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Club News and Views

Editorial

Martyn Phillips, G3RFX

I'm delighted to welcome Steve Telenius-Lowe, 9M6DXX (ex-G4JVG), to our team of regular contributors. See his 'Borneo Bulletin' on page 12. Steve has already provided the *Digest* with many an interesting contribution, one of which I forgot to include last time round (Yes, you can't get the staff these days...). You'll find this, a 'Borneo Bulletin' in itself, under 'E-mails to the Editor'.

Either way it seemed to me that it would be an additional attraction for the *Digest* if we could include a regular look at goings-on on the bands from a rather different, non-European perspective. From the outside looking in, as it were. And who better to write it than Steve in 9M6?

Yes, it can be a totally different world out there (obviously...), as those of us who've operated from some of these more distant locations will immediately confirm.

I'll never forget the first time I switched on the rig at newfound 8P9FX in Barbados, with 20m SSB suddenly full of Ws at 59+40 and their inter-state ragchews. I immediately tried calling a few of them for a signal report, but soon got the impression that this was a waste of time. If you're anything less than 59+20 at their end, then it would seem they don't hear you at all.

Quite possibly, though, this was partly due to my fairly basic antenna, a dipole at a mere 30' slung between two palm trees next to a south-facing beach. At considerable expense, I hasten to add. The local palm tree shinner-uppers, mon, dreadlocks an' all, don't come cheap. They also try and flog you loads of

'must have' memorabilia, mainly coconut-based, which you don't really want at all. As for the south-facing beach: there was very little I could do about this, short of moving this hotel of ours some 20 miles to the north.

All in all, this first Caribbean trip of mine taught me several things which seem so obvious now - and which will be nothing new to the many CDXC members who are far more experienced than myself at this sort of thing. It might be of interest to the relative newcomer, though.

Firstly, no matter how exotic you think your DX location and/or callsign might be, you ain't gonna get nowhere, mon, unless you have a good and efficient antenna.

Secondly, if you have to go for wire antennas, then palm trees are far from ideal as supports, seeing as they tend to sway around an awful lot in the breeze (the constant QSB on my signal must have been considerable...).

Thirdly, if you're running a fairly basic set-up, leave the 59+40 Ws and others on 20 SSB well alone and stick to CW, whatever the band. That way you'll be heard a lot better and also work far more stations, even with a relatively mediocre signal.

Otherwise loads of great stuff in this issue of the *Digest*. I'm also delighted to welcome back John, G3LAS, after his round-the-world cruise for another inimitable 'Chairman's Chat'.

73 Martyn, G3RFX

Chairman's Chat

John Butcher, G3LAS

It seems like a million years ago, but my last Chairman's Chat was only last November. Since then I have been half way round the world and back - and even that seems a long while ago now.

I didn't manage to get on the air from the good ship Artemis, partly because that wasn't the point of the trip anyway and partly because the relevant deck rails were so heavily festooned with HF verticals that operating would have been a bit of a risky process, even if permission had been forthcoming.

However, I did keep an eye out for signs of amateur radio in the various countries visited. Two of the 'contacts' were right under my nose. Thanks to wearing my RSGB shirt I met ZL3GT, who was on the ship en route to his home in Christchurch, New Zealand. A week or two from the end I also discovered that Dave, G3SBP, had been on board since the beginning three months earlier. Dave is a CDXC member and he discovered that I was aboard only when another member mentioned it in an email. Not a very good example of communication skills - I think we were both more concerned with bird watching and eating than radio.

I saw signs of significant aerials in most countries, but one thing which struck me was that there appeared to be many more sightings in the South American countries, PY, CX, LU and CE, than in the UK, Australia or New Zealand. I think the highlight was when we cruised past Pitcairn and from a mile offshore I saw what was almost certainly the QTH and 3-element beam of Tom Christian, VR6TC, perched on the side of that rocky island. Sadly we didn't stop there so that I could pay my respects.

Anyway, what about the present scene? Even 3YØX seems a distant memory, but yes, thanks, I did get home in time to work that one on five bands and three modes. I was surprised by the strength of their signals on occasions.

As I write this I am listening to the various manifestations of VU4AN/VU3*** scattered around the bands. They are really booming in on 18 MHz at the moment (about 1500z) and good on 14 and 10m, which just shows that conditions are often much better than one might think when idly tuning around - does anyone actually do that nowadays? It's interesting to reflect that when the Andaman Hamfest is over, the status of this entity on the world's wanted lists should have taken a major dive, only a few months after it reappeared on the air for the first time in many years. It shows what persistence and diplomacy can do. Let's hope similar results can be achieved for the likes of VU7, KP1 and KP5.

I missed most of the low band DX season, which is sad, but I must admit it was a compensation to have Christmas in 27° C. Having checked with some of my 'expert' friends, I get the impression that, for the time being, the solar cycle is depriving us of good conditions on the HF bands while not giving much back on 160 and 80m. There have been quite a few rather isolated happenings on 160m, including brief opening(s) to ZL, but overall the impression is that one has to be very committed to struggle out of bed regularly at dawn in winter in the hope of something turning up. Nevertheless, that is what it takes if you aspire to be in the leading group on LF. I, for one, would like to see a *Digest* contribution on last winter's happenings from one of the dawn brigade.

Let's see if I can be persuaded to make an effort and erect a Beverage for next year.

I see that the solar physics gurus are now saying that the coming SFI peak may well be significantly better than previously predicted, perhaps approaching the phenomenal heights of 1958. Unfortunately I well remember those days when I was able to work all kinds of exotica with 100W and a dipole at about 15', even on AM. For the younger generation, that's Amplitude Modulation – ask your grandad for details.

Long before these predictions are due, we must look forward to this summer. CDXC will put in an appearance at the Kempton Show on 7 May (with luck you may see this before then) and the ever-popular Elvaston Rally on 11 June. For those with full social calendars, make sure that you make an advance note of

this year's AGM and Summer Social on Saturday, 15 July. This year I seem to have volunteered to host this event, so let's all pray for a fine day – it usually is. See you there!

Finally, what about a CDXC reflector? This method of stimulating discussion and news dissemination is very successful in many common-interest groups and could well be popular with our members. The Committee is in favour of trying it out and it needs only a suitably motivated and willing member to act as moderator et cetera. Sadly, the present Committee members are all already heavily committed (of course), but I would be interested to hear of anyone willing to give it a go for a trial period.

73 es gud DX John, G3LAS

President's Patter

Neville Cheadle, G3NUG

The CDXC Annual Dinner last month went well and seemed to be enjoyed by everyone. It was good to meet quite a few new members. John/G4IRN's talk was particularly enjoyable and gave a good insight into DXpeditioning around Africa. It was interesting to hear how much could be achieved by one man on his own.

During the evening several members expressed interest in joining the next major FSDXA DXpedition now being planned for September 2007. We get frequent similar enquiries and our advice is always to get to know the key players in the DXpeditioning team. Getting the right team together is

absolutely crucial when a large group of 20-30 is working closely together for three weeks or more. It only takes one or two people who decide to do 'their own thing' to completely spoil team cohesion. Valuable experience and contacts can also be gained by joining a leading contesting team.

Events like the CDXC Annual Dinner, the Summer Social and the RSGB HF Convention are ideal functions at which to meet the key players. Of course, and perhaps inevitably, the number of people wanting to join these teams exceeds the slots available, but I know the FSDXA team does like to take a few people

who have never been on a DXpedition before, but who are nevertheless excellent operators.

This leads me to the forthcoming CDXC AGM and Summer Social on 15 July. Chairman John, G3LAS, has kindly agreed to host the social at his very attractive location. Mark Mann will be doing the catering yet again and I am sure the food will be as good as ever. Let's have a really good turnout and a thoroughly good day. Booking forms are enclosed with this *Digest*.

We try to attend as many rallies as we can including Kempton Park, Elvaston Castle, Donnington and of course, the HF Convention. It would be enormously helpful if local members could help out with manning our stand from time to time.

I'd like to remind members that our special contest call MØC is available for use by members. The call can now be used in many contests and undoubtedly attracts much interest. Please contact me to book the call.

I'm glad to see IOTA moving in the right direction and at long last issuing numbers for the yet-to-be activated island groups. This means that it will not be necessary to purchase an IOTA Directory every year or so with the latest numbers. I think we now need a booklet with the details of awards, full island listings, the rules and application details. Hopefully, a document like this will be timeless and can be updated easily with minor changes from time to time.

Just when is IOTA going to use Logbook of the World? LoTW works well for DXCC and will soon be available for WAS. IOTA references can already be entered into the log data. Getting QSL cards from IOTA DXpeditions has always been a problem and in my view, detracts from the IOTA Programme. LoTW is surely the way round

this and could produce a substantial increase in interest in IOTA.

Requests for funding DXpeditions during the past year seem to have fallen to an all-time low, but recently there has been a build-up. This has surprised me, as we seem to be at the bottom of the sunspot cycle. Historically the cycle declines slowly but then increases at a much more rapid rate. Let's hope for much better propagation from mid-2007 onwards.

We'd appreciate some feedback from members about the level of interest in a CDXC reflector. The Committee feels such a reflector could be a valuable source of information and enable members to draw on the vast amount of knowledge within the club.

Finally, a few admin points. Could I ask members to renew their subs as soon as possible so that Nigel, G3TXF, our Treasurer, does not have to spend time chasing renewals. Also, please consider setting up a standing order as these help us enormously. At the 2005 AGM we mentioned that we may need to increase subscriptions this year. Fortunately we are in a strong financial position, so this will not be necessary - even though postal costs have increased.

I look forward to meeting many members at the CDXC AGM and Summer Social on Saturday, 15 July.

73



G3NUG

CDXC AGM and Summer Social 2006

The Annual General Meeting of CDXC will be held on Saturday, 15 July, at 1200 hrs at the QTH of John Butcher, G3LAS, Westlands, Westland Green, Little Hadham, Herts SG11 2AJ.

Agenda

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Minutes of the 2005 AGM
3. Chairman's Report
4. Secretary's Report
5. Treasurer's Report
6. Election of New Committee
7. Election of Auditor
8. Any Other Business

Committee nominations and items for AOBs must be given to the Secretary prior to the start of the AGM.

Our Summer Social follows the AGM in the garden and all members and families are most welcome to what is always a very enjoyable occasion. Come and meet your fellow members. There should be something of interest for everyone. As usual we will be providing food and a barbeque. Soft drinks will be included but please bring your own wine and beer. We will also be holding our famous raffle and donations of prizes from members attending are most welcome. Please also bring a folding chair as only a limited number of seats are available.

A charge of £7.50 per adult will be made to cover the cost of the food. There will be no charge for children under 16 and of course there is no charge for members who will only be attending the AGM. Please let our Secretary, Peter G3SJX, know as soon as possible if you will be attending so that we can plan the catering requirements. A return slip is enclosed with this Digest or alternatively send an email.

Peter, G3SJX

For directions to Westlands, John/G3LAS's QTH, see page 48

DX an' all that

Don Field, G3XTT don@g3xtt.com

After the flurry of correspondence preceding the last column, it's all gone deathly silent! Maybe you've all been busy on the radio. There have, after all, been a few interesting DX operations and, as I write this, there is more activity from the Andaman Islands than from mainland India, a situation that would have been thought impossible a few years ago. The SØ1R team seem to have done a good job, and the recent YJ operation was easier to work than might have been expected at this stage of the cycle, so all credit to the guys concerned.

That ZD8Q operation was pretty good too. Must have been a whole team of them! (Well done Justin) Indeed there has been plenty to fill the logs, as G3TBK's totals in the Annual CW Table show – 844 band-slots on CW so far in 2006, at the time of writing, and 205 DXCC entities. But the band totals tell the tale – only 14 on 10m and 23 on 12m, compared with 149 on 20m, 145 on 40m, 96 on 80m and 79 on 160m.

How to operate?

Talking about the Andaman festivities, it appears that calling out of turn, deliberate QRM and all the usual problems are there in spades. Roger, G3SXW, picks up the baton elsewhere, and there are obviously wider societal and cultural aspects; we do seem to live in a society where it is the norm to expect quick results for minimal effort. Tuning the bands is a thing of the past; we would prefer to sit and wait for a spot to appear on the Cluster. Justin, G4TSH, fresh from his prodigious efforts as ZD8Q, was telling me how he worked an Italian station on 10m one day, with great signals – so he kept calling CQ, but to no avail. Undoubtedly if that original Italian had spotted ZD8Q, then Justin

would have been rewarded with a pile-up of southern European stations.

Then there's the whole question of how to operate, whether in a contest or in a DX pile-up. A couple of recently-licensed M3 guys have thanked me recently for writing (more accurately, re-writing) the RSGB Operating Manual (a blatant plug!). They commented that, having got their M3 calls, they were wholly unprepared for what procedures to follow when they actually got on the air, and that there are very few sources of such information. It's probably true, so new amateurs listen and follow what they hear on the bands; not necessarily the best guide! Hopefully CDXC members are the exception, but maybe we should be finding ways in which we can pass our knowledge on to others. A recent Reading club meeting coincided with one of the SSB legs of the 80m Contest Championship and Tom, GØVQR (CDXC member), set up a station at the club so that members could make 10 or so contest QSOs each in order to gain some relevant experience. It went down a treat. I wonder if there are other ways to achieve something similar; maybe a downloadable DX and contest primer on the Internet, with video clips and the like? We certainly seem to need something of the sort.

Where does amateur radio end?

While I am rabbiting on in anecdotal mode (obviously DX really has been in short supply recently!), I gave a talk to the selfsame Reading club a couple of weeks back about amateur radio software (mainly the stuff that relates to the operating side of the hobby). I mentioned Logbook of the World, propagation tools etc., as well as the latest datamodes stuff (including the VHF and VLF software that pulls out signals you would never be able to

detect by ear), and also VoIP (Voice over Internet, ie Echolink, IRLP etc.).

Afterwards it was clear that many club members felt that 'working' stuff you couldn't hear, or using the Internet as part of the link, simply wasn't amateur radio (a topic I alluded to in an earlier column). But one of the recently-licensed M3's said that, for him, all this stuff was self-evident. He had grown up with PCs and the Internet and, to him, it was obvious that they had a major role to play in the hobby. I wonder which of these viewpoints is the more widely shared within the ranks of CDXC?

It is already quite feasible to tune in that VU4 that you are having trouble hearing via a remotely-accessed radio (www.dxtuner.com, for example) and get armchair copy. Maybe when Dave, G3UEG, has finished optimising his remotely controlled station he will rent out time on it to the antenna-challenged so that they can increase their DX scores (well, I don't suppose he will, but someone might be tempted!). Would a DXCC achieved this way be worth less than one achieved in the face of the usual obstacles of EMC problems, local noise, lack of antennas etc? Or will we feel - when we work the unmanned, permanent remote station on Heard Island - the same as we would if we had worked an operator freezing his privates off while actually there?

As Roger, G3SXW, said last time, it's probably best to regard these various developments as a separate sub-hobby, although it crosses our paths directly if those who use such techniques then apply for the same awards as us. Maybe even that doesn't matter, though, because at the end of the day each of us knows what we have achieved against our personal goals and benchmarks. There again, DXing and contesting are inherently competitive activities and it's always nice to compare our results with those

of others, hopefully achieved by the same set of rules and within the same constraints.

Propagation

Maybe we'll all relax a bit when propagation returns. There have been times recently when I have felt as though those of us in the southern half of the UK have been disadvantaged all ways. Hearing GM3POI and others in the far north working FO, YJ, T8 etc. on 80m and, in some cases 160m, has been an exercise in frustration while, on the other hand, the southern Europeans still seem to be able to work plenty of stuff on the high bands. Fortunately 30 and 20m still seem to hold up for much of the day, providing an opportunity to work most DXpeditions, even if only on a couple of bands. And more and more countries are now gaining access to that additional 100 kHz on 40m, so hopefully that band will become less congested over time, which SSB DXers will especially welcome. This said, some of the forecasts now being bandied about are suggesting that we could be in for a bumper sunspot peak next time. Don't hold your breath, but maybe the Palos Verdes Sundancers have been working overtime during the current minimum (those of you not familiar with the writings of the late Hugh Cassidy, WA6AUD, need to brush up on your DX history!).

Most Wanted

Last issue, thanks to Roger, G3SXW, and to 'The DX Magazine', I was able to bring you the latest Most Wanted country listings. I thought a little more information from the survey might be of interest. Firstly, the changes. Andaman dropped from 2nd to 10th between 2004 and 2005, and with the recent activity will probably drop even further next year. Curiously, North Korea dropped from 1st to 3rd, although I don't think there was any activity. I suspect it was just a reshuffling as, apart from Andaman, Scarborough Reef,

Laccadives and North Korea remained at the top of the list. Peter 1, Yemen, Navassa, Desecheo and Bouvet also stayed constant in the Top Ten, while Glorioso was the only 'new entry', up from 14th to 9th place. Kure dropped from 10th to 11th place, and ought to drop a lot further once everyone has their K7C cards and feel they can finally tick this one off. Navassa should also have dropped. Daily DX subscribers will have seen the write-up of last year's surprise operation; hopefully the story will be told more widely before too long. Maybe it will open the way for further operations from there and from Desecheo.

Looking down the list, significant risers include

	Now	Was
Willis Island	19	25
Peter & Paul Rocks	23	29
Malpelo	24	38
Tromelin	25	37
SMOM	28	37
Kingman Reef	30	43
Minami Torishima	31	44
Annobon	32	46
Palestine	33	55
Spratly	40	50
Bangladesh	42	62
Pratas	44	91
Agalega & St Brandon	45	75
Burundi	46	79
Eritrea	49	73

Significant fallers include (in addition to Andaman)

	Now	Was
Aves Island	26	18
Juan de Nova	34	22
Clipperton	37	27
Midway	39	33
Central Kiribati T31	41	32
Kerguelen (biggest faller)	43	12
Nauru	47	42

Those of you with good memories for DX trivia may well note that some of the fallers haven't seen operations during the period concerned. Roger tells me that some of the changes this time were due to a tightening up of the methodology, so there has been what will hopefully be a one-off correction. The results should now be more representative and, because the new methods will be applied in future years, year-on-year comparisons should be more helpful too.

This whole business of generating Most Wanted lists is fascinating, but fraught with difficulty. The DX Magazine shows lists for the major areas of the world, but inevitably the sample size is much larger for the US than for Europe, and some parts of the world will hardly feature at all in the sampling (it would be nice to see a listing for JA DXers, for example). Equally, expedition planners would love to see such a list band-by-band (especially for the low bands) and mode-by-mode (but RTTY DXers do already conduct a survey of their own). But the sample size would have to be much larger again for such a list to be meaningful. At the same time, expedition organisers spend a lot of time and money planning on the basis that a given entity is sufficiently rare to warrant activation, so there is quite a lot hanging on the result. Incidentally, the lists produced by ARRL always differ because they are based on submitted credits for DXCC, which means there is inevitably a time lag because many DXCC participants update once a year or less.

Sources of information

Having urged you earlier in the column to tune the bands rather than rely on the Cluster, I shall now do an about-face and cover some sources of information. But, in fairness, there's a long history of sharing DX information through newsletters etc. The DX News Sheet, now overtaken by the rise of the Internet, was first published something like 40

years ago by the late Geoff Watts. Martin, G3ZAY, and I took it on in 1981 or thereabouts, followed by Bren, G4DYO, and Chris, G4BUE. Nowadays you can subscribe to the Daily DX and Weekly DX, both run by Bernie, W3UR, which seem to dominate the market and contain pretty much all the information you need in order to follow what is happening in the DX world. But there are some great weekly sources free of charge, particularly the 425 DX News and the OPDX Bulletin, both of which are mailed to your e-mail address or can be downloaded from the relevant web sites. The monthly compilation of the 425 bulletin, which includes DXpedition stories and photos, is excellent – I really don't know how the guys manage to keep up the standard. It is downloadable in PDF format, although it helps if you have broadband!

The official IOTA web pages carry details of forthcoming IOTA operations and will be relaunched later this year with even more information and facilities. Apologies if I am teaching grandmother to suck eggs, but some members may not be aware of these various

sources. If you have any other favourite sources, please let me know and I will pass the information on to the wider membership.

Island operation

Finally, this announcement from Charles, M0OXO (charlie.debbie@btinternet.com), via the CDXC website:

First, may I say it was a pleasure to meet you all at the CDXC Dinner. We had a great time. Now the news: the North Wakefield ARC will be activating Caldey Island, Wales, IOTA EU-124 from 24 - 31 July inclusive of the IOTA Contest. The Operators will be Charles, M0OXO, Nigel, M0NJW, Chris, M1TRC, Steve, 2E0JTI, and Barry, 2E0JRZ. The Callsign will be GB4CI and for the IOTA Contest the Callsign will be GW5X. Contacts will also count for Caldey Island Lighthouse (WAL-004). QSLs for all contacts are via Charles, M3ZYZ: qrz.com, direct or via the Bureau.

73 Don, G3XTT

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.

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

Borneo Bulletin

Steve Telenius-Lowe, 9M6DXX

teleniuslowe@gmail.com

Your Editor has prevailed upon me to provide a regular epistle from the wilds of North Borneo for the pages of the CDXC *Digest*, so here is my first offering.

Eva and I have been living in Sabah for 10 months now, although I have not been very active during that time. We moved into an apartment in Kota Kinabalu (from which it is impossible to operate amateur radio) in July 2005 as a 'temporary' measure, while we found a house to buy. We looked at new and old houses, and were very close indeed to buying plots of land on two occasions, until the land surveys revealed problems. The long and short of it is that as this is being written in April we are still in the apartment and we have changed our plans once again. We have now decided to rent a house long-term and have found a place which will be ideal for our requirements.

Most detached houses here have water tanks set on very substantial 20'-high galvanised steel towers, in order to provide a satisfactory water pressure to the house. Towers in the garden are therefore not at all unusual – it is just that mine will be a little larger than most! In fact we plan to use a 20' water tower and put a 20' tripod on top, above which the KLM KT-34A beam will rise. We plan to move into the house by the end of May, after which I should be more active.

9M6DXX on the air

Meanwhile 9M6DXX has been on the air from a couple of other locations on a total of eight days only, during which time some 6,000 QSOs have been made. The first operation was in CQ WW in October last year, the other

three weekends of operation all being in March 2006.

I found conditions abysmal to North America during the ARRL DX SSB contest on 4-5 March, making only 205 QSOs with NA, so spent most of the time working JA and EU instead. On 18-19 March I was active as 9M6DXX/P from Pulau Gaya (OC-133), making 620 QSOs in under 24 hours of operation, although sadly conditions to Europe were very poor and the Russian DX contest meant few European IOTA chasers were able to get through. On 25-26 March I was joined by Pete, SM5GMZ, for a multi-single entry in the CQ WPX SSB contest, making 7.4M points from 2,834 QSOs.

QSL information – *get it right!*

During the contest a well-meaning but ignorant German station posted my G4 callsign on the Cluster as the QSL information for 9M6DXX. This is incorrect: I left the UK nearly a year ago and mail is no longer being forwarded to me. As there is no functioning QSL bureau in 9M6, the *only* correct QSL information for 9M6DXX is direct to:

Steve Telenius-Lowe, WDT 527, 88905 Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia.

Thanks to this meddling ham, people will be sending QSLs to my former address in England which I won't receive. No doubt this is one reason some amateurs get a reputation for being bad QSLers!

Best DX during March was G3BJ, GIØVJE and several GMs on 80m; CN2R, who was an absolutely phenomenal signal on 80m during

WPX; OA4WW and V31RV on 40m; T68G (Afghanistan) on 20m, and JE7IZM/JD1 on Iwo Jima (AS-030, not the more usual Ogasawara Islands) on 15m, all SSB.

Rental station

Other than the weekend on OC-133, all operations have taken place from the Langkah Syabas Beach Resort, half an hour south of Kota Kinabalu city. Here there is a well-equipped station owned by a Japanese group which is available for rental by other hams. There is an FT-1000MP, an FT-1000MP MkV, an FT-920 and a Quadra VL-1000 amp, and the antennas consist of a Force 12 C3 beam on one tower and a Force 12 C4 beam (with 40m rotatable dipole) on another tower, along with two 6m beams and wire antennas for the three WARC bands. There are no antennas for 80m, and the 40m rotatable dipole is resonant somewhat below the bottom of the band, making it OK for CW but almost useless above 7.040 MHz. For my operations, I put up a Butternut HF2 vertical on the beach, with some of the radials actually in the sea at high tide, and this worked exceptionally well on both 40 and 80m.

The resort was also used by Pete, SM5GMZ, for his 11-day operation in March. Together we put up a 160m dipole which we have left behind. So at present the only band not immediately available is 80m. If anyone wishes to experience pile-ups 9M6-style, please feel free to e-mail me for further information.

Low bands from Borneo

Operation on the low bands is very difficult in this part of the world. There are three main reasons for this. Firstly, *everyone* here uses fluorescent lights, so unless you are lucky enough to be in a very remote location, you will pick up an S9+ hash from local

fluorescent lights. Then there is atmospheric static noise from tropical thunderstorms, which are usually taking place somewhere in the region. This can vary from being hardly a problem at all to an S9+20dB continuous noise.

Finally, there is a new phenomenon, which is believed to be a Chinese over-the-horizon radar, a sort of Oriental 'woodpecker'. David, 9V1RH, confirms this is as bad in Singapore as it is here. This is on for perhaps 98% of the time, is blissfully quiet for a couple of minutes, then returns again with a vengeance. It covers the whole of the 80m band and beyond, and is frequently also on 40m. It does not seem to affect 160m, so contrary to normal experience 160m can be quieter here than 80m on low static nights.

Hillview

Sad to report, but the Hillview Gardens Amateur Radio Club, 9M6AAC, in Keningau, Sabah, is no more. Unfortunately the resort was being run at a loss and the owners, Alfons and Doris Udans, have been forced to part with their dream project.

Some CDXC members may recall that the 9MØC Spratly DXpedition team stayed at Hillview in 1998 immediately after the expedition for a couple of days R & R and enjoyed Alfons's and Doris's hospitality.

Till the next time, 73 from Sabah, North Borneo.

Steve Telenius-Lowe, 9M6DXX

VP2V/G6AY - 2006

Phil Whitchurch, G3SWH

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Jim, G3RTE, and I had not really made any plans for a DXpedition in 2006, but had vaguely discussed the fact that we might do something at some stage. However, early last December Jim floated the question of whether we would make a trip in 2006 or leave it until 2007. I had actually started a new job in November and was a bit concerned about taking leave so soon after starting, but agreed that we really should do something, but without any concrete ideas of exactly what.

After a flurry of e-mails and a lot of analysis of the spots on the DX Summit website, we decided that, despite a fairly big operation by DL7DF and his group in the spring of 2005, the British Virgin Islands still appeared to be in fairly high demand for CW, particularly on the LF bands.

The Ciboney Indians, who arrived in stone-age canoes from the Americas, initially populated the islands. A few hundred years later the Arawak Indians arrived from South America. The group of some 60 separate islands were officially 'discovered' by Christopher Columbus in 1493 during his second voyage to the New World. Columbus let his imagination run a bit wild and named them 'Las Once Mil Las Virgines' (the Virgin Islands) after the legendary St Ursula and the 11,000 virgins.

In the early 1600s many countries took an interest in the Caribbean and in 'the Virgins'. Holland, France, England, Spain, Denmark and the Knights of Malta all sought colonies. Although the islands were claimed by England as early as 1628, the Dutch were the first true settlers, arriving in Tortola in 1648. In 1666 British planters took over control of the island

group from the original Dutch settlers. The islands attained the status of British colony, and remained part of the Leeward Islands from 1872 until 1956, when the British Virgin Islands became a separately administered entity. To preserve its close economic ties with the US Virgin Islands, the group did not join the now defunct 1958-1962 West Indies Federation. In 1967 a new constitution provided for a ministerial system of government headed by a Chief Minister. The islands remain under British control today.

Known as 'the islands that time forgot', the British Virgin Islands (BVI) remain relatively undeveloped compared with the crowds, glitz, casinos and high-rise hotels of the neighbouring US Virgin Islands, although nowadays tourism is the mainstay of the economy along with a growing international finance industry. The population is just over 19,000, the capital is Road Town on Tortola, the largest island, and the currency the US Dollar. All the cars are left hand drive, yet they drive on the left-hand side of the road!

In addition to being a fairly sought after DXCC entity, it also counts as NA-023 for IOTA purposes. Consequently, I checked out the OH2MCN web site for information on licensing and accommodation. Licensing was the easy bit and a phone call to Darren Woodley at the Ministry of Communications and Works in Road Town confirmed that it was easy to get a licence provided I sent a copy of my passport, a notarised copy of my home station licence and an International Postal Money Order for US \$20.10. When I explained that International Postal Money Orders in US currency were not readily available in the UK, Darren said that was not a

problem, as he would send me a credit card authorisation form.

Calls are allocated on the basis of VP2V/YOURCALL and we didn't want to get two licences, so elected to use Jim's father's pre-WW2 call of 6AY that had been re-issued to him as G6AY in 2005. At £40, obtaining a notarised copy of the G6AY licence was a bit more expensive than we'd thought, but all the documents were sent off by snail mail just after Christmas. Receipt was promptly acknowledged and actual licence application and credit card authorisation forms sent to me by e-mail.

In the interim I checked out the possibilities of accommodation and contacted several of the supposedly 'ham friendly' hotels etc. on the main island of Tortola and listed on the OH2MCN web page. Regrettably, most (including the one used by the DL7DF group) either didn't respond to phone calls or e-mails - or had a day rate roughly equating to what I was budgeting for a week.

I also exchanged a couple of e-mails with Dave, K1ZZ, who had operated from the BVI in February 2005. He told me to avoid the place that he'd stayed at on Cooper Island, as there was a large hill between it and Europe.

At this point, I was getting rather despondent, but thanks to a conversation between Jim and Nigel, G3TXF, we started to make some headway. Nigel had visited and operated from the islands in 1999. He told us that most of the islands are volcanic in origin and recommended we only look at sites on the north side of our chosen island. He also suggested we consider Anegada, the most northerly and remote of the island group, some 20 miles northeast of Tortola. BVI's only coral atoll, this sparsely populated island is ringed with swathes of white sand, very flat (rising no more than about 8 metres above sea level), about 16 km long, 3 km wide and having extensive salt ponds in the interior. It is

also home to the very rare Anegada Iguana and a flock of Roseate Flamingos. A search on Google produced information on Neptune's Treasure, located on the southwest coast of the island, but close to the salt ponds. I received a very prompt response to my e-mail explaining a little about ham radio and a very affordable quotation for a twin-bedded room.

I also investigated flights. I have since come to the conclusion that the Internet-based flight consolidators, such as Opodo and Expedia, are very expensive and a total waste of time! After a few false starts I finally found very affordable flights with Virgin Atlantic from Gatwick to Antigua (V2) and a Caribbean-based airline called LIAT to fly us from Antigua to Tortola via Siint Maarten (PJ5). The biggest complication was getting to Anegada from Tortola on the evening of our planned arrival, as the ferry only runs in the mornings of every other day. Consequently we had to charter, at a fairly high cost, a seven-seater air taxi from Fly-BVI to take us on the final, 15-minute flight of the journey.

The final pieces of the jigsaw dropped into place in late December 2005 and I was able to make an advance announcement to the various DX bulletins. The licence arrived in good time by snail mail. The flights were all booked and the air charter company told us that they had another booking for our flight and so the cost to us would be halved. Neptune's Treasure was even able to accommodate Jim's last-minute request for a separate room.

After the 5T0CW DX-pedition I did my best to persuade Jim as to the practical advantages of a doublet antenna on such operations - as we were planning to the point that he agreed to take one with him, mainly to minimise the weight. We were both taking Kenwood TS-570D transceivers and thus had two almost identical stations. We discussed whether it was to be a 100% CW operation or whether Jim would do some SSB operation. Jim wanted to keep his options open.

The outward flights were uneventful, although claiming our baggage in Antigua and re-checking it on to LIAT was a little fraught, as our bags didn't appear on the carousel. We eventually found that some kind soul had been taking them off the carousel and stacking them in a corner if they weren't claimed on the first circuit. Two LIAT Flights were leaving Antigua at the same time and we managed to get directed to the wrong one, only realising the mistake once the flight attendant had checked the boarding passes. There was then a frantic rush to get off again and to get on to the correct aircraft. Transit through Siint Maarten was long enough only for two passengers to get off and another two to get on before we were off again for Beef Island Airport in Tortola, arriving at sunset. We were met on arrival by the pilot of the charter aircraft who ushered us through Customs and Immigration without difficulty, loaded us onto his Piper Aztec aircraft together with the other two passengers, an American couple from Indiana, and took off into the gathering dusk..

I had been a little concerned that the small air strip on Anegada would not be equipped for landings at night, but had been assured that there were no problems and that there would be a taxi waiting to take us to Neptune's Treasure. Reality was rather different, as despite repeated radio calls from the Aztec pilot, no runway lights appeared. However, there was a single set of headlights on the road from the small town to the airport but the pilot lined the aircraft up with the runway, put on his landing lights and made a perfect landing. As we taxied to a stop, so the runway lights came on and we were greeted by the local policeman who had been driving the car whose headlights we had seen. We later learned that there was a facility for automatically turning on the runway lights by calling on a specific radio channel, but this had been disabled because of the drug runners. The policeman insisted on taking our names and where we were staying, but there was no taxi. The American couple were staying at the

Anegada Reef Hotel, who were better organised, and we were able to scrounge a lift to Neptune's Treasure with their transport. After about 20 hours travelling we were quite happy to be shown to our rooms at opposite ends of a single-storey block, eat a hasty dinner and fall into bed.

By the time I awoke early the next morning, Jim had his station set up, but no antenna rigged. There are lots of mature, well-sited palm trees around the grounds and Jim had selected a 10m-high one for his antenna. We shot a lightweight line over it with a catapult without much difficulty and rigged his doublet as an inverted Vee to fire north/south. My own antenna was rigged in a similar manner, but fired east/west, and we were on the air very quickly. I made the first QSO on 20m with DK1PZ at 1343 UTC on Thursday, 23 February, and a mixed pile-up of Europeans and North Americans built up very quickly. Jim made his first QSO on 17m at 1359 UTC and also enjoyed a similarly mixed pile-up.

Jim also brought a length of coax and a 40m dipole and persuaded me to shoot another halyard over another tree to erect it alongside the doublet, which worked very well on 40m that night. The following day he made it into a 20m dipole and was able to compare this against the doublet. He found that in general signals were a bit stronger on the dipole, but the big difference was in the band noise. The doublet was very noisy and a lot of signals that were R3/4 on the doublet were R5 on the dipole, which enabled him to log a few more stations. He also suffered from some horrible RF problems to start with, which damaged the computer keying lead. He also complained that, even with Dunestar filters in place at both stations, he could hear me on the doublet, but if he switched to the dipole then there was no trace of my signal at all. Jim remains unconvinced and says, "Give me a bit of coax, a dipole or a vertical any day!"

Conditions on the higher bands were not good and, despite several attempts, we made no QSOs on either 12 or 10m. The solar flux index didn't rise above 77 whilst we were there. However, the lower bands were very good and we made every effort to maximise the QSOs on 80, 40 and 30m, often struggling with some very weak signals. Jim did operate some SSB, but found it hard going and we decided to concentrate on CW. The full QSO statistics are shown in the tables below.

I was particularly keen to operate on 160m, but was doubtful in my own mind as to whether we could make an impact with only 100W and low, wire antennas. We have tried to operate on 160m on several of our previous DX-peditions, without much success. The location was obviously working well on 80m, so I decided to add some extra wire to my doublet and to try 160m on the evening of Saturday, 25 February. The extended antenna tuned after a fashion and, after dinner, I listened on the band, only to find the CQWW SSB in full swing. I tried again on the Sunday evening, but did not make any QSOs and came to the conclusion that the antenna wasn't long enough to tune properly. Having added some more wire, it tuned a lot better and on the Monday evening I tentatively answered a CQ call from NO2R at 0047 UTC, who gave me a good 'real' report. I then moved off his frequency, called CQ and ran a very nice pile-up of European and North American stations for a couple of hours. I then grabbed a few hours sleep, got up in time for the European sunrise and was delighted to work many more European stations. I just wish I could get such good results from home on 160m with a (theoretically) much better antenna and an amplifier!

We were scheduled to leave early on the morning of Wednesday, 1 March, having taken our antennas down in failing daylight the previous evening and treated ourselves to a dinner of lobster and wine to celebrate. Jim made the last QSO on 20m at 2230 UTC with

JA9FAI. When we came to settle the hotel bill, all of my credit cards were rejected with an invitation to phone the company in UK, which was a big problem as we didn't have a number to call and couldn't get an international telephone connection anyway. Fortunately, Jim came to the rescue and paid my bill on his card. Thanks Jim! The moral here is: make sure you tell your credit card company where and when you will be travelling overseas and using your credit card for fairly large transactions!

We had been told that the ferry to Tortola was scheduled to leave at 0800 the next morning and that a taxi would pick us up at 0730. We were all packed and ready to leave in good time, as the ferry trip was an hour long and we then needed to take a short taxi ride to the airport to check in for the flights back to Antigua by 1000 at the latest, which was workable. In fact, the ferry didn't arrive until the correctly scheduled time of 0830 and took an hour and a half to get to Tortola. The airport is some 11 miles from the ferry terminal and the roads are very hilly and full of bends. Our driver earned his money and got us there in about 25 minutes and we joined the short queue at the empty LIAT check-in desk.

After a while a girl appeared, examined our tickets and casually informed us that our flight to Siint Maarten had been cancelled. We managed to communicate that we were connecting with the Virgin Atlantic flight in Antigua that afternoon and that not getting to Antigua was not an option. There was another English couple in the queue behind us in the same situation. Naturally, we began to compare notes and discovered that they were actually on different flights to ourselves, travelling via St Lucia, which started to ring loud alarm bells in my mind, as I could understand a single flight being cancelled, but not all four. It subsequently transpired that all the LIAT pilots had 'gone sick' that day. The poor girl on the check-in desk disappeared

with our tickets and passports for what seemed like hours and finally came back with a boarding pass for a flight to Siint Maarten with WINAIR on a Twin Otter and a ticket for a connecting flight to Antigua with Caribbean Sun on a DHC 8, arriving there at 1640. The airport at Siint Maarten was chaotic! Inevitably our flight was delayed, did not appear on the electronic departures board and, with a single queue of people forming to board different several flights, we considered

ourselves lucky to make it to Antigua at all. The poor girl at the Virgin Atlantic transfer desk was just packing up to go home when most of the passengers from the Caribbean Sun flight suddenly appeared in the arrivals area demanding boarding passes for the flight back to Gatwick, which was scheduled to leave at 1830. Somehow we made it and the flight home was uneventful. Our baggage even arrived!

VP2V/G6AY – QSO Analysis by Band

BAND	CW	DXCC	SSB	DXCC	TOTAL	DXCC
1.8	212	28	0	0	212	28
3.5	771	47	0	0	771	47
7	1,404	72	0	0	1,404	72
10	1,431	69	0	0	1,431	69
14	2,447	77	10	3	2,457	77
18	1,921	69	117	20	2,038	71
21	537	49	38	12	575	50
TOTALS	8,723	103	165	26	8,888	105

VP2V/G6AY – QSO Analysis by Operator

BAND	G3RTE		G3SWH		TOTALS	
	CW	SSB	CW	SSB	CW	SSB
1.8	0	0	212	0	212	0
3.5	467	0	304	0	771	0
7	430	0	974	0	1,404	0
10	707	0	724	0	1,431	0
14.	979	10	1,468	0	2,447	10
18	940	117	981	0	1,921	117
21	499	38	38	0	537	38
TOTAL	4,022	165	4701	0	8,723	165

Copies of the licence and supporting documentation have been submitted to – and accepted by - the DXCC Desk at ARRL. The island is not sufficiently rare to need to be documented for IOTA purposes. Logs will be uploaded to LoTW after I have weeded out as many of the inevitable busted calls as practicable.

Special QSL cards have been printed and are available either direct from my QRZ.com address, via e-mail for a reply via the Bureau or via the Bureau itself. If you choose either of the latter two routes, please remember that there may be a considerable delay in receiving your cards, as the Bureau process is very slow and, due to the large volume of bureau cards

that I handle, I only tend to send outgoing cards to the RSGB once per year. Judging by the spots and comments on the DX Cluster and the number of direct requests received so far, we seem to have made a lot of the Deserving happy.

Our particular thanks go to our XYLs, Cheryl and Jan for allowing us to undertake another DXpedition; to the Telecommunications Unit, Ministry of Communication and Works, Tortola, BVI, for issuing the licence; to Randy

& Linda Thielman and the staff of Neptune's Treasure, Anegada Island

<http://www.neptunestreasure.com>

and to our sponsors: RSGB, Chiltern DX Club (CDXC), GM DX Group, EUDXF, GDXF, Clipperton DX Club and Nanchatte DX Aikoukai - without whose help and understanding this operation would not have been possible.

6OØN Somalia 2006

I1HJT and I2YSB

It was in March 2005 that we received the sad news that Adan, 6OØN, had died in a car crash. As you may remember, Adan was one of the organisers of the DXpedition to Somalia in 2005. We thought about how best to celebrate his life and decided to devote the next DXpedition to him, in his memory.

The operation from Somalia was not our major target. We had been working for month in the hope of activating a rare country, but close to the deadline we received a refusal. Unfortunately it was too late to switch to another rare location, so we decided to go to Somalia, where we still had good connections and knew that we would be made very welcome. In last year's expedition we didn't cover the low bands as well as we would have liked, so we planned to make a much bigger effort here this year. We are close to the solar minimum, but a good antenna and CW team would ensure that we have good pile-ups on the low bands.

There were seven team members: Alfeo, I1HJT, Silvano, I2YSB, Carlo, IK1AOD,

Carlo, IK1HJS, Vinicio, IK2CIO, Angelo, IK2CKR, and Marcello, IK2DIA.

After the logistical preparations and packing 350 kgs of supplies and equipment, we finally left northern Italy for Paris in IK2CKR's van. The weather was bad and it was cold. We had snow in the Mont Blanc tunnel, then rain for the rest of the journey. After a full day's driving we arrived in Paris. Our flight to Djibouti was scheduled for 2200 with Daallo Airlines. It is a nine-hour flight and a big temperature shock was waiting for us when we landed in Djibouti. It had been -5° C in Paris, but was 30° C in Djibouti. From Djibouti to Galkayo they use an old Antonov AN-24. This took off on time and then landed early. Hussein and Hasan, 6OØXJ, had not yet arrived, so we had to face customs on our own. Thank God all our luggage had arrived too and so we were able to set off in the car to our guest house, the same one we had rented the previous year, and where we planned to install the SSB station. The 4-element 6-band yagi we had left in Galkayo was still there, so we just had to collect it and install it on the top of the house. We also installed an inverted V

for 40m and a dipole for 80m. Finally the station was ready to go on the air.

The electricity supply is still a problem in Galkayo and was even worse than the previous year. There was no electricity for many hours during the day. Also, the voltage was often unstable and below 200V, so it was necessary to hire a generator to ensure our power requirements. SSB operators IK1AOD, IK1HJS and IK2DIA would stay and operate from this location. We also decided that a CW operator would sleep here at night.

Our original plan was to set up three stations, so once the first site was ready we went to inspect the second location, Galkayo University. Immediately we realised that the courtyard was not big enough to allow us to install a beam, so we moved to the Medical Centre, 5 km outside the city. This was a wonderful site for our operation, with a big courtyard where we could lay out the radials for the vertical antenna. The Medical Centre is also a hospital, but it was not in use during our previous expedition. There is a lot of space available inside and outside.

At sunrise we began to install the 5-element 7-band beam on top of the roof, also a vertical for 30-40-80m and an inverted V for 40m. By late morning the work was complete, although we still had to erect the Battle Creek Special. However, the weather was getting worse, with strong winds and black clouds. It looked as if it was going to rain. In fact this rain was an exceptional event, seeing as none of the local inhabitants could remember rain at this time of the year. Was it our RF which was causing it?! After a few complications and brief moments of panic the Battle Creek Special was finally erected. This is 15m tall and designed for 80 and 160m. To improve its efficiency we laid out a number of radials, with some 1,000 metres of wire on the ground by the time we'd finished the job. Finally we installed two EWE antennas for low-band reception, one directed to the USA the other to Japan. This

antenna had been strongly recommended by Vinicio, IK2CIO, who used it during the IH9P operation, and we have to admit that it was the key to our brilliant results on the low bands.

It was now really hot and the sun very fierce, so we wore as little as possible, with the result that by the end of the day our skin was red and burnt! Because of the heat we also wore open sandals. Later some of the local inhabitants told us that a number of large scorpions were living under the stones! And a few days later, at around sunset, a big black mamba was seen close to our building!

The Medical Centre is not connected to the local electricity network, so we needed a 10KW generator set for this purpose. Normally the lighting in the hospital is covered by solar panels, but these, of course, were not sufficient for our requirements. The generator room was quite a distance from our location. We also experienced voltage drops during our operation, with the supply never exceed 200V under load, so as a result the output from our Acom 1000 amplifier was lower than we had expected.

As soon we started to transmit we realised that we had huge pile-ups, so we decided to stay over so as to avoid interrupting the operation for lunch and dinner time. The restaurant was in the city centre and you needed a car to get there. We stopped just for one hour in the early morning in order to service the generator. After sunrise all the bands were out for at least for an hour, so it was possible to interrupt our transmissions without the QSO rate suffering too much. The Atlas was constantly in operation in order to keep a check on the grey line, and we were there very punctually and ready to call the West Coast via the long path, also to give them a new country and a new zone. The West Coast of the USA is almost antipodeal from Somalia. Contacts on the low bands were possible for less than one hour around the time of our sunset, which corresponds to sunrise over

there. We started calling on 40m, then moved to 80m CW and sometimes on 75m SSB. It was amazing to realise that the stations we were working were right on the grey line, starting with W6 and W7 and then moving north towards VE. But it was not possible to work them like this every day. Sometimes the noise and the static was too high even for our EWE antennas. It was also difficult to operate on 40m. The low solar activity had a negative effect on the propagation on the high bands. Only a little activity was possible on 10 and 12m - and we had no conditions at all on 6m. Nevertheless, in the second week of our activity we added a further station in the Medical Centre with an IC-706 and a 15m dipole. Carefully monitoring the band opening times we managed to put almost 1,000 CW QSOs in the log!

We found a good Internet connection in Galkayo, which allowed us to download e-mails and especially the daily reports sent by our pilot station Gianni, ISØVSG, which were very helpful in giving us some feedback from Europe. Every two days it was also possible to upload the log online. Then we received an amazing email from the ARI's Casale Monferrato section telling us that the International Space Station (ISS) was looking for a sked. In the e-mail we received the details of the frequency and also the time schedule for the most suitable orbits for Somalia. The ISS commander, operator, Bill McArthur, NA1SS, was looking for DXCC from the space and Somalia was, of course, a new one for him. Only three orbits were suitable for us and at the appointed time we were ready. The QSO was logged on the first attempt, with good signals both ways.

We were very proud to receive an unexpected visit from the Mayor of Galkayo. We were invited to a special dinner at the Taar Hotel, the most prestigious hotel in the town, in order to demonstrate to us the friendliness of the Galkayo community. During the dinner Isak, 6OØMY, the Director of SARFEN, awarded

life-time Somali radio ham licences to the newcomers: Alfeo, 6OØHT, Vinicio, 6OØIO, Angelo, 6OØKR, Carlo, 6OØJS, Carlo, 6OØOD and Silvano, 6OØN. We were guests at the Medical Centre, which had not been in operation since Dr Abdul had left for Italy with a view to finding work and money so as to be able to return to Somalia to support this local hospital. In the meantime there was nobody to keep the hospital up and running. Because of this a number of children cannot be cured and dozens of them are without hope. We met Dr Jama, the Medical Centre Director, who recorded a video in which he thanks all the radio amateurs who sent help to the hospital and urged them to continue with this solidarity work. See <http://www.i2ysb.com/comsed/index.htm>.

Finally the DXpedition was over. After dismantling and packing our equipment we were ready to drive to the airport, where the AN-24 was waiting to depart. Suddenly many soldiers and cars arrived, not because of us, but because the Somali President's aircraft was due to land.

We have since received many positive comments on our DXpedition over the air, on QSL cards and in the post. The log contains approx. 35,000 QSOs. Most of them were with Europe, but there are also many USA and JA stations in the log.

We wish to thank all our friends and sponsors: NCDXF, INDEXA, EUDXF, GMDX, GDXF, CDXC, Danish Group, SWODXA, MDXC, Marconi Club, Western New York Association., DX 425 NEWS, ARI, ARI Casale M., ARI Bergamo, ARI San Remo, ARI Broni/Stradella, ARI Scandicci. Thanks to their generosity it was possible to leave Radio Galkayo with some spare valves for their AM transmitter, antennas, an HF radio – also an Acom 1000 amplifier which will help them to increase their broadcast coverage area.

Alfeo, 11HJT and Silvano, I2YSB

A Weekend in the Sun – a trip to ZB2 and EA9

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This was a little trip to ZB2 and EA9 to escape the seemingly endless cold weather of our winter. It does not merit the description of ‘DXpedition’. John, G4IRN, and Roger, G3SXW, operated from these two locations in March 2006, making some 4,000 CW QSOs, and had a lot of fun. Licences and travel were easy. The challenge was finding suitable operating locations.

We firstly targeted Ceuta, EA9. This would be an interesting place to see and would provide CW pile-ups for a few days. Ceuta is one-hour on a ferry from Algeciras, just up the coast from Gibraltar.

First Problem

We booked up the BA flights to Gib and knew that EA was CEPT, hence no action needed on transmitting licences. It remained only to choose a suitable hotel. Here started our problems. There are three sizeable hotels in Ceuta, all located in the town centre. We picked the Parador hotel as being nearest the sea, but were told that they could not permit amateur radio antennas to be installed on their roof, at the ‘request’ of the local Military Commander. My goodness! In all my years of DXpeditioning I had never come across this block before. We tried the other two hotels and were given the same answer.

Whilst battling with this problem we enlisted the support of Juan, EA9IE, who I had met some years previously. Juan couldn’t have been more helpful and was as surprised as we were at this problem. When visiting Ceuta we saw that all three hotels are merely yards from the military command post. One has to assume

that previous ham operations may have caused HF QRM to military operations.

We had our non-refundable BA tickets and nowhere to operate. So we turned our attention to ZB2.

Second Problem

Believe it or not, we met pretty much the same problem in Gibraltar. Licences were easy, but we couldn’t find a suitable hotel which allowed antennas on the roof. Even the luxurious Rock Hotel refused us, quoting ‘health & safety’. All operations from ZB2 have been from the East side of the rock. This gives a great take-off to the East, but is completely blocked to the West. So we were aiming for a hotel on the West side of the rock, in the downtown area. We eventually found a hotel with a clear shot to the North and West, blocked only to the East and South-East. They said that we could happily use their roof for antennas.

A day or two before flying to Gib, EA9IE e-mailed to say that he had found a possible operating location for us. Thus we were back to having two options. We resolved to set up and operate in Gibraltar, but to pay a quick visit to Ceuta on the second day to check out the scene there, with the possibility of reverting to our first-choice location.

Equipment

We travelled light. This was hardly a serious ‘DXpedition’, so we definitely wouldn’t need amplifiers. We each took an Elecraft K2/100, laptop, keyer etc. We decided to stick with a known formula of one station operating on the

WARC bands (usually Nigel, G3TXF, but this time John, G4IRN), with Roger, G3SXW, on the 'traditional' bands.

John bought Dunestar band-pass filters for the three WARC bands and I was able to borrow a multi-band switchable ICE bandpass filter from our mate, Fred, G4BWP. There was no way to know how much antenna separation we would have, so these filters were essential to allow us to operate without signals being chopped up by our partner.

To get on the three WARC bands, John built himself a lightweight tri-band ground plane, based on a modified half-wave 11m antenna, with resonant radials. I contented myself with a 40m dipole with 20m trap. This didn't resonate on 15m, so I added parallel wires, thus providing these three bands with one coax.

All of this stuff, plus a few clothes etc. came in at about 10 kgs over our airline luggage allowance and we thought we'd be charged extra, seeing as airlines have become so strict on excess baggage these days. But, lo and behold, check-in at Heathrow never weighed our hand-luggage or antenna bag.

On the Air from ZB2

On 28th March we landed in Gibraltar. I hadn't seen the Rock before, and I can tell you it is VERY impressive. A massive lump just sitting there! The runway is built out into the sea, with traffic and pedestrians crossing it at will (when there are no planes landing, we might add!). It was a balmy 18° C and sunny.

A three-minute taxi ride took us to our hotel. Sure enough we were told to do what we wanted on their roof. So we checked in and went exploring. We found a vertical ladder bolted to a wall marked 'fire exit' (and wondered how all but the fittest of guests could manage to climb it). This led to the roof, which turned out to be mostly sloping

corrugated sheeting, not at all suitable to walk on. But there was one piece of usable flat roof and a patio, so an hour later we had the two antennas installed. They were only thirty feet apart, but we kept our fingers crossed. We had each taken about 100' of coax and by chance this was just enough to reach our rooms.

We fired up late afternoon, suffering already from mild sunburn after erecting antennas in the strong rays, and indeed had no inter-station interference. All was well for the first hour or two. ZB2/G3SXW logged 200 QSOs on 20m, while ZB2/G4IRN pounded away on 17m. But then G3SXW noticed that the SWR had gone intermittent, so went to the roof to investigate, only to discover that one of the joints on the telescopic fishing pole had come loose and dropped, so the dipole was blowing about in the wind.

Much to my surprise there were four men on the roof. These turned out to be Moroccans who were renting an 'apartment' up there. I had assumed this room was a just a gash storage area. My antenna was on their veranda and the oldest chap, obviously in charge, was extremely angry. He was shouting in Arabic and spoke no other languages. The other three were friendly and apologetic, but their boss was not to be persuaded. I brought the young chap up from the hotel (also a Moroccan) to negotiate with him. I offered to pay £1 a day to leave my antenna on his patio, so for five days £5. He asked for £160. I offered £20. He stuck to £160. I took down my antenna.

So that night ZB2/G4IRN carried on operating while G3SXW watched television. Not good! But there was literally nowhere else to install the antenna. This roof is not a suitable location for ham antennas. Forget the Continental Hotel. The Rock and the Cannon had refused permission. Only the E side works satisfactorily, so US stations will only ever work ZB2 visitors via the long path.

EA9 Recce and QSY

Next morning we got a taxi to Algeciras and then the ferry to Ceuta. This goes hourly and is very civilised. We were met by Juan and his friend Joaquin, EA9FY, and whisked away into the hills, five minutes drive, above Ceuta to a complejo rural (rural complex). This was a small resort with cabins for hire, restaurant and bar. They also did horse training there and had free-range poultry. However, the poultry was all caged up because of the bird flu threat. This didn't stop the cockerels making a racket in the mornings, though!

Everything about the place was charming, set in a bowl, looking down on the town. Even the building works seemed not to matter. The problem was the looming hill which would completely block signals to the West (USA). But we took an instant decision to move from ZB2 to this location, and this turned out to be a very good move.

Early the next day we checked out of our ZB2 hotel and went by taxi to the Spanish border. Taxis don't cross over the border, so travellers must walk over it, hauling their luggage, go through customs and then take a Spanish taxi on the other side. The X-ray machine at customs brought a K2 in one bag and bandpass filters in another straight to the attention of the customs official. All the bags had to be opened and they asked for receipts for the gear.

We played dumb to it all, shrugging our shoulders and showing our ZB2 and UK transmitting licences. The official escalated the issue to her manager, who then escalated it to a military official. He quickly resolved it by inspecting our licences then waving us on. This had cost us a half-hour and we could have done without the stress. But more importantly we had missed our targeted ferry and had to sit around the ferry terminal for an extra hour. That's no fun when you want to get on the air! We can only imagine that this

customs hassle is all part of the Spain-UK dispute over Gibraltar: they just want to make life difficult, particularly for Brits. They were polite, even friendly, but while dealing with us they waved many Spanish-looking people straight through.

A couple of hours later we were back on the ferry heading for Ceuta for the second time. We made a quick stop at a hypermarket for provisions and then headed for our new home. At nighttime it got quite cool, but around the middle of the day the temperature was reaching 20-22° C. Very pleasant.

QRV in EA9

So we both hit the airwaves, having quickly installed the two antennas with the eager help of our EA9 friends, and again with barely no inter-station interference. Now we could settle down and run some serious CW pile-ups.

Over the next 48 hours we each made approaching 2,000 QSOs and thoroughly enjoyed the operation. EA9 is hardly DXCC-rare, but anyone firing up with a rather unusual callsign and running snappy 5NN contacts can command a pile-up for a couple of days.

Of course, there were no sunspots during our operation: nil, zilch - or should I say nada. I made the grand total of FOUR contacts on 15m. There were just no signals. In fact, being at only 36° N of the equator we also had midday absorption, with weak signals on 20 and 17m. But 30 and 40m were in very good shape at night.

We had done a little shopping, so had some snacks to keep us going, and some excellent Spanish red wine for about £0.70 a bottle. Ceuta is a tax-free zone. Aha! We also went QRT both evenings for a really excellent dinner in the complejo rural restaurant.

Socialising

As mentioned earlier, Juan/EA9IE was a magnificent host. He couldn't have been more welcoming. He has a long list of DXing and contesting achievements. His charming wife, Pilar, is also an active ham, EA9AM, and they both speak excellent English.

We also enjoyed the company of Joaquin, EA9FY, who had lived and worked in UK. A fun character, bubbling over with enthusiasm. We were invited to lunch at Juan's house, Moroccan cous-cous, delicious. There is much contact and influence between Ceuta and Morocco, of course. One of the strange difficulties is that Spain is one hour ahead of GMT, but Morocco is on GMT, so there is always one-hour time difference at the border. Then when Spain goes to summer time (which

happened while we were there), and Morocco stays on GMT throughout the year, there is a TWO-hour time difference. We found the whole issue of local time rather confusing, as we kept crossing the borders!

Ceuta is one of two Spanish enclaves in Morocco. The other is Melilla, some distance down the coast. The obvious question is whether Spain would give these back to Morocco in the way that they are demanding that the UK give Gibraltar back to them. I guess the answer is a big, fat NO. So the Spanish position is entirely illogical.

The biggest single problem is that this is the edge of the EU and there is a constant battle to keep out illegal immigrants. The high barbed-wire fences are a blot on an otherwise beautiful landscape.

QSOs

Callsign	40	30	20	17	15	Total
ZB2/G3SXW	-	-	199	-	-	199
ZB2/G4IRN	-	465	-	265	-	730
Total ZB2						929
EA9/G3SXW	900	-	602	-	4	1506
EA9/G4IRN	-	1518	-	244	-	1762
Total EA9						3268
Total	900	1983	801	509	4	4197

In Closing

We had a lot of fun on this trip. In the normal course of events our 'DXpeditions' would be organised in far more detail ahead of time. This time things were left to chance, to resolve on the day. But that's OK – it added some spice to the adventure and the potential consequences of failure were much less than a full-blown DXpedition. The target countries

were hardly rare enough to be needed by serious DXers, so if we took two hours off to enjoy a wonderful dinner, then so be it. This trip also gave us a break from the long, cold winter in UK.

Both EA9 and ZB2 are highly-congested places, with everyone living on top of each other, clogged by traffic and horribly noisy. Spanish people seem not to know how to

speak – they only know how to shout! There are hotels to choose from, but for the visiting ham there are few places to operate. In ZB2 it is even more restricted than in Ceuta.

Bearing in mind the lack of DXCC rarity and therefore the lack of demand on the bands, it might be best to leave ZB2 and EA9 alone and head instead for HBØ, GJ or SV9 where hams and their money are more welcomed by the

hotels. But touristically they are both very worthwhile visiting. They each have a remarkable character: Gibraltar with its fish and chips, unimaginably cheap booze and rowdy pubs - Ceuta with its fine wines, superb cuisine and screaming Spaniards.

Muchas gracias, Juan y Pilar y Joaquin. Hasta la proxima vez!

Confessions of a Rookie QRPer

Roger Western, G3SXW

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During the 70s and 80s Hugh Cassidy told stories in his weekly West Coast DX Bulletin about the QRPer who went up the hill to learn from the older, Big Gun DXer. Hugh was full of wise words and entertainment, long to be remembered. Our culture used to be that new radio amateurs start with QRP and then graduate to higher power. But while we were not watching, things have changed. New licensees can now afford a 100W black box. They no longer need to solder valve bases, or remember the resistor colour codes, to build a QRP transmitter.

Dropping to 100W

And so it came to pass that some long-in-the-tooth operators who have used high power for many years are discovering the joys of QRP operating later in life. I am one such, so here are my 'confessions'.

It all started some years ago when suffering at the hands of a particularly nasty neighbour: I decided to leave my Alpha amplifier in storage in West Africa and to operate only

with 100W at home. I was astonished at how little difference it made to anything. Only occasionally did it take significantly longer to get through and only in the biggest, wildest pile-ups did I miss out on snagging the rare DX. In a majority of cases, dropping from 400 to 100W made no difference at all. Then a fundamental truth hit me: the majority of DXers are operating barefoot with 100W. I expected to lose out to all those high-power chaps, but most of them are not, in fact, running amplifiers. And it's also worth pointing out that 100 to 400W is only two S-points difference.

So, for some years I operated quite happily with 100W. Meanwhile the volume and frequency of the screams from my nasty neighbour declined markedly, but still persisted at a lower level. Once they even complained that they could hear my CW in between medium-wave broadcast stations, while tuning across the band. After many years of coping with unpleasantness and solving problems one by one as they arose, I finally gave up trying to communicate with them.

Dropping to 10W

A surprising bonus of dropping to 100W was that I was actually enjoying operating more. Not just because I was more relaxed about the neighbour, but also because each difficult or far-distant QSO gave more satisfaction. It was no longer like shelling peas: operating skill was more called into action.

So, a couple of years ago I decided to go the final step and reduce to 10W just as an experiment. And you know what? Again, it made far less difference than I ever expected. This was firstly with the Kenwood TS-570, and more recently with the Elecraft K2/100. In the olden days rigs did not feature accurate power read-outs and ability to reduce power in a controlled fashion, watt by watt. QRP operating has been much boosted by the addition of this facility to transceiver designs in more recent times.

It started as an experiment on 1 January to see how many countries I could work in a month. I had so much fun that I never went back to 100W again.

There are these two advantages, and both of them are ten times more significant than when dropping from 400 to 100W. The neighbour has fallen totally silent, so I can enjoy the radio without being on edge the whole time. Secondly, the buzz has returned to my operating fun. Every DX contact now puts a smile on my face again. Stress levels are well down, it's more relaxed, less of a race.

More Persistence

None of this will come as news to established QRPers, so apologies for boring them with these comments. But it goes without saying that it takes longer to break a DX pile-up - sometimes a lot longer, and occasionally I can't get through at all. Being newly retired helps a lot; I'm no longer in a rush to do

things, so am happy to spend time calling in pile-ups. So here are some of the main factors, in no particular order, to chasing DX with 10W:

1. Your operating skills and tactics are stretched to the limit: timing, tail-ending, TX frequency, finding a tiny gap in the pile, coming back later when the propagation path has improved, varying sending speed etc.
2. Knowing when to even try: a JA on 160m who is barely 339 will never hear my 10W, so it's silly to even try. I have found that, as a generalisation, if the incoming signal is S5 or better and if the frequency is clear, then he will be able to hear me. There are exceptions, of course: perhaps he has high local noise.
3. The buzz can be really amazing. I worked VK4EMM on 40m recently. He came back to my first call, on a very clear frequency, and persisted until he had my full callsign. Now I probably worked my first VK on 40m some 30 years ago, but to do it with 10W was a thrill. Thanks, John!
4. Timing and persistence to catch the sweet moment when the frequency happens to be clear for a couple of seconds at precisely the moment when QSB happens to peak. Sometimes, having called a station thirty times, I just know that this time he is going to come back to me because his signal is peaking and the frequency has suddenly cleared!
5. Waiting for DX Cluster spots is no good; you have to go back to the old ways of finding the DX yourself. Again, being retired helps a lot, affording the time to tune the bands.

Then you pick up the DX before he is spotted on the Cluster - and he is much more likely to have a clear frequency. You sometimes get just one shot before the frequency gets swamped with callers.

6. CW FOREVER - and QSK - helps enormously. QRP on SSB is pure self-flagellation. Digital is OK, but really boring!

7. Entering the QRP category in some contests means you can be more competitive if you have a good QTH and antennas. As with DXing, it seems to make far less difference than you might expect. In the 80m Club Championship events recently I made 107 QSOs in 90 minutes and logged 70% of the number of QSOs of the winning 100 watt station. Not a single station failed to hear my QRP call.

The down side?

For a working man who runs his life at 100 mph, the extra time needed to get through with QRP is a disadvantage. But then again, it is quantity versus quality: a golden nugget may be worth a hundred brass buttons.

I do worry a little about the extra struggle that I impose on other stations to pull me through the QRM and QSB, particularly contesters who are out to win and cannot afford the time to listen to me six times to get my full callsign. However, outside contests I feel that many DXers actually seem to also enjoy the challenge and are pleased to have worked a QRP station. Another down side is, of course, not being able to work some rare stations. For a new DXer, or one with a lot of band-slots still to fill, this is enough reason not to try QRP. But I've reached the point where a new band-slot comes along only rarely, so it hardly matters any longer. Rather than losing motivation for DXing and for finding new ones, I have opened up a whole new interest.

NCDXF Beacons

A word about the Beacon system. If you check the NCDXF Beacons you will be astonished at what can be heard. They transmit on a vertical, non-directional antenna on 14.100, 18.110, 21.150, 24.930 and 28.200 from 18

locations around the world. Each transmission consists of the callsign followed by a long dash at 100, 10, 1 and then 0.1W. It takes three minutes for the sequence of stations to transmit. Listening to what sounds like a dead band, you go to the Beacon frequency and can hear the station in New York, for example, down to 100 milliwatts. Wow!

This says it all about QRP. Propagation often (mostly?) permits signals at power levels much less than we have become accustomed to expect. Our culture, as on the famous N2AA T-shirt, is 'Loud is Good, Louder is Better'. And 'Life is too Short for QRP'. We have been indoctrinated to believe that QRPers are somehow lesser mortals, poor cousins. What a shame. Band-pollution could be lessened if we each stuck to the code of conduct which says that you only use as much power as is needed. More details on <http://www.ncdxf.org/Beacon/BeaconSchedule.html>

Anecdotes

1. I was operating TY5A on 15m in the CQWW CW contest some years ago. The relay on the Alpha 78 started sticking, so while someone was fixing it I carried on operating barefoot. I then just plain forgot to switch the newly fixed amplifier back to 'Operate'.

For the next three hours I ran a huge European pile-up with 100W, seemingly not disadvantaged at all. In fact there was an ADvantage: during that time the multiplier-hunting station could listen to my band even when I was transmitting. But my colleagues (especially Americans) seem to insist on maximum output all the time: the louder the signal, the bigger the pile-up. But big pile-ups slow down our QSO-rate, so logic suggests that going to barefoot might actually increase the rate.

2. There has hardly been any propagation on 12m so far this year. So I was pleasantly surprised to hear the 4X6TU Beacon on 24.930 MHz. It was S9+ at 100W and about S4 at 100 milliwatts. I sent CQs on 24.893 for several minutes at 10W and got no replies. But never mind: I knew that the band was wide open to that area and that my signal was reaching them. Either they were not listening or didn't want to talk to me. The NCDXF Beacon system had once again proved that QRP is enough to communicate successfully.

3. Some people just don't have 'good ears'. When calling with QRP you get to know some of the DX stations who do not hear you, even when they are S9 to you. To be generous: they might have local noise, but it could be that they just don't know how to listen for weak callers. It does take a little extra concentration to properly check the frequency, rather than listening for three microseconds and when not hearing a loud caller then CQing again. Let's not name them, but you get to know not to waste your time calling them. It's their loss.

4. One time I was setting up the memories (function buttons) just before the start of a contest. Rather than pressing the VOX button in order not to transmit, I just turned the output to zero. The meter showed no output at all. I recorded the CQ message then listened back to it. Imagine my shock when a W8 called me. Gulp! Again, the wonders of QRP. I must have been transmitting with milliwatts.

5. My earliest experience with QRP was when getting licensed in 1963. I had a homebrew 8W DC input transmitter and a BC342 receiver, with a 130' long wire, no tuner. I spent two whole winters (as a teenager) waking up at 5am on Sunday mornings to listen for US stations on Top Band in the W1BB transatlantic tests. I thought I was in heaven when finally identifying a W2, but of course he didn't hear my plaintiff calls.

Finally, after about forty such Sunday mornings, a W1 heard my puny signal and we completed a QSO. I floated on a cloud for many weeks after that QSO: my friends never did understand why my eyes were shining like that. I regret to say that this enormous thrill has never been repeated to quite the same intensity ever since. The sense of achievement was almost overwhelming.

6. I was also very much impressed by QRP when working G4BUE in the late 1970s from EP2IA. He was really weak and I knew he was QRP, but I didn't realise the significance of the contact until meeting Chris later and he told me the story.

He had been calling for a long while at QRPPP levels, starting at 10 milliwatts. Only when he was convinced that I was not hearing him (my RX frequency was clear) did he increase power. He eventually lifted above my noise floor and we made the QSO at 50 milliwatts. Mind-blowing!

7. Operating in 1993 from ZD9SXW with continuous massive pile-ups, I finally said 'QRT 30 minutes lunch' and went QRT. After wolfing down some delicious crayfish and salad, I rushed back to the rig and put on the headphones. Rather than just hitting the keyer to send a CQ I listened for a moment. Of course the rig was still tuned to the receiving frequency of the last QSO before lunch.

The band was silent, except for one signal. It was Peter, G3XJS, calling me at about RST 539. Knowing him to be a renowned QRPer, I cut the power to 5W and answered him. We completed a QSO, needing no repeats. I hoped that he had not been calling continuously while I was having lunch; he probably started calling only some minutes before I re-entered the shack.

This QSO taught me a big lesson about QRPing: skill and patience, skill and patience. It can be so rewarding.

8. When running pile-ups from the DX end I do refuse to go back to partial callsigns. I recall one time hearing a weak signal sending 'QRP QRP', but without his callsign. I ignored him and went on working the pile-up as normal, replying to those who were sending full callsigns. This chap was evidently a skilled operator and he kept following my receive frequency efficiently, so I kept hearing him. After thirty minutes of this I felt he was like an old friend. He was always there at about S4 in amongst the other S9 callers. Finally, for the first time he called with his full callsign. Unfortunately he sent his call and stroke QRP and repeated this three times, but this time I was happy to waste my time waiting for him to finish. I worked and logged him. Did he understand that the very FIRST time sending his full callsign he got the contact? I doubt it, but I hope so.

Not all QRP operators do it right. Some seem to think that their low power gives them priority over others. The genuine QRPer makes the QSO without leaning on the crutch of '/QRP'. And those who DEMAND that I write /QRP on their QSL card can go jump in a lake !

What next?

Hmm, I'm not sure. I suppose the next step would be to get serious and start counting countries, zones, prefixes, WAB squares that I have worked with QRP. But I don't think so. This QRP bug has bitten and I am enjoying it a lot. It is not like experimenting with RTTY or AMTOR, which was great fun but just a novelty with no long-term attraction. This is here to stay.

But it comes with a wholly different built-in attitude, one which is more laid-back and somewhat healthier. There's no rush. The enjoyment and satisfaction has a quite different quality – it may be the old 'quality versus quantity' thing. Fewer QSOs and fewer

head lines, but a lot more satisfaction after years of shelling peas.

The moral here, if any, might be that there is always some new challenge lurking around the corner of life. We just occasionally hear a disaster story of some DXer who has worked 'em all and given up the hobby. I know of at least two who have taken up bird watching instead: such a shame. If not QRP then some other new challenge is always out there. Experiment with new things and one of them just might grab hold of you and become a friend for life.

Radio-equipped holiday home to let in Paphos, Cyprus

I have a 3-bedroomed (sleeps 6) town house for rent in Paphos, Cyprus. Why not bring the family for a holiday and at the same time experience the pile-ups from a DX location? As this is the first season I will be letting the property, I am offering it for the next 12 months only for prices well below the market price. You can get more info and view photos from:

www.homeforexchange.com/property_detail_view.php?propId=2680

This is a home exchange website, so don't be confused by that! For details of the special pricing or for info on the radio aspects, please email me at alan@shacklog.co.uk.

Alan Jubb, 5B4AHJ.

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

Jim McCaig GM3BQA 20/03/06

Railway Signalling

John Gould, G3WKL, RSGB HF Manager

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The article in the March *Digest* by Peter Chadwick, G3RZP, raised several important points, not least the potential ‘pollution’ to our spectrum by yet another commercial application that plans to pervade a large part of the HF spectrum. The other main point that Peter made was to highlight the role in international spectrum management and regulation played by the IARU and, through it, by the RSGB.

To remind you, the whole railway signalling saga started some years ago, well before I was on the scene, or even knew that such things as HF railway signalling existed! Then, agreement by CEPT – the European communications regulator – was given to the development of ‘Euroloop’ as an HF spread-spectrum system. Euroloop is part of a wider suite of railway communication and signalling systems.

As an aside, it isn’t a radiating loop, but terminated leaky coax between 300m and a kilometre in length that is installed alongside one of the rails on the track. About a year ago the Euroloop proponents returned to CEPT’s Frequency Management Working Group (WG FM) to ask if they could move the system to a higher frequency, to avoid compatibility problems with one of these other systems.

This caused alarm bells to ring within IARU and as a result Colin Thomas, G3PSM, in his capacity as IARU Region 1 HF Manager, looked for a volunteer to get engaged with SE24, the CEPT Spectrum Engineering Working Party that deals with short-range devices. This is because WG FM had referred the matter to it for advice. Early last December I thus made what would become

one of several visits to the SE24 working group meetings.

As Peter outlined in the March *Digest*, I approached the issue twofold. Firstly, to see if there was a potential problem from ionospheric propagation - and secondly, to gain some idea of the impact for those living close to a railway line. As one might expect, SE24 is well versed in undertaking short-range field-strength modelling, and thus experts from NATO, the broadcasting industry and the German regulator, BnetzA, led this work. SE24, however, seemed less experience and somewhat sceptical, I have to say, about possible ionospheric propagation of Euroloop signals.

Thus, in raising my concern, I neatly got the job of undertaking the mathematical modelling problem. Worst still, this had to be done over the Christmas and New Year period as SE24 were due to meet again in early January. I won’t bore you all with the fine detail except to say that in the spirit of scientific method I and others eventually managed to convince the working group to validate both modelling techniques with some field trials, which in my case helped me to find a 30dB error in my earlier calculations.

Since Peter wrote his piece, our understanding of the issues has improved. The skywave modelling has demonstrated with reasonable certainty that, if the Euroloop H field specification is lowered by around 10dB, there is virtually no likelihood of it affecting the noise floor through signals, propagated via the ionosphere, adding at the receiver from multiple loops.

However, turning to the effects on the noise floor for those living, or rather having their HF station near to a railway line, the problem is of more concern. Some very approximate statistics, based upon field strength modelling carried out by NATO, would suggest that around 1.2% of amateurs would be effected. This percentage is for those who live in the quietist radio locations adjacent to railway lines with a Euroloop installation.

For those living in the centre of towns and cities and near to Euroloop installations this percentage could reduce by an order of magnitude. This variation is all to do with the normal environmental fluctuations in the noise floor and the distance over which the spread-spectrum signal from the Euroloop might exceed this level. Some of you reading this, who live close to railways, may now be getting alarmed.

For the majority of CDXC members, however, there should not be a problem as it does appear that something less than 10 European countries are likely to adopt Euroloop, and informally I understand that the UK is not one of those countries.

The main countries that are expected to adopt Euroloop are the so-called Benelux countries. My understanding is that the UK is likely to go to straight to the next 'level' of railway communication systems, by using something called GSM-R, or Euroradio – that, as its initials implies, operates far from the HF spectrum.

SE24 is now in the process of drafting a report on the spectrum issues and compatibility considerations for presentation to WG FM. It is the responsibility of that working group to agree whether or not to accept the request for a frequency change. Currently, in addition to our own concerns, NATO and one of the representatives of the broadcasters are not convinced that Euroloop could be operated at the proposed H field level without some

significant disruption to their own usage of the HF band between 9 and 18 MHz.

I have made some new friends within SE24, some of whom - and I guess there are more - turned out to be amateurs. Given that they have to represent their professional organisation, they are appreciative of IARU involvement to represent the amateur interest.

It is important to acknowledge fellow amateurs who have given their time and expertise to this issue, in particular Robin Page-Jones, G3JWI, for his help and support in the modelling, and Peter Martinez, G3PLX, and Andy Talbot, G4JNT, for undertaking the field trials.

All the papers on this topic can be found on the CEPT website (www.ero.dk), although seeing as a little cunning and perseverance is needed to find them, I am in the process of drafting a summary document, with my main modelling papers as links, for the IARU Region 1 website (www.iaru-r1.org).

The West of England Radio Rally

organised by the Severnside TV Group

Frome, Somerset

(close to Longleat)

Sunday, 25 June 2006

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

www.westrally.org.uk

Deliberate QRM – Time for Action

Roger Western, G3SXW

g3sxw@compuserve.com

Let's first define the problem. We are talking here about hooligans who deliberately interfere with DXpeditions. They transmit all sorts of QRM on the frequency specifically in order to destroy the operation.

They are clearly in breach of their licence conditions as they do not identify and because they are broadcasting. But let us not, at this time, try to work out *why* they are doing this. We do not know who they are; they remain anonymous and they will not explain their actions. So we must just assume that they are hooligans, intent on causing maximum damage for the sake of it. Just like so many people in our society these days who want to hurt the community in which they live - for unfathomable reasons. A sickness of our time. Sick people. Instead, let's consider what our reaction should be.

The Size of the Problem

It is my opinion that this problem has grown dramatically just in the past two or three years. It is now expected that any DXpedition will have to fight against this QRM, whereas a couple of years ago it was only occasional and five years ago it was almost unheard of. However, I still think that it is a rather small number of perpetrators – maybe a few dozen individuals. But even one or two of them can have a disproportionate affect: they can destroy a frequency.

The recent rapid growth of this problem is really turning people away from the hobby, either from the sub-hobby of chasing DX or indeed from the whole hobby of amateur radio. We are aware of folks who are turning their backs on amateur radio because DXing was their main interest - and their pleasure is being so severely dented that they throw their

hands up in disgust and say “I have better ways to spend my time”. The most recent case I am aware of is Dave, G4WFQ, who has left the hobby, quoting this as the main cause. These QRMers, let's not underestimate the problem, are damaging amateur radio. And this makes me angry. Why should a few louts be allowed to get away with it?

Who are they?

We do not know. But we do know that this is almost entirely a European problem. Where in Europe? When operating from the Pacific, propagation allows for either ‘Far West Europe’ or ‘Main Europe’, but seldom both at the same time. I have found that ‘Far West Europe’ includes CT1, EA, F, ON and UK. The rest of Europe is a separate propagation area. Whenever the band is open to Far West Europe we do not have the Deliberate QRM problem, so I am assuming that the problem mostly derives from Central and Eastern Europe. This is a generalisation. There may be some individuals in the Far West Europe area who are also engaged in Deliberate QRM, but my opinion is that they are the exception rather than the rule.

We do know that some of them are skilled DX operators. They know how to use their station to maximum effect, by the timing of their transmissions and especially the tracking of the DXpedition's frequency. Sometimes they even track the DXpedition's receive frequency and QRM that too. It is entirely Deliberate. And they have persistence: they do not get bored and go away quickly. And some of them have big signals.

Again, let's not get trapped into discussing WHY they do this. Believe me, that would take us nowhere. We've been down that road

many times. There is no logical explanation for their actions and they refuse to explain themselves. So they deserve only our complete rejection.

Time for Action?

So, what are we to do about it? Before we throw our hands in the air and just give up, let's consider the options. The result of inaction, dare I suggest it, is the death of DXing. It will never die entirely, but it is already being severely damaged. Many folks who express an opinion these days are saying that they spend less time DXing as a direct result of Deliberate QRMers. So, right now the QRMers are winning!

Logically, there are several steps. The first is to recognise the size of the problem. I have been trying to draw attention to this for a year or two. It is now time to ramp it up. The problem is becoming intolerable. It is having a hidden affect: folks drifting away from the DXing sub-hobby without our noticing. The next, and most important step, is to open discussion. We must all engage in trying to uncover solutions to the problem. As stated earlier, let's not simply discuss WHY they are doing what they are doing. That would lead us nowhere.

Self-Policing

This is not a problem that 'the authorities' will solve or even consider. These killjoys are clearly breaking their licence conditions, but governments want to de-regulate amateur radio and we are now in the age of self-policing. So, if anyone is to take action it must be our national societies and IARU. And let's be realistic: HF is only one part of the Spectrum and DX-chasing is only one part of HF. This is a minority activity, seen through their eyes. So, I do not expect national societies to get seriously involved unless we press really hard. So, it is down to us, the DXing community.

Previous Initiatives

My 'Open Letter' to the Deliberate QRMers some months ago attracted a lot of replies, but only from the good guys. Not from the hooligans themselves. In it I proposed a self-policing direction-finding initiative to identify and expose the culprits. Even big-gun DXers were not prepared to support this initiative for fear of being branded a vigilante. We set up a chat room for the specific purpose, but when the cookie crumbled none of the people I approached were ready to take on board the responsibility of DOING something meaningful themselves.

This could be done. We could DF and identify the guilty people. It would need a dedicated group of 20-30 European DXers with directional receiving antennas to triangulate the source of the QRM. The mere fact of setting up and publicising this group might dissuade some of the hooligans. But this project would only develop successfully if it were made official, backed by national societies and IARU. DF may be a blunt tool, but it might just help to uncover the terrorists. If naming and shaming them does not stop their destructive activities, then we could find other solutions. Meanwhile, maybe there are other solutions? Ideas, please.

IARU Support?

Individuals lack the clout of an institution like the IARU. This has already become such a serious problem that our own authorities, in the shape of IARU Region 1, must now get involved. This, apart from PLT and declining sunspots, is now one of the most serious threats to our hobby.

Unfortunately I am not a politician myself, so will not get involved with lobbying and building up interest amongst Region 1 officials. But maybe someone out there will take this on as a challenge. And finally start to DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT!

IOTA News

Roger Balister, G3KMA

Update of data in IOTA Directory – 40th Anniversary Edition

New IOTA reference number issued

OC-270 YB6 Simeulue and Banyak Islands (Indonesia)

Operations which have provided acceptable validation material

AS-169 ATØAI Arnala Island (March/April 2006)
AS-169 ATØEI Elephanta Island (February 2006)

NA-178 K6VVA/6 South East Farallon, Farallon Islands (February 2006)

OC-008 P29WXZ New Britain, Bismarck Archipelago (March 2006)
OC-008 P29YDX New Britain, Bismarck Archipelago (March 2006)
OC-069 P29WXZ Lihir Island, Lihir Islands (March 2006)
OC-069 P29YDX Lihir Island, Lihir Islands (March 2006)
OC-101 P29WXZ Feni Island, Feni Islands (March 2006)
OC-101 P29YDX Feni Island, Feni Islands (March 2006)
OC-102 P29WXZ Boang Island, Tanga Islands (March 2006)
OC-102 P29YDX Boang Island, Tanga Islands (March 2006)

OC-215 YE5M Siberut Island (December 2005)
OC-270 YB1BOD/6 Simeulue Island (March 2006)

OC-270 YB6LYS/P Simeulue Island (March 2006)
OC-270 YB6PLG/P Simeulue Island (March 2006)
OC-270 YC6JKV/P Simeulue Island (March 2006)
OC-270 YC6LAY/P Simeulue Island (March 2006)

SA-020 TO7IR Royale Island, Salut Islands (February 2006)

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.

Roger Balister, G3KMA
RSGB IOTA Manager
20 April 2006

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

New QRP Discussion List

There is a new e-mail discussion list for QRP in Europe: the EUQRP List (but not just limited to Europe...). Anyone wishing to join should send a blank e-mail message to

euqrp-subscribe@yahoogroups.com

Everyone is welcome!

73 Tom, DL1DSK, and Pete, G8ICI

The RTTY Column

Phil Cooper, GUØSUP *pcooper@guernsey.net*

Is it me, or have conditions been rather poor of late? Just before Easter I saw that the solar indices showed an A of 50, K of 5 and an SFI of 77. Not the best for trying to work new ones!

Despite that I did manage to work several of the TY team during their DXpedition. Personally I thought this was an excellent operation, at least on RTTY, and it gave me TY on 20m and 17m, both of which were new band-slots. The last time I worked TY was back in 1998, during the CQWW RTTY contest, and the op was Eddie, W6/G0AZT. Hopefully, you also managed to work them on a few bands! Claudia, K2LEO, is the YL of Andrea, IK1PMR, and is really enjoying RTTY. Last year she operated in several RTTY contests and found she enjoyed the mode. During the TY operation she also showed how well she could handle the pile-ups and is becoming a first class op on RTTY.

As I am writing this, I am looking forward to trying to work the VU4 calls on Andaman. There are several good RTTY ops present, so there is always hope! Among them are Andrea, IK1PMR (just back from TY as TY5MR), and his YL Claudia, K2LEO (TY5LEO), Doug, N6TQS, and Jan, DJ8NK (who was recently active from GU). However, I guess that by the time you read this, it will all be over!

How many of you have managed WAS on LoTW yet? I already have a mixed-band WAS, but I keep hoping to achieve single band WAS, and thought LoTW may help. So far, the only state I don't have confirmed on LoTW is Montana. That was also the last state I needed to work for WAS. Getting the card, once I had worked it, was easy enough, but

curiously it was Delaware and West Virginia that were hardest to get confirmed.

How are you doing with LoTW? I have found that the confirmation rate is quite high. I currently have just over 40,000 contacts on LoTW and have almost 9,000 confirmations, which is over 20%. From what I have seen on the LoTW reflector, some folk are reporting confirmation rates of less than 2%, which seems very low. There does seem to be a mode split on LoTW, just as there is with paper cards. Those using mainly SSB seem to report lower returns than CW, and both those modes seem to be lower than RTTY. My returns seem to confirm this, although I now rarely use SSB, except for a little on 6m. I do use CW, but mainly just for new ones. What do you think?

The RSGB 80m Club Championships seem to be attracting much higher levels of activity this year. I am still wondering about the start time of 8pm local, although I do prefer this. I happen to like my bed, and need my beauty sleep, so contesting till 10.30pm local was not good for me, especially during the week. I wonder what conditions will be like in June at 8pm local time?

In 2004 the data nights seemed to attract around 30 – 40 entrants, so it is good to see 80 or more this year. I wonder whether the RSGB will consider dropping the PSK part of the data nights too. From what I have heard, there are very few entrants using PSK in these contests, so maybe it would be wise to drop that mode. These mini-contests certainly seemed to have raised the level of interest in RTTY contesting, and there are now many more Gs entering the major contests.

In the BARTG HF contest in March, I counted more than 30 different G calls being worked. However, I suspect that only a small percentage of these will submit logs. I am sure that some of you reading this will be amongst those who didn't submit a log. I wonder why? Is it because you were using MMTTY and couldn't produce a suitable Cabrillo file? Or maybe you just don't bother to submit logs?

If you are having problems producing a Cabrillo file, then take a look at Marek, SP7DQR's home page at http://sp7dqr.waw.pl/eng/index_en.html. On this page you will find an ADIF to Cabrillo converter that can be used for most of the contests, and at less than 250 KB it is a quick download. It is also worth checking the contest website, as many now include examples of the Cabrillo layout, which will enable you to verify that the converted file matches the expected layout.

And obviously it is up to you whether or not you submit a log, but please remember that it does help the contest adjudicators verify other logs, and also gives them an indication of the level of interest in the contest. If it is just because you can't be bothered to mess around with your log, then simply send it as a check log. This could be in plain text, or a Cabrillo file, but it will help the Contest Committee. I know some of you will say that you only made a few dozen contacts, so it isn't worth it. Oh yes it is! However many contacts you made, whether it is just a few, or in the hundreds, it does help to verify other logs, and gives the Contest Committee a much better idea of the popularity of their contest.

Judging by the claimed scores shown on the 3830 reflector, there are plenty of folk who enter a contest and just plough ahead making contacts. Some rack up a respectable number of contacts, but miss out on the multipliers completely, thus reducing their overall score.

For example, take a look at the 2006 results of the BARTG Sprint contest. Go to www.bartg.demon.co.uk and click on CONTESTS, then SPRINT, and then 2006 results. If you look at the single op section, you will see several examples of where someone has made 100 Qs more than the person above, but has a lower score.

It is always worth printing out a copy of the rules, and keeping them close by during the contest. Check class, operating times, especially if you enter the single op class, whether you are allowed to use the Cluster but, most of all, check what counts as a mult! In the BARTG contests continents are additional multipliers, so it is always worth chasing the 6 continents early on in the game.

It will soon be time to depart for Friedrichshafen once more. This year there will be an RTTY forum on the Friday. It is planned to be one of the last sessions of the day and will comprise a short presentation on best practice when chasing DX, contesting, and then an open forum for questions. Hopefully it will appeal to the many people who have started to enjoy RTTY. There is also the RTTY dinner on the Friday evening, so if you are going this year, please come along and enjoy the fun!

DX

Over the past few weeks P29ZAD has been fairly active on RTTY. This is the first time I have ever heard a P29 station, so I am hoping to work him in due course. He has a website at <http://p29zad.blogspot.com> and his QSL manager is N5FTR. Peter, HA3AUI, has extended his stay in Africa and will now be active until 10 June. His callsign is either J5UAP or 6W/HA3AUI.

Good luck with the pile-ups, and maybe see you at Friedrichshafen!

73 de Phil GUØSUP

Contest

Lee Volante, GØMTN

This time there are some thoughts about making log details more accurate, some new software to help sharpen your CW, and an opinion of the recent major contests during the last few months.

Contest Log workshop

At my local radio club I am, for my sins, responsible for organizing contest operations. One of the jobs to do is collating contest logs to send off for team events like AFS, or the 80m Club Championship. I know, from being the occasional receiver of contest logs for some contests, that there are many other people in the same position as ‘contest secretary’ for a radio club. Over the past year I was pleased to see that some relatively new club members at my club have started to take an active interest in contesting. Whilst they had learnt some proficiency in using a computer to log during the contests, I noticed that sometimes I needed to edit the log names, summary sheet details, or even convert the whole file before I could send it off as a reasonably well-formatted entry. It’s relatively easy to find testers on the air to listen to and learn from. Multi-op events, field days, and contests from the club shack can all be used to pick up operating tips. But it’s usually left to a single person to produce the log after the dust has settled. My solution to this was to hold a contest workshop at my club – not so much for the on-air logging and duping elements of using the software, but more focused on setting up software correctly before the contest, and filling out the required details afterwards to produce a good log. So in future I hope I can compile entries from my team, quickly check over them, and then send them off. Not having to make any edits myself should save me some time and effort. You

might like to do something similar with your own club.

So what happens when a log with some problems reaches the adjudicator? Whilst the majority of adjudicators may send a query if a log is incorrect, they are not obliged to do so, and such queries take up time. If a contest attracts hundreds of entrants, the adjudicator does not want to spend time writing lots of e-mails. Some of the more sophisticated log entry robots will reject logs that don’t contain the log or summary information they were looking for. Most of these will offer some advice too for your next attempt.

It’s easy to fall into the trap of not reading the contest rules fully, especially if you’ve entered the same event in previous years. Ask yourself if you always follow the rules as regards log file naming, for example, e-mail subject headers - or correctly stating your section. Not all contests have High Power, Low Power and QRP categories. Did you specify your off times, if that is what is required in the rules? In the past I have received logs without any reports and serial numbers, and even logs for the previous year’s contest. I’m only human myself of course, and have made some embarrassing errors too in my time, but all could have been avoided with a little more diligence in double checking the log before pressing the Send button.

RufzXP

One of the most popular CW training programs available for PCs is Rufz, originally written by Mathias Kolpe, DL4MM. For those who have not heard of the program, Rufz is the abbreviation of the German word ‘Rufzeichen-Hören’, which means ‘Listening

to Callsigns'. It is not a contest simulator, but instead sends 50 callsigns one at a time. A score is awarded for each QSO, with more points awarded if calls are logged quickly, and also accurately. The speed of the sent callsign increases if the previous one is logged correctly, and decreases if there are errors. The top scores are compiled to a list, and climbing the rankings can be very addictive, as well as being similarly frustrating!

A few weeks ago I discovered by chance that a new version of Rufz has been written for the MS Windows software family (Windows XP, 2000, NT, ME and Win98.). One feature of the original DOS software was that the program was aware if any attempts were made to slow down its operation, for example if anyone decided to cheat (heaven forbid), and it would stop running to maintain the integrity of the scores produced. Unfortunately this meant that the DOS program would not run at all in a standard Windows environment. So this new RufzXP, written by Mathias and Alessandro, IV3XYM, will be welcome news to many people.

You can read more about Rufz and download the software from <http://www.rufzxp.net/> Also on this site are details of the current 'toplist' scores. From previous versions of this list it is fascinating to see the competitive interest in high speed CW by a large number of young people, and also women. Rufz is used as part of the international High Speed Telegraphy Championships events, which attracts good support from Central and Eastern Europe, but not very much from the UK.

GB5HQ

Despite having a number of regular operators and supporters enjoying themselves (sorry, I meant officiating at the WRTC in Brazil...), the GB5HQ team are hoping for another successful year, hopefully climbing more places toward the #1 HQ station position. Whilst the top spot has sometimes seemed out

of reach, an analysis of the scores shows that just a few more multipliers on a few bands would start to make the results table look very interesting indeed. Those missing multipliers are probably easier to obtain than the other option of finding several thousand additional domestic UK QSOs to match the impressive totals seen in DL. Last year saw an extremely close competition between the Germans, the Poles, and the French, with the DAØHQ guys winning again after adjudication.

For 2006, 80m/10m station host John, G3LZQ, has again kindly offered the use of his station, despite John himself being a referee in Brazil. This will be one great way to find out first hand just how loud his 80m 4-square is, I guess! Has anyone else personal experience of hearing what their own station sounds like from the distant end of a DX QSO?

In the past the July Digest has, on occasions, landed on my doorstep on the same day as the IARU HF Championship, which is cutting it a bit fine to get word out about the contest. So I make no excuses in giving this early plug. The dates and times are 8-9 July 2006 – 1200z to 1200z. Work everyone, mixed mode, 160m to 10m, exchanging RS(T) and IARU zone (for the UK this is 27) but listen doubly hard for GB5HQ. See <http://www.gb5hq.com> nearer the contest for more news and updates about station hosts, QSL information, and awards news.

On the Air

I never had a chance to actively participate in the Commonwealth Contest again this year, as giving assistance to my club's radio rally needed to take precedence. I had a quick dabble on HF with my dipole at low height, and was pleased to see a seemingly non-stop pile of Gs working the most audible DX stations. Eventually I even managed to be louder than the pile and made a few QSOs! Reading the reports after the event showed

overall conditions and participation were maybe not as good as in previous years. Still, there were a few QSOs to be made on 28 MHz – so even ‘completely dead’ bands can offer some surprises. However, it was very sad to learn that stalwart and Commonwealth medal winner Frank, G2QT, will not be heard again in the contest, having passed away at the beginning of March.

The Russian DX Contest was well supported again. The 24-hour mixed mode format works well. Even the most limited of stations in the UK should be able to easily reach a good number of the Russian stations participating, who offer lots of points and many oblast multipliers. Entrants should receive a large glossy results booklet in time, and the website at <http://www.rdxo.org> contains a wealth of information.

There is a rule change to the European Sprints this year. Clive, GM3POI, had successfully lobbied Paolo, I2UIY, for a change in the start times. Entrants in the north and west of Europe previously suffered in the spring events, as it was still light at the end of the contest and consequently 80m contacts were difficult. Normally I’d only arrive on 80m for the last 30 minutes or so, work most of the UK entrants, and sometimes not much more. So now the contests will start an hour later – 16.00 to 19.59z. Additionally, in spring the CW contest is now first, to avoid clashing with the Russian WSEM contest.

The time change actually seemed to suit everyone in terms of scores and propagation. Stations in the UK and Portugal benefited the most, with several reports of best ever score, and/or best ever 80m score posted. However, activity was perhaps not as high as normal, with several regulars being missing, perhaps due to the Easter holidays. The Holyland contest did make 40m seem even more crowded than normal during the SSB event, but I didn’t spot any arguments. The only major concern reported was that the entrants

had to wait an hour longer for their dinner, with previous winner Ben, DL6RAI’s post-contest pizza a casualty of the new format. The 2006 autumn EU Sprints will be on 7 and 14 October.

My final note is more humorous. In the April 80m Club Championship CW event, I was surprised not to be able to find a clear spot in the non-QRS section at the start of the contest. All my QRL? calls were met with a response. Bad luck for me for not being ready early enough, but good to see the increasing activity. Later I found a relatively clear frequency immediately adjacent to Gerry, GØRTN. I remembered some confusion during a CQ WW or WPX contest years ago when I was sandwiched between EA8EA and EA9EA who were both calling CQ, and could hear both in my passband. So I decided it may be prudent to find a different spot away from Gerry to minimize the risk of misunderstandings. At least on SSB, with accents audible, it’s easier to tell us apart.

Vanity Calls

Amateurs in Belgium may now apply for a secondary 2x1 vanity callsign from any of the possible ITU prefixes allocated to that country - excluding OT5x and OR5x, which are reserved for club stations. Their use is not exclusive to contests, although this is where a lot will be heard.

A few other countries have given similar privileges recently, and maybe the UK will follow suit one day. It would be interesting to see the demand for a shorter callsign, and even more so to see what the actual use would be. There are a lot of current UK short contest callsigns that don’t see much activity. Is this because they are tied to club callsigns and not personal ones? If there are UK vanity calls in the future, maybe there should be a clause that the most sought-after callsigns must be kept active else they would be forfeited! There are similar arguments when a number of ‘good’

US callsigns are held by foreign amateurs, and rarely, if ever used, whilst there is a good demand for them domestically.

Where new prefixes are suddenly commonplace on the bands, it will take a little time to get used to them. For example with the Belgians, mentally 'OQ' as a prefix doesn't seem right, and initially more people might ask for a repeat amidst the QRM of a contest. Well-known callsigns are an advantage, so changing from one may not be the best move until the newer one becomes better known. Many leading contest stations still do very well with a longer than average callsign, so perhaps it's only in the real DX contests - with good conditions, combined with a great location and station - that the callsign length will be a limiting factor. As well as the callsign length, operators might like to change from sending letters or numbers that are easily miscopied on CW or SSB. I would not like to have combinations of S's and H's in my callsign for CW, and some letters are misheard more than others when using SSB.

More Winkey notes

Following on from his experiences about contest logging in the March Digest, I've had an update from Ron, GØMRH:

Previously I commented about the need to install another serial port before I could use Winkey with my laptop and radio. I have now achieved this and feel my experience may help other members faced with the same situation.

The situation is a 'minefield', as many have found out before me. I needed communication for Winkey and control by my Kenwood radio using Windows 2000. I found help in an article 'USB-to-Serial Port adapters' on the RTTY website: www.rttycontesting.com/usb.htm (Stateside related) and from Direct USB Store: www.directusbstore.co.uk. Initially I fell into the trap of buying a multi-port USB hub with in-built serial port, only to find it

was one of those that fell short of what is required. I assume now that it has the wrong internal 'chip'. It does, however, have an external power supply that could be useful for more demanding USB devices. I have ended up with the hub providing the extra USB facility and use it in conjunction with a USB 2.0 to RS232 Adapter for the radio control that now works as it should. In my case Winkey/CW is sent via the single serial port on the laptop, COM 1, and radio control is via COM 5. A tip is to be sure you have the correct driver to suit your operating system or be prepared to download this from the maker's website.

Antenna work

With the recent transition to British Summer Time complete, many of us are now enjoying the benefits of the first evenings still in daylight. The daytime temperatures are rising, so outside work doesn't seem so much like hard labour. In other words, it's time to check what state your antennas are really in after the winter.

I have a wire antenna that for the last few years just clipped the top of a conifer tree. I use a fibreglass mast to support the antenna centre, and so maximize its height. Last year I noticed that when pushing up the antenna, the antenna wire appeared to be caught in the tree branches. No amount of zealous shaking and prodding would free it. Recently I decided that the tree could do with a cutting down to size, and soon a team of tree surgeons were employed to tackle the task. Seeing a man sitting in the top of the tree wielding a chainsaw reassured me that this wasn't a job I should have attempted myself. I received a surprise when I found that the reason I could not free the antenna wire was because it had become embedded in what was quite a thick branch. The cumulative effect of the wind causing the branches to brush against the wire was evident. The branch was chopped down, but when working on it at ground level found I

still could not free the wire, and needed to break and rejoin it. I've heard of similar things happening to other people who use trees as natural antenna supports, but I didn't think

that it would happen to me, nor in such a relatively short time.

73, *Lee GØMTN*

E-mails to the Editor

from 9M6DXX

Dear Martyn

I very much enjoyed reading the January CDXC Digest. The note from John, G3LAS/MM, sailing past 'Tin Can Island', reminded me of a very pleasant afternoon spent in the company of Father Kevin Burke SM, A35KB, back in 1992.

Father Kevin is a Roman Catholic priest who lives on Tin Can Island, or Niuafou'ou, to give it its official name. Originally from Lancaster, Kevin has been in Tonga for well over 30 years now. He used to be pretty active on SSB back in the early 90s, but pressure of his religious and educational duties forced him to go QRT.

Eva and I met Kevin in Tonga's capital, Nuku'alofa; he just happened to be visiting 'headquarters' when we were passing through. He kindly drove us to the licensing office, where I collected my A35VG licence - after which we shared a couple of Royal beers before Eva and I left for our accommodation on Fa'fa Island.

I was delighted to see that my old friend and former BBC colleague, John, G3LWI, is a new CDXC member. Welcome to the club, John! Sad, though, to hear of the passing of Ray, G3ALI. I first worked Ray on a regular basis back in 1978 when I was EP2SL and

Ray had one of the biggest signals out of the UK on 80m SSB. My condolences to Robert and the Small family.

I'm sorry I can't be at the Annual Dinner this year, but hope all who attend have a great evening. I certainly remember the Corus Hotel in its former guise of the Waterloo and if it is as good as it used to be, a good evening will be had by all.

Vince, K5VT's, story, 'Amplifier Threat in Houston', should be a cautionary tale for everyone carrying amateur radio equipment through the USA. I have taken equipment, including sometimes linear amplifiers, to some 25 countries all over the world and not once had any problems with airport security personnel once they had been told what the equipment is for (customs officers can sometimes be another matter - but that's another story).

However, when transiting through Newark en route to the Virgin Islands - fortunately without any amateur radio equipment on this occasion - we were taken out of the queue and given a very vigorous search (to an extent that was almost embarrassing) in full view of all our fellow passengers by rude, brusque security personnel - simply because we did not possess US passports. US citizens, of course, were allowed on board without any physical search at all; it looks like Uncle Sam has not

heard of home-grown terrorism! I would say that one of the few countries in the world where a radio amateur is likely to have trouble with security personnel is now, sadly, the USA.

Derek's, G3KHZ, tale of his activities in Papua New Guinea took me back to the happy three years we spend there from 1991 to 1994. I was amazed that Derek says 100 kina is equivalent to £20. When I was there, the kina was on a par with the US dollar. In those days the licensing authority, the Spectrum Management Department of the Post and Telecommunication Corporation, issued visiting amateurs with P29Vxx three-letter callsigns, with no exceptions! It seems that the new licensing authority, Pangtel, has relaxed this and is now issuing two-letter callsigns for visitors too. (I wonder how long it will be before my P29DX callsign is re-issued for a second time?!) Would that the Malaysian licensing authority, MCMC, followed the lead of Pangtel: I would have liked 9M6DX, but they now insist on issuing three-letter callsigns, even for residents!

I agree with Don, G3XTT, who suggested that many DXers' expectations of DXpeditions are now unrealistically high, thanks to the great efforts of 'mega-DXpeditions' such as D68C and 3B9C. Many DXers, who have probably never been on a DXpedition in their lives, now seem to expect all DXpeditions to be beaming in their direction on every band 24 hours a day!

What this means in practice is that an 'ordinary' scale operation is simply unable to deliver, through no fault of its own. The five-man 7Q7MM DXpedition, of which I was a member, followed hot on the heels of 3B9C in 2004, and received a great deal of criticism, mostly from USA. I have to say the worst culprits were American 160m operators, who

seemed to think that the DXpedition should spend the whole of the night, every night, looking for them on 160m CW, even when conditions were extremely marginal and it was much more productive working 40 and 80 CW or SSB.

They also seemed to fail to realise that levels of local static noise in the tropics can mean that even S9+ signals are not workable. Steve, G4EDG, in particular, made sterling efforts on Top Band for relatively few QSOs and little in the way of thanks. If you had read the criticism during and immediately after the DXpedition, you would have thought it to have been a complete disaster. Yet in the final analysis we made over 23,000 QSOs, which worked out at around 1,000 QSOs per station per day, pretty much the same average as that achieved by Roger, G3SXW, and Nigel, G3TXF, on their highly successful operations.

As Don says, a few DXpeditions have deliberately countered the Five Star DXers Association approach by going 'lite', but this is most emphatically not the answer – at least not at this stage in the sunspot cycle. 'Lite' DXpeditions, with their relatively weaker signals due to deliberately using low power and/or single-element antennas, can only be received well enough by the 'big gun' DXers with their monoband beams, and therefore the 'little pistols' lose out – they can't even hear the DXpedition, let alone work it!

Which brings me back to where I started. I remember working G stations on 40m SSB with S9 signals during local daylight from my A35VG QTH on Fa'fa Island. I was using an FT-890, 100W 'barefoot' to a 40m dipole in a low coconut tree. Of course, that was in 1992. Bring back the sunspots, I say!

73, Steve, 9M6DXX

Not the GB2RS News

This week's headlines:

- 'Americanisation' firmly denied
- World Cup special event stations
- Learn German in Friedrichshafen

Allegations have been firmly denied that the GB2RS News is gradually turning into a general science and technology bulletin, and becoming increasingly American in both style and content. "This is nooze to me," a member of the editorial staff said last nite from his colorful office in the Innernational Science & Technology Cenner in Houston, Texas.

A spokesman for ARRL HQ added, "I would like to express my deep gratitood to the British amateur radio commundity for their pardicipation in this great adventure and for showing that they really care about this wonnerful hobby of ours, which means so much to so many."

Although it was not entirely clear what he was talking about here, it certainly sounded good and had many of us fighting back tears of emotion. In the event of any future items of this sort, we gather that both newsreaders and listeners will be provided with an adequate supply of Kleenex.

If you haven't worked Germany yet, you'll finally get your chance during the World Cup, which kicks off in Munich on 9 June. Long before that Germany will be fielding no fewer than 38 special event stations with callsigns in the DR2006* and DQ2006* series. Twelve of these will be special stadium stations, with CW operators required to adjust their pitch accordingly. The goal is to net a final score of 1 million QSOs.

Special World Cup awards will be available, but when sending in your logs please quote the name of at least one referee. Extra time will be given to enable you to thoroughly check these logs and make sure that the details match, with the appropriate header, otherwise ze organisers vll be in touch and penalties will be incurred. In case of any PC problems, try re-booting your computer.

[Yes, 'Not the GB2RS News' on ze ball as ever. Ed.]

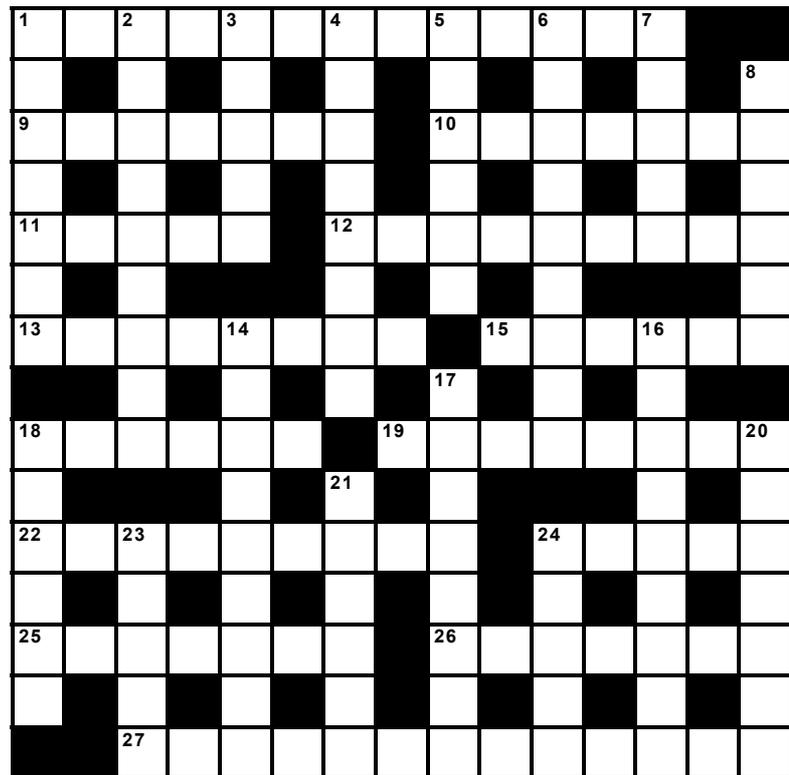
Kicking off on 23 June: the Friedrichshafen Hamfest, or 'Ham Radio 2006'. Any UK visitors with a bit of time on their hands, and wishing to learn a few words of very basic German, can now take advantage of the special intensive courses offered by Franziska Frohmacher, from Friedrichshafen. Freelance Franziska can frequently be found fraternising at the bar in the railway station buffet.

Solution to Digest Prize Crossword 15

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

Digest Prize Crossword 16 *by RFX*

Deadline for entries: 20 June.



The winner of Prize Crossword 15, March 2006, and that brand-new £10 note: Alan Jubb, 5B4AHJ, Paphos, Cyprus (via e-mail).

ACROSS

- 1 Regular payment, the aim of all line managers? (8,5)
- 9 Get-together with old friends in part of France (7)
- 10 It's hard work, taking enormous figure half cut round Virginia (7)
- 11 Foreign capital leads to kerfuffle about builder's unsecured loan (5)
- 12 University term a lama conjured up (4,5)
- 13 Chemical process producing a response (8)
- 15 Team given backing about court orders (6)
- 18 It's dull, being back in the outskirts of Derby (6)
- 19 Primate almost gets joints, we hear, for smokers (8)
- 22 Awful tube crash in European city (9)
- 24 The lucky thing, heading off for somewhere in Berkshire! (5)
- 25 Flower first to open in three states (7)
- 26 Unable to relax after heartless Scot becomes violent (7)
- 27 The ideal footwear for those waiting for the train? (8,5)

DOWN

- 1 Batsman who's not out? Quite the opposite (7)
- 2 A stupid animal ultimately ovine in outline (9)
- 3 School bore (5)
- 4 Sister worried, we hear, in English town (8)
- 5 Punctual, as indicated by the clocks at Waterloo? (2,4)
- 6 Financially demanding, precocious girl and how to address her in writing? (4,5)
- 7 Traditional dinner served in Cairo as 'Tutankhamen's Revenge' (5)
- 8 Philanderers disheartened faithful EI society (6)
- 14 Wild angora rat found in Port of Spain (9)
- 16 For a gradual increase on the staff, end soccer training! (9)
- 17 More talkative - and more spiteful, when heroin is withheld (8)
- 18 Outstanding lolly merchant, maybe? (6)
- 20 Beastly homes inhabited by HM's dogs (7)
- 21 Leave - 'cos the radio's not switched on? (3,3)
- 23 Primate's letter from abroad supported by the police (5)
- 24 As usual, Toscanini provides the singers (5)

DX and Events Calendar

Compiled by G3XTT

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

Period	Call
till 07/06	HB2ØDIG: special call (Switzerland)
till 10/06	6W/HA3AUI: Senegal
till 10/06	J5UAP: Guinea-Bissau by HA3AUI
till 15/06	SYØ5AIA: special event station (Greece)
till June	6W/EA4ATI and 6W1EA: Senegal
till June	JW4GHA: Bear Island (EU-027) by LA4GHA
till June	TT8LN: Chad by F5TLN
till 03/08	YU8/IV3NVB and YU8/IV3SRD: Kosovo
till 31/12	4N5ØØCC, 4N5ØØZZ, YU5ØØBW: special calls
till 31/12	8S3ØJC: special call (Sweden)
till 31/12	9A15DX: special call
till 31/12	9A15ØNT: special event station
till 31/12	9A35Y: special call
till 31/12	9A65ØC: special event station
till 31/12	EI6ØLRC: special call
till 31/12	GB6ØSWL: special call
till 31/12	GB6SWL: special call
till 31/12	HA5ØMHZ: special call by HA5X
till 31/12	JV8ØØ: special prefix (Mongolia)
till 31/12	LZ13ARDF: special event station
till 31/12	LZ5ØKSB: special call
till 31/12	LZ8ØR: special event station
till 31/12	ON4ØDST: special call
till 31/12	TF6Ø: special prefix (Iceland)
till 31/12	YU5ØØCM, YU5ØØJDE, YZ5ØØA: special calls
till December	VKØJLX: Davis Station (VK-03, AN-016) by VK2JLX
till Feb 2007	EM1UC & EM1U: Vernadsky Station (UR-01, AN-006)
till March 2007	T68G: Afghanistan by LA5IIA
till March 2007	VP8DJB: Rothera Station (G-07, AN-001)
19/05-25/11	HH/PS7EB: Haiti
19/05-22/05	JA1UNS/1, JI1PLF/1: Hachijo Island (AS-043)
21/05-26/05	9A/ON6KN: Losinj Island (EU-136)
24/05-07/06	SM1/DL8AAV/P: Gotland Island (EU-020)
25/05-20/06	VI9NI: Norfolk Island (OC-005)

May-July	TT8PK: Chad by F4EGS
06/06	SA2ØØ6EM: special event call by SK6AG and SK6AW
09/06-18/06	6W2/F6ELE: Carabane Island (AF-078)
16/06-28/06	GM: Isle of Rockall (EU-189)
16/06-19/06	P29VV: Witu Islands (OC-181) by PA3EXX
18/06-18/07	FO: Marquesas, Australes, French Polynesia by F6CTL
23/06-25/06	Ham Radio 2006 (Friedrichshafen)
01/07-13/08	7S6EM & 8S6EM: special event calls by SK6AG & SK6AW
07/07-10/07	World Radiosport Team Championship (WRTC)
24/07-31/07	GB4CI & GW5X: Caldey Island (EU-124)
24/07-30/07	VA7AQ/VE2 and VE7SAR/VE2: La Madeleine Isls (NA-038)

CDXC AGM & Summer Social, 15 July

Directions to Westlands, John/G3LAS's QTH

From M11 (South): Exit at A120 West (just before Stansted Airport exit). Follow A120 towards Hertford for about 5 miles. In village of Little Hadham turn left at traffic lights at bottom of hill. After about 1 mile, turn right into Chapel Lane (just past Nag's Head on right). Follow road up hill into Westland Green. Turn left at grass triangle with little post box (see map above). Pass 6 houses on left, last one is called Woodside. Turn left at grass triangle into No Through Road. Westlands is the first house on the left, about 200 yards.

From M11 (North): Exit at A120 West (Stansted Airport exit). Follow A120 towards Hertford for about 5 miles. In village of Little Hadham turn left at traffic lights at bottom of hill. After about 1 mile, turn right into Chapel Lane (just past Nag's Head on right). Follow road up hill into Westland Green. Turn left at grass triangle with little post box on left (see map above). Pass 6 houses on left, last one is called Woodside. Turn left at grass triangle into No Through Road. Westlands is the first house on the left, about 200 yards.

From A10: Follow A120 East (about 6 miles North of Ware). Go through village of Standon and up to top of hill. Turn right towards Broken Green and Wellpond Green. Ignoring farm road on left and similar on right, turn left at T-junction towards Little Hadham. After about 1 mile, including a Z-bend, turn right at grass triangle with little post box on right (see map above). Pass 6 houses on left, last one is called Woodside. Turn left at grass triangle into No Through Road. Westlands is the first house on the left, about 200 yards.

CDXC Clothing

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

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

ITEM		SIZE	PRICE
Sweatshirt	Polycotton raglan sleeve	S, M, L, XL	£21.00
		XXL, 3XL, 4XL	£22.00
Children's sweatshirts	Polycotton raglan sleeve	3, 5, 7, 9, 11 years	£16.00
Rugby shirts FR1	100% cotton	S, M, L	£25.00
		XL, XXL	£26.00
		3XL	£28.00
Rugby shirts FR2	Quartered 100% cotton	S, M, L	£29.00
		XL, XXL	£31.00
Polo shirts	100% cotton	S, M, L, XL, XXL, 3XL	£19.00
Polo shirts	Polycotton	S, M, L, XL, XXL, 3XL, 4XL, 5XL	£18.50
Children's polo shirt		3, 5, 7, 9, 11 years	£15.00
T-shirts	Heavyweight 100% cotton	S, M, L, XL, XXL, 3XL	£16.00
V-neck pullover	Lambswool	36" to 48"	£31.00
		50"	£32.00
V-neck pullover	50% wool / 50% acrylic	36" to 48"	£28.50
		50"	£29.50
Crew neck pullover	Lambswool	36" to 48"	£31.00
Fleece jacket		XS, S, M, L, XL, XXL	£28.00
Children's fleece jacket		3, 4, 6, 8, 10, 12 years	£23.00
Tie			£14.25

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

ITEM(S)	QUANTITY	SIZE	COLOUR	PRICE
Additional text @ £3.00 per line				
Sub-Total				
P & P: £1.75 for first¹ item, £1.25 additional items, £1 children's items, £2.00 fleece jackets				
Callsign	Total			
Name/Address				

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

Standing Order Request Form

To: Bank

Branch :

Please pay:

Bank: **NatWest Bank**
Branch: **Kingston-upon-Thames**
Sort Code: **60-60-02**
Account: **44532385**
Account name: **CDXC**

Reference: (Please write your **callsign** here)

The amount of £15.00 (fifteen pounds) / £20.00 (twenty pounds)
(Delete as appropriate)

1. starting with an **initial payment TODAY**
2. followed by an **annual payment on 1 July** thereafter,
starting with 1 July 2006 and until further notice in writing.

Please debit my/our account accordingly.

Name of account to be debited :

Account number :

THIS REPLACES ANY EXISTING STANDING ORDER PAYABLE TO
'CDXC' or 'Chiltern DX Club' (Delete if this is a new Standing Order request)

Name(s) :

BLOCK CAPITALS PLEASE

Signature :

Signature :

(For accounts where two signatures are required)

Date :

Address :

Postcode :

**After completion of this Standing Order Request Form,
please send the signed form to the bank branch looking after your account.**

