Directory 2003 is the official source of information for the IOTA Programme on Antarctic Base stations. It acts as an extension of the IOTA Directory, providing the IOTA reference number as well as a wealth of detailed historical information on each base. The Directory is downloadable from the 425 DX News website at <http://www.425dxn.org>.

Rule clarifications

The IOTA Directory includes rule clarifications on:

- operation of a station by remote control (not allowed),
- validation requirements for operations by yachtsmen with an on-board operational amateur radio station (requirements extended), and
- requirements for outgoing SWL reports and cards submitted for credit (requirements tightened).

IOTA charges

The Directory also includes an up-to-date list of charges. Although there has been NO increase in the GBP figures (beyond changes in postage for the higher priced items), recent currency fluctuations have meant a rise in the Dollar equivalent figures, effective immediately. Members paying in Dollars will need to check the correct fee.

New certificates

The new Directory announces the addition of three new certificates to the programme's current range: for contacting 800, 900 and 1000 IOTA groups. These will be of the same design as other certificates in the 100 series. The 1000 Islands certificate will be sent free of charge to each member reaching that level, whether or not the 1000 Islands Trophy is requested. The 800 and 900 Islands

certificates will be charged for on the same basis as other certificates. To ensure fairness of treatment in the issue of low number 800 and 900 Islands certificates, a period of several weeks will be allowed for members to apply through their checkpoints. At the end of that period the certificates will be issued, numbered in the order of the applicant's score on the central IOTA database. So, if you qualify and are interested, please apply before 1 August 2004 via your checkpoint. Certificates will be despatched in September.

IOTA 2004 Activity Programme

Some of the regularly activated island groups counting for premium points during May to August 2004. For further information on this current activity programme, see the CDXC website at www.cdxc.org.uk (follow the IOTA 2004 links).

May 2004

AF-013 5R Madagascar
 AF-016 FR Reunion Island
 AF-024 S7 Seychelles
 AF-032 5H Zanzibar Island
 AF-049 3B8 Mauritius Island
 AN-015 8J1 Queen Maud Land group
 AS-002 A9 Bahrain
 AS-004 5B/ZC Cyprus/UK Sovereign Bases

EU-019 R1F Franz Josef Land

June 2004

There are over 100 European counters in June. Look also for:

AF-018 IH9 Pantelleria Island
 AF-019 IG9 Pelagie Islands
 AF-023 S9 Sao Tome Island
 AF-044 S9 Principe Island

July 2004

In addition to many European counters look for:

AF-003 ZD8 Ascension Island
 AF-004 EA8 Canary Islands
 AF-005 D4 Cape Verde, Leeward Islands
 AF-014 CT3 Madeira Islands
 AF-022 ZD7 St Helena Island
 AF-029 ZD9 Tristan Da Cunha Islands
 AF-030 ZD9 Gough Island
 AF-086 D4 Cape Verde, Windward Islands

AN-016 Various Antarctica

August 2004

EU-089 CU8/9 Flores Island

NA-018 OX Greenland
 NA-021 8P Barbados
 NA-027 VO1 Newfoundland
 NA-032 FP St Pierre & Miquelon
 NA-063 CYØ Sable Island
 NA-094 CY9 St Paul Island

SA-002 VP8 Falkland Islands
 SA-003 PYØF Fernando de Noronha Archipelago
 SA-026 PP5 Santa Catarina State Centre group
 SA-046 PY7 Pernambuco State group
 SA-068 8R Guyana group

Roger Balister, G3KMA
 RSGB IOTA Manager
 14 April 2004

Email: IOTA.HQ@rsgb.org.uk
<http://www.g3kma.dsl.pipex.com>

Visit the website for the latest IOTA information

The RTTY Column

Phil Cooper, GUØSUP *pcooper@guernsey.net*

It would appear that my last column about RTTY contesting got a few of you interested, judging by some of the e-mails I have since received. I have responded to those, and I hope you are now active on this mode.

I guess a few of you were getting RTTY sorted for an attempt to work 3B9C. If so, did you manage to work them? It was hard work from here, with just 100W to a small antenna, but I did get them on 10, 12 and 17m. Tim, G4VXE, did sterling work on the data modes in the last week - and I was very pleased to work them on 10m on the very last day.

Sunday, 11 April, was a good day for me and started off well! For some reason I woke up earlier than usual on a Sunday and decided to check the bands in case 3B9C was around. As it happened, they weren't, but I heard a fluttery signal that had that 'over the pole' sound to it, and was amazed to copy 5WØSS at about 589. He was working split, and it only took one call to work him! The op was Volkmar, DF2SS, who visited Guernsey a few years back, and we even had a brief chat about his visit. The QSL is via DL2MDZ for this one. That was quite a surprise for me, and an all-time new one, so that bit more pleasing.

Around lunchtime, I found 3B9C on 10m PSK, but they were weak, and copy was poor to start with. Soon they got a little stronger, enough to be workable, but still weak. As it was 10m, and the A and K indices were not good, that didn't surprise me too much. I tried a few calls, and then saw Tim say they were QSYing to 10m RTTY. Within a few minutes, they were CQing on 28.085 MHz and the signal was a good S9! A few calls and they were in the log! At last I had a data QSO on

the 'normal' bands to complement the two WARC band contacts.

How did you get on with trying to work 3B9C on RTTY? I also managed to work them on 10, 12, 15 and 30m CW, plus 10m SSB. I just could not break the pile-ups on 20 or 40m CW, despite hours of trying. I did look on 10m FM, but had no copy there at all.

Following on a little from last month, I guess you will now have found that the rates for RTTY contesting are slower than for SSB or CW? Maybe that depends on your style of contesting, but I guess it is true in most cases.

Despite that, I find RTTY contesting most relaxing, as I can sit back, read the Digest, and even get up and go to the fridge for another can of drink, and still keep the rate going. Not only that, but you will also come across folk who are prepared to have a brief chat with you despite being under a pile-up, and then wish you well.

In general, RTTY is the 'friendly' mode, and people tend to behave in a gentlemanly manner. The reason I mention this is that this was NOT evident in the pile-ups for 3B9C! If you found the hordes to be extremely unruly, not to mention downright rude at times, I can only suggest that this is not the norm.

Over the last few weeks, there has been a lot of RTTY activity on 30m, with some nice DX around too. Over the Easter break I worked Brett, VR2BG, and have since seen Ed, D2PFN, on the band. It has been open to some odd places at odd times of the day, so it is well worth checking during the day. In the main, most activity is during our evening, but it is well worth checking in the morning too.

Have you noticed the comments about 40m RTTY on the various reflectors? There were a lot recently, all bemoaning the fact that RTTY was being used in the CW and SSB portions of the band! Some of the complainants were Gs too!

Creeping outside the boundaries is GOING to happen, but probably only in contests. Let's face it, this happens in CW and SSB contests too, so please be a little patient, and perhaps a little tolerant too. 40m is a very narrow band, and the data allocation is extremely small, so some poaching of space is going to occur. Let's face it, it happens in CW and SSB contests, and RTTY is no different.

How have you been getting on in the RSGB 80m Club Championships? From comments I have seen and heard, there isn't much PSK activity, as most QSOs taking place are general chats and nothing to do with the contest. This has meant a few more using RTTY, which is probably better. Maybe the HFCC ought to consider dropping PSK from this contest? What do you think?

I have entered the CW legs as well, just to keep the club name going, and even tried SSB as well. I'm still not comfortable using SSB, but will persevere, just to keep the club tally up a little more. Guernsey ARS has absolutely no chance of winning, but at least we have taken part!

I like this short contest, and it is pleasing to see some of the Gs trying out RTTY here in some of the major RTTY contests. I hope this trend continues.

I guess all of you will have submitted logs for the 80m championships, and you will now realise that the Cabrillo file is easy enough to handle. When you enter the main RTTY contests, most will accept Cabrillo logs too, so please do submit a log, even if your entry is quite small.

With Cabrillo logs, there is no need to send a dupe sheet, summary sheet, or anything else. The only point to remember is NOT to zip up the Cabrillo file!

By the time you read this, I will be the new BARTG Awards Manager! I have taken over this task from Nigel, G4KZZ, and will now handle all claims for the BARTG awards. BARTG offers various awards, such as the QCA, or Quarter Century Award, and various continental awards. For more details on the awards, check out www.bartg.demon.co.uk or e-mail me.

Forthcoming contests:

Volta 08-09 May Details from
www.contestvolta.com/rules2.htm

This one is great fun, with huge scores! Points are based on distance, so working the DX is the way to go!

Anatolian 15-16 May Details from
www.sk3bg.se/contest/anwwryc.htm

ANARTS 12-13 June Details from
www.users.bigpond.com/ctdavies/Anarts%20RTTY%20Contest%20Information.htm

Uses the same points system as the Volta, and is one of the major RTTY contests of the year.

For details of all contests, and everything to do with RTTY contesting, check out www.rttycontesting.com

That's it for this edition, and I hope to see some of you in the various contests soon.

Enjoy the summer, and the DX.

Phil GUØSUP

GM5A

CQ WPX RTTY Contest 23 February 2004

Tom Wylie, GM4FDM *t.wylie@ntlworld.com*

I only really got interested in RTTY a couple of years ago when I bought a second hand PK-232MBX which I still have, but never use. It got despatched to the cupboard when I came across MMTTY on the Internet. When I downloaded and started to run MMTTY I never connected the TNC again.

In the early days I was using WF1B as an RTTY Contest program and even managed with some jiggery-pokery to get it to run with MMTTY, but when it was no longer supported I decided to look for something else. A further trawl through the Internet led me to Writelog and RCKrtty.

I have to confess from the outset that I do not like Writelog and find it too complicated to set up. Having said that, it is now in standard use by my Contest Group – so I am learning to love it. Grrrr! I did get the opportunity to play with Writelog and a TNC for RTTY when I was OY7TW in the spring of 2003, but it was not my programme of choice.

I have grown into RCKrtty by DL4RCK. To me, it is a piece of software written by an RTTY man for RTTY men. It has in-built cluster support, and has templates for all the major contests including all of the RTTY ones. It uses MMTTY as its 'rtty engine' and I have to say it works very well and includes all the facilities of MMTTY.

When you start up the software, you have to tell it that it is to run in Contest Mode, then after selecting which contest from a long list, you can set up your Contest Macros for the 'F' Keys. The configuration can, of course, be

saved for future use. There are a large number of in-built cluster connect scripts, including all of the UK Internet Clusters.

What I especially like about RCKrtty is the 'double click' feature. When a received call-sign comes up in the RX window, simply double clicking on it inserts it into the log file, then sends the required report, all in one action. A single mouse click or an F3 will log the QSO and send the 'TU – NEXT' text. So a Contest QSO can be as simple as two clicks. The mouse actions are replicated by the F-keys. It really is very user-friendly software. My only complaint is that it does not have a 'running score' total.

I decided to have a bash in the CQ WPX RTTY Contest this year as a single operator: all-band, high power. As I have no low-band antennas at my home QTH (80/40m), I decided to operate from the GM5A contest station location. This is by courtesy of the Stirling and District Amateur Radio Society, just outside Stirling. The antenna set-up there is a 4-element wide-spaced on 10m, a 5-element wide-spaced on 15m, a 4-element wide spaced on 20m, a 2-elements on 40m and two phased verticals for 80m. 160m does not feature in the WPX.

I arrived on site during the afternoon of the Friday before the Contest. The first task was winding up all the towers. Then, having checked out all the antennas, I set up my FT-1000MP and Challenger 2 amplifier as well as my computer. Initial tests brought no RFI problems.

I started at midnight on 80m and from then on, until I quit for the night, I switched bands a couple of times to 40m and back, bearing in mind the band change rules.

Conditions were not good, as there were signs of an aurora on the Friday evening. I did work some Ws, VEs and a few South Americans, but mainly Europe. I quit at 0315 and went to bed for four hours, hoping to make a splash long path on the Saturday morning on 20m. It was 0832 before I worked my first JA. Conditions were not good and the band in general was very flat. I did not hear any VKs. I worked DU7/G4DUN at about 0940 for the only 'interesting' piece of DX during the early morning.

However, when conditions are bad, they can only get better – or can they? The antennas continued to perform, but there were no 'runs' to either the Far East or the USA. It was no better searching and pouncing. All the stations I could hear I had worked. 15m was little better, with only Europe in the main, and as far east as UAØ. I managed a few solitary stations like CN8, 7X and a few other Mediterranean ones. 10m brought 9J2KC and a few South Americans.

I picked up a host of European and Near East prefixes on 40m before venturing back onto 80m at about 8pm on the Saturday. Two of the other Group members were taking part in the RSGB 160m Contest, so in order to conserve 'hours' I had arranged that they could have the shack at 9pm for the RSGB contest. I couldn't believe it when VK6HD popped out of the noise at 2051. At least it proved the verticals were working.

I opened for business at 0715 on the Sunday morning, again on the long path. Conditions seemed better and I worked ZL2AMI and another ZL, but still no VKs, although I did hear VK6GOM (as usual). I did work an XE and a host of JAs on the long path, much

stronger than on the Saturday, but it was still not a good run. Keeping my eye on the band changes, I jumped from 10m to 15m and back during the afternoon, picking up some Middle East, Africa and South America. As greyline approached I changed to 40m and quickly picked up YEØANA, VR2BG and a JA, before the Europeans became overpowering. My final blast on 20m brought ZS6EGB. I ran out of hours at 2000 on the Sunday, which was just as well, seeing as I had to lower all the towers in the dark.

My final totals were:

	QSOs	WPX
80	126	101
40	373	229
20	439	261
15	287	200
10	16	13

for a final claimed score of 1,813,000 points, which at the time of writing on the 3830 reflector shows me lying 4th in the world - although as the real scores come in, I've no doubt that will drop. I am quite satisfied with my performance, considering the state of the bands and the sun spot cycle, but I feel I could have done better. Ah well, there's always next year. I will try to persuade some of those key bashers to join me in a Multi 2 for the CQ WW RTTY in September.

Thanks and acknowledgement to the SADARS – GMDX and to JE3HHT, Makoto Mori, for his very fine RTTY engine – MMTTY - as well as Walter Dallmeier, DL4RCK, for some very FB software.



Not the GB2RS News by RFX

The authorities in Bulgaria have announced that amateur radio stations there can now use their LZ prefix followed by the number of years they've been licensed, providing this is 10 years or more. The suffix will stay the same. For example, after 10 years LZ2ZZ can sign LZ10ZZ; after 11 years: LZ11ZZ; after 99 years on the air: LZ99ZZ. It's thought that many other European countries will follow suit. In some cases this will mean that you won't have a clue as to which callsign area of which country a station is in any more, but all in all it'll be a lot more fun.

In a surprise move in the opposite direction, in the United States the FCC has announced a new measure designed to eliminate any on-air confusion as to which state a station is actually operating from, seeing as these days the whole thing's basically one hell of a mess and it's virtually impossible to tell. Indeed as of 1 June 2004 all US stations will be officially obliged to indicate their state each time they give their callsign. For example, ex-Californian W6AA, long since a resident of Pennsylvania, will have to sign 'W6AA/PA'. Whereas K0BBB, originally from Iowa, but now living happily with his six wives in Utah, will have to sign 'K0BBB/UT', etc.

Here in the UK the communications regulator, Ofcom, has approved plans for the introduction of highly sophisticated new computer software to facilitate fully unattended amateur radio operation on the HF bands. As of 1 January 2005 UK amateurs will be able to pop out for a leisurely pint or two down at their local pub, a mind-bogglingly spicy Meat Vindaloo at their favourite Indian restaurant – or even two weeks' holiday in sunny Mallorca – and see what they worked when they get back.

A new awards programme has recently been unveiled: Pubs on the Air, or POTA. Although initially UK-orientated, it's hoped that radio amateurs in other countries can be encouraged to join in the scheme and activate as many of their local hostelrys as possible. The rules are based on that well-known motoring game of pub cricket. Thus a QSO with a station operating from the 'Dirty Duck' public house scores two runs or points, due to the duck's two feet, dirty or not. Whereas a contact with the 'Red Lion' scores four runs or points, seeing as most lions have four paws, be they red or not. Something like that, anyway.

Those well-known helpers on the HF DX station scene, 'band policemen', are to be issued with their own official uniforms. We won't see them, of course, but they will – and will be able to spend countless hours admiring themselves in these uniforms in the mirror at home. Truncheons will also be provided to complete the picture.

Solution to Digest Prize Crossword 3

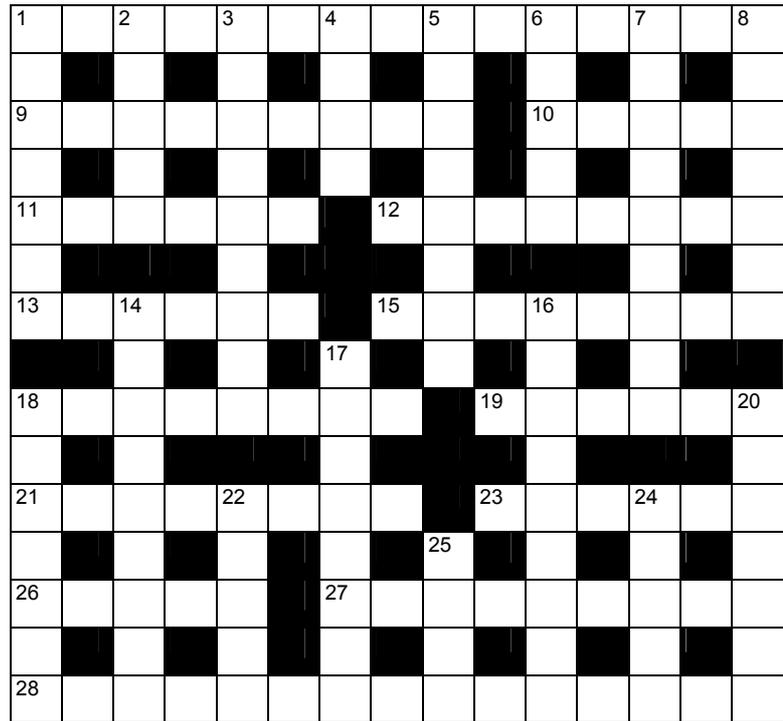
S	O	L	D	E	R		A	M	E	R	I	C	A	N
E		A		N		B		A		E		O		O
T	H	I	R	D	T	E	S	T		D	I	N	E	R
T		N				N		A		U		D		D
L	O	G	P	E	R	I	O	D	I	C		U	R	I
E				M		G		O		E		C		C
I	D	I	A	M	I	N		R	E	S	I	T	S	
N		N		E						P		O		W
	S	C	E	N	I	C		U	N	E	A	R	T	H
F		R		T		I		G		E				I
R	A	E		H	A	R	D	A	N	D	F	A	S	T
I		A		A		C		N				M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

Digest Prize Crossword 4 by RFX

A record number of entries for Prize Crossword 3, not only from G - but also 5B4, EI, VE and VK. Not too many unusual words to worry about either. Although one entrant did comment, somewhat tongue-in-cheek, on my 'rather unseemly obsession with erections'. Well, let's face it: in this hobby of ours there are so many different types of erection to choose from!

Anyway, see what you can do with this one.

The winner of Prize Crossword 3, March 2004, and that much-coveted £10 note: Bob Cox, G3PLP, Ottery St Mary, Devon.



ACROSS

- 1 Reveal the secret of what the final score's going to be? (4,3,4,4)
- 9 Horse and cart in new formation for the players (9)
- 10 Local measuring device (5)
- 11 English operator forever cut in this part of EI (6)
- 12 Pirate who loved messing about in boats (5,3)
- 13 Banana cooked in N. African port (6)
- 15 Fabric making a comeback in Transylvania, Coram said (8)
- 18 A bit of a pig at table, this I4? (5,3)
- 19 Poems written by Nazi terrorist militia in E. European city (6)
- 21 Ancient capital, not new, holding permit for the runners (8)
- 23 Domingo, say? Make a note of him! (6)
- 26 Banish wife no longer to French island (5)
- 27 Taking a break – at Waterloo, say? (2,7)
- 28 Highly elated, like Hillary in Coronation year (2,3,2,3,5)

DOWN

- 1 State in which first-class rum is served up around the end of June (7)
- 2 Loud girl nursing commanding officer (5)
- 3 Country listed under the Bahamas? Quite the opposite (3,6)
- 4 Treebeard's folk, descended from non-standard mother and father (4)
- 5 Chap receiving two degrees from Birmingham, say? (8)
- 6 Writer leaves Greek hero's wife to run away (5)
- 7 Visions experienced by those who sleep out in the rain? (3,6)
- 8 Chinese settler embraces pet in part of XE (7)
- 14 It runs hot in a way in part of GM (5,4)
- 16 Strange chap, a member of this order (9)
- 17 Becomes unstable and leaves the ground (5,3)
- 18 In effect it's only in the mind (7)
- 20 Dry area redeveloped as arranged (7)
- 22 Ogle organ at university (3,2)
- 24 The lowest point in Sheridan's upbringing (5)
- 25 He ruled Hungary in silence (4)

DX and Events Calendar

Compiled by G3XTT

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

till 10/05	JV45D: special event station (Mongolia) by JT1BG
till 14/05	HR5/F2JD: Honduras
till 31/05	ZM6CL: special event call
till mid-May	ZS1ØRSA: special event station by ZS6Y
till May	7Q7HB: Malawi by GØJMU
till May	YA8G: Afghanistan by LA5IIA
till 01/06	K2ZR/4: Key West (NA-062)
till 15/06	SV8/KE2SP: Hydra I. (EU-075) by KE2SP
till July	YI9GS: Iraq by YN1GSR
till 31/12	HB75A: Switzerland (USKA 75 th Anniversary)
till 31/12	HS72B: special call and licence (Thailand)
till 31/12	NL7AU: Upper Matecombe Key (NA-062)
till 31/12	W1AW/9Ø: ARRL's 90 th anniversary
till December	HFØQF and HFØPOL: 'Arctowski' Base (S. Shetlands)
till December	OX2KAN: special event station
till December	VKØDX: Davis Station (Antarctica) by VK4LL
till December	WL7CPA: Unalaska Island (NA-059)
till March 2006	5H3HK: Tanzania by JE3MAS
till March 2006	ZD8I: Ascension Island by G8WVW
01/05-21/05	3B8/DL3LBP: Mauritius (AF-049) by DL3LBP
07/05-25/08	HSØZCW: Thailand by K4VUD
15/05-16/05	FO/ON4AXU: Tahiti (OC-067), French Polynesia
16/05-20/05	K7ZO/KL7: Adak Island (NA-039)
17/05-23/05	FO/ON4AXU/A: Tubuai (OC-152), Austral Islands
28/05-29/05	FO/ON4AXU: Huahine (OC-067), French Polynesia
30/05-31/05	FO/ON4AXU: Raiatea (OC-067), French Polynesia
01/06-07/09	VO2/K2FRD: Labrador (Zone 2) by K2FRD
03/06-13/06	FO/ON4AXU/M: Hiva Oa (OC-027), Marquesas Islands
05/06-06/06	3G1E: Peninsula del Alacran Lighthouse by CEs
14/06-15/06	FO/ON4AXU: Tahiti (OC-067), French Polynesia
19/06-20/06	Albania DX Convention
25/06-27/06	Friedrichshafen Hamfest
25/06-29/06	GH8KGC: Les Minquiers Islands (EU-099) by G Team
26/06-27/06	His Majesty the King of Spain Contest, SSB
14/07-16/07	N3RW and KG6RWI: Anacapa Island (NA-144)

Letters to the Editor

from M3SDE

Firstly a big 'Well done!' to the CDXC Team involved with 3B9C. You did a terrific job. I think conditions were not as good as we had all hoped, but still 150K QSOs.

The reason for my letter to The Digest is to ask the DX-pedition teams to think about their 'Band Plan' before leaving for their planned expeditions. We all recognise that 14.195 MHz is the 'DX-pedition frequency'. However, I am quite disappointed that many teams still use that frequency! Why? you ask! Well, for years now a certain Sicilian station [*Callsign supplied. Ed.*] has been a comedian and clown on that frequency and he revels with delight when he sees the cluster spots for a major expedition on 14.195 MHz. This is his go-ahead to start playing up. The consequence of this is that the expedition is completely drowned out and unfortunately many receive his signal at 59+ instead. This disrupts the expedition to a massive extent, but due to duplexing the DX-pedition team are left unaware of the problem.

I certainly would not plan any activation around 14.195 MHz - and if everyone took up this response then maybe - just maybe - this Sicilian station would get bored and clear off. Instead he rubs his hands with glee when people bite, and all try to move him.

DX-pedition teams: please be aware of what is going on on the bands and act accordingly! It's not always a courteous hobby!

I must admit that while writing these words I feel that people may think I am criticising the fantastic work done by members of the CDXC, but on the contrary I am just trying to help their team achieve greater success. It is easy to criticize from the armchair. A lot harder from their side of the microphone, I know. Keep up the good work everyone.

from GM4FDM

Murphy Strikes

Or as my old boss used to say: 'The Embuggerance Factor'

There I was sitting in my shack, ripping things apart for my trip to Banaba, when 3B9C came up on 30m. A few calls and he was in the bag. I rush outside to tower, wind down tower in dark, add 7' to either side of dipole to make it tune on 40m, rush into shack - check SWR - too long, wind down tower, cut 1½' off each end - near enough! - wind back up tower - listen for 3B9C on 40m - humungous pile up.

Staring blankly at computer when a spot came up for TJ3G on (embuggerance factor...) 30m. Now I need TJ for an all-time new one on 30m. I didn't even know Roger and Nigel were heading down there. Decision - wind down tower or not? Decided not - lucky - I worked 3B9C on 40m. Rush outside, wind down tower, cut the 5½' back off the dipole - wind back up tower - crawl gasping into shack - TJ3G gone QRT/QSY. B....r!

Ah well, I might as well try for 3B9C on 80m. Rotate coax switch to 80m - dead silence? Crawl back outside - check 80m antenna in dark - seems OK - check SWR - infinity. Back to tower, and with all my winching up and down, my 80m coax was cut cleanly in two by being trapped in the tower sections. B....r! also 2 feet of the braid stripped. Nice piece of Westlake too. No chance of 3B9C on 80m. Still I worked 7 band/modes for 3B9C, Roger SXW on 15 and 20 and Nigel TXF on 24 and 18.

As I write this, it is 6.30pm. Tomorrow - Korea - then Fiji en route to Banaba. Nigel still running on 18 MHz as I stare glumly at 30m...

B....r, B....r!

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(For accounts where two signatures are required)

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.....

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

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

Pricing

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Replacement Badge:	£2.50	including post/packing to UK

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