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Club News and Views

Editorial

Martyn Phillips, G3RFX

Somewhat predictably, in this *Digest* you'll find many a mention of the N8S Swain's Island DXpedition. I was also hoping to include, all the way from Honolulu, an 'exclusive' article for CDXC and the *Digest* by a member of the N8S team, but unfortunately this didn't turn up in time.

For Scarborough Reef and BS7H you'll also have to wait until next time round, seeing as this one kicked off a week or so after our 20 April deadline. In the July *Digest*, though, I'll be reserving at least 20 pages for comments on BS7H, most of them devoted to an in-depth analysis by an eminent brain surgeon, Dr H. Lecter, of some of the highly debatable on-air antics which surrounded this operation. In his report Dr Lecter will also be describing guaranteed, if not slightly controversial methods of ensuring that this sort of thing doesn't happen again.

On a very different tack I'm delighted to welcome back two of our regular columnists after a short break. For starters that's Neville, G3NUG, and his 'President's Patter'. In it Neville, mainly in his other role as Chairman of the Herefordshire Tourist Board, fills us in on the arrangements for this year's CDXC AGM and Summer Social. We also welcome back Roger, G3KMA, and his 'IOTA News'. There are plenty of exciting new developments at IOTA, as you will see. Mind you, make sure you have your pocket calculator at the ready.

We also follow in the vapour trails of Phil, G3SWH, for a report on his trip to Montserrat and VP2MTE together with Jim, G3RTE. Always good value for money is

Phil. With him you not only find out about the amateur radio side of things, but also learn a lot about the country itself.

After that we have Nigel, G3TXF, talking about his trip to Antigua and V25XF, for the Commonwealth Contest. Always a very civilised and gentlemanly affair is BERU. I might be totally wrong, but I can't help thinking that this might have something to do with most of our Continental cousins having no alternative but to sit on the sidelines for the duration and... well, keep quiet for a change (Whoops!).

Veteran globetrotter Roger, G3SXW, has been burning the midnight oil again, something for which I and the mini-skirted maidens here at the *Digest* Editorial offices in the CDXC Tower in Bristol (Penthouse Suite, 35th floor) are most grateful. This time Roger homes in on no fewer than seven topics close to his heart.

Finally, an impassioned plea. Without the sterling efforts of our regular contributors the CDXC *Digest* would not be the excellent publication that it is. These expert contributors of ours write their stuff gladly, but after a while it can be very frustrating if they continue to get little or nothing in the way of feedback: comments, reactions, additional input, whatever it may be. Can I ask you to provide them with a bit more of this? I know it would make their day. Thanks.

This time the colour pages have been kindly sponsored by Nigel, G3TXF.

73 Martyn, G3RFX

Chairman's Chat

John Butcher, G3LAS

Well, how was it for you? As I write this, the Swain's expedition has been and gone and another new one is in many logs. I think it is generally agreed that this was a good effort, well planned and pretty well executed. At the time it was almost possible to forget that we were working one of the most difficult paths across the polar auroral zone at a time of minimum solar activity. I don't think the SFI crawled much above 70 the whole time. How many 5Ws had you heard in the past year?

I managed to stagger out of bed at the ungodly hour of 0530z on at least three or four days and it was worthwhile. In fact I was impressed by the way the propagation followed the predictions of the W6EL software – or was it the other way around? The N8S signal crept out of the noise on 40m most days at about 0545, peaked at about 0600z and then slowly subsided into the noise, by which time we were beginning to hear them on 30 and/or 20m.

As expected, 30m seemed to be the most consistent band, but 40, 30 and 20m all performed manfully (personfully?) on most days and sometimes the signal strengths were such as to prompt cluster cries of 'S9+ is it real?' from the disbelieving multitude. It wasn't always the usual pipelines to South and East Europe which dominated, although they did at times seem to have a hard-wired link to Russia and the Ukraine. On occasions they worked a healthy string of UK stations, and not always when they were QRX specifically for Gs. Once I even managed to penetrate a West Coast USA wall to get through on 40m.

I'm sure we all appreciated the way N8S really understood the difference between SE and NW Europe. It's not often an expedition says, 'UK only' and means it! Even so, the CDXC reflector abounded with comments

comparing the propagation differentials between North and South. Is there really a major imbalance between Orkney and Southampton, or is it more to do with where the activity is? While I can understand that the 'wet string brigade' might have difficulty working an expedition station like N8S, it's difficult to see how they could avoid hearing them if they listened on the right frequencies at the right times.

I'm loath to mention the topic of the loony fringe, but I may have detected that there was a bit less trouble on the DX frequencies than usual. Could it be that good operating discourages loonies? Enough said.

Anyway, enough also of N8S, it's Scarborough next, although at the time of writing there is a deafening silence from that direction. Are they waiting until the Swain's fuss subsides, is there a political issue, maybe the boat owner is proving difficult or perhaps they've decided that it would just be too precarious, tsunami-wise, perched on a rock in the South China Sea.

By the time you read this, you'll know the answers, but for now I'm just hoping that the presumed better path to the UK and the 'wet feet' situation for the BS7H aerials will overcome the disadvantage of beaming over the European Wall. At least I won't have to get up early again. All being well, I will be offering special inducements then for someone to organise holidays to Navassa, Desecheo and Heard – guess why!

Those members of CDXC who didn't get to the Annual Dinner on 31 March missed a really good 'do'. There were 49 of us present, enjoying an excellent meal and a very entertaining talk by Don, G3XTT, on DXing past and present. The only discordant note was when Don found it necessary to refer to an occasion when I was

misguided enough to appear second in a RadCom (or rather Bulletin) DX table – for VHF! Sorry folks, I won't do it again... come in second, I mean.

We made our usual appearance at the Kempton Show in April and will be at Elvaston on 10 June. See you there! After that it will be the annual binge, aka the CDXC AGM and Summer Social on 21 July. I am delighted that this year we will be at the QTH of our President, G3NUG, for the first time in several years. You will find more information elsewhere in this *Digest*,

but we are very hopeful that this will attract more members from the Midlands and North plus, of course, the diehards from the South, who will find that Neville always chooses to live in a very attractive part of the country and one which is well worth a visit.

73 es gud DX

John, G3LAS

President's Patter

Neville Cheadle, G3NUG

A date for your diaries – Saturday, 21 July – the CDXC AGM and Summer Social to be held at our home, Lower Withers Barns, Middleton on the Hill, near Leominster, Herefordshire, HR6 0HY.

Trish and I would like to welcome all members to our new home in the 'sticks'.

We realise that the journey to Lower Withers Barns is a somewhat lengthy one from parts of the South East, but on the other hand it's a convenient location for those living in the South West, around Birmingham and the Midlands and even around the Manchester area. All are welcome, of course, and we hope that this year we can attract a new group of members who live in relative close proximity.

Trish and I would also love to see our friends from the South East and elsewhere who supported the CDXC socials at Further Felden, Hemel Hempstead, for many years. All are welcome, caravaners too, do bring the family. There's parking space for 500 cars!

A thought! Why not stay in this area for a few days and make a long weekend of it. This really is a most beautiful part of the UK: wonderful countryside, more cows and sheep than people, light traffic and little litter. And there's so much to see and to explore.

Hereford is well worth a visit, particularly the area around the Cathedral and the Left Bank Village, The Mappa Mundi and Chained Library Exhibition are a must where one can see a spectacular medieval map of the world.

Ludlow is well worth a visit too, described by some as England's most beautiful town, with its Norman castle, market and excellent restaurants. There's much to explore in Ludlow alone. Leominster is worth a visit too, particularly on a Friday when it's market day. It's a bit quiet on Sundays, tho'!

Hay-on-Wye, the town of books, is another place to visit. Hay is just inside the Welsh border and has over 30 bookshops with over 1 million books for sale on every

conceivable subject. There is also a variety of galleries, antique shops and gift shops.

The countryside itself is magnificent. The Wye Valley and the Marches are steeped in castles, churches, rivers and trails. Visit the Golden Valley, which is sheltered by the Black Mountains – this is the land where Norman and Celtic cultures have merged seamlessly over the centuries, a totally unspoilt landscape. A little further away there's Shrewsbury, a really beautiful city, much of it pedestrianised, and the Ironbridge Gorge museums at Telford. There's so much to see – many visitors stay in the area for a fortnight or more and see somewhere different every day.

For those wanting to stay for a few days, I can recommend the Travelodge at Wofferton, south of Ludlow (Tel: 0870 191 1586). This is very close to us. There are also many local B & Bs and generally the standards are pretty good. Contact Leominster Tourist Information (Tel: 01568 616 460) for further details about the area generally and for lists of B & Bs. Do book well in advance – they get busy in the high season.

That's the end of the commercial – well almost! If the above hasn't stirred members' interests, then a reminder that the major raffle prize, very kindly donated by Yaesu UK, is an FT-897 transceiver.



This is an excellent unit – see www.yaesu.co.uk/yaesu/hf/hfbase/ft897/ft897_spec.htm for the full details.

Frequency range: Receive: 0.1-56 MHz, 76-108 MHz, 118-164 MHz, 420-470 MHz; Transmit: 160 – 6m, 2m, 70cms

Power: 100W on HF and 6m, 50W on 2m and 20W on 70cms.

Trish and I look forward to seeing many members here on 21 July. As usual the AGM as starts at noon sharp and the BBQ will start at around 1:30 pm. Mark Mann will again be in charge of food and will no doubt do another excellent job.

21 July, CDXC AGM and Summer Social. Make a note in your diary now!

73

Neville

G3NUG

Five Star Dxers Association (FSDXA) wins the Calcutta Key

I am delighted to tell CDXC members that the FSDXA has won the RSGB's Calcutta Key.

Peter Kirby, the RSGB's General Manager, wrote as follows:

At their Meeting on Saturday 16th March the RSGB Board unanimously agreed that the Five Star DXers Association be awarded the 'Calcutta Key' for the Association's outstanding service to International Friendship.

I would like to offer my personal congratulations to the Association. I think this is a well deserved recognition for all the hard work and commitment you have all put in in recent years in mounting your very special DXpeditions.

Warm regards

Peter Kirby

Good news indeed. Most of the FSDXA team now numbering over 50 are or have been CDXC members

73 Neville, G3NUG Chairman, FSDXA

New UK Terror threat just revealed

Press Release

London 11th August - A public school teacher was arrested today at Gatwick Airport as he attempted to board a flight while in possession of a ruler, a protractor, a set square, a slide rule and a calculator.

At a morning press conference, Home Secretary John Reid said he believes the man is a member of the notorious Al-gebra movement. He did not identify the man, who has been charged by the Metropolitan Police with carrying weapons of maths instruction.

"Al-gebra is a problem for us," Reid said. "They desire solutions by means and extremes, and sometimes go off on tangents in a search of absolute values. They use secret codenames like 'x' and 'y' and refer to themselves as 'unknowns', but we have determined they belong to a common denominator of the axis of medieval with co-ordinates in every country. As the Greek philanderer Isosceles used to say, "There are three sides to every triangle".

When asked to comment on the arrest, Prime Minister Tony Blair, speaking from his holiday resort before the planes stopped flying, said, "If God had wanted us to have better weapons of maths instruction, He would have given us more fingers and toes".

New Members

CDXC offers a warm welcome to the following new members:

<i>Call</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Location</i>
GØOYH	Buck Taylor	Exeter
G3WOE	Michael White	Feltham
G4WGE	Alun Cross	Surbiton
G6LSO	Colin Wolf	Carlisle
SM5AQD	Hawk Eriksson	Almunge
W4DN	Dave Novoa	Miami

CDXC AGM and Summer Social 2007

The Annual General Meeting of CDXC will be held on Saturday, 21 July, at 1200 at the QTH of Neville Cheadle, G3NUG, Lower Withers Barns, Middleton on the Hill, Leominster, Herefordshire, HR6 0HY. Thank you to Neville and Trish for offering to host this year's event.

AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Minutes of the 2006 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 AOB must be given to the Secretary prior to the commencement 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 £8.00 per adult will be made to cover the cost of the food. Tea/coffee included. 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 and preferably send an email.

Peter, G3SJX

Directions to Lower Withers Barns

From the Ludlow area

Take A49 south by-passing Ludlow in the Leominster direction. After about 5 miles pass through Ashton village and immediately turn left signposted Middleton on the Hill and The Hundreds. (This turning is on a sharp right-hand bend just after Ashton.) Keep going (one mile) through the first hamlet, down the hill to cross-roads. Turn left signposted Middleton. Keep going another mile through the next hamlet. Down hill past new barriers on right-hand side of sharp left-hand bend. We are next on the right signed Lower Withers Barns. Take the entrance at the corner and follow the red drive to the rear of our barns.

From the Leominster area

Take A49 north by-passing Leominster in the Ludlow direction. After about 3 miles turn right signposted Middleton on the Hill and The Hundreds just after passing the Berrington Hall grounds on the left. (This turning is on a sharp left-hand bend just before the village of Ashton.) Keep going (one mile) through the first hamlet, down the hill to crossroads. Turn left signposted Middleton. Keep going another mile through the next hamlet. Down hill past new barriers on right-hand side of sharp left-hand bend. We are next on the right signed Lower Withers Barns. Take the entrance at the corner and follow the red drive to the rear of our barns.

From the M40

Take the M40 to its end. Here keep in the RH lane and join the M42 West (also signposted M5). Follow the M42 to its end, keep to the RH lane and join the M5 South. Turn off the M5 at Droitwich Junc. 5, the first junction after turning onto the M5. Follow the A38 signposted Worcester for around 2/3 miles and look for a signpost to "Ombersley". Take slip road left off the A38, up to roundabout, third exit to "Ombersley" and "Tenbury Wells". Then follow the A4133, A443 and A456 passing to the north of "Tenbury Wells". Eventually you will reach the A49, turn left. After about 4 miles pass through Ashton village and immediately turn left signposted Middleton on the Hill and The Hundreds. (This turning is on a sharp right-hand bend just after Ashton)

Directions from the M4 (London)

Leave M4 at Junc.15 (Swindon) and take the A419 north. This leads to the A417 and joins the M5 at Junc.11A. Go north on the M5 to Junc.7 (Worcester south).

By-pass Worcester by taking the A4440 (look for the left turn). Join the A44 and follow this road to Leominster. At the roundabout at the end of the A44 take third exit signposted A49 north (Shrewsbury/ Ludlow). Don't go into Leominster.

After about 4 miles on the A49 turn right signposted Middleton on the Hill and The Hundreds just after passing the Berrington Hall grounds on the left. (This turning is on a sharp left-hand bend just before the village of Ashton.) Keep going (one mile) through the first hamlet, down the hill to cross-roads. Turn left signposted Middleton. Keep going another mile through the next hamlet. Down hill past new barriers on right-hand side of sharp left-hand bend. We are next on the right signed Lower Withers Barns. Take the entrance at the corner and follow the red drive to the rear of our barns

If in difficulty telephone Neville on (01568) 750560.

WANTED... WANTED... WANTED...

You will be sorry to hear that Peter, G3SJX, is standing down as our Secretary with effect from this year's AGM in July. We are therefore seeking an enthusiastic member to take his place. He/she must be literate and have a supply of sharp pencils. The main duties are to keep the Committee minutes (meetings about four times a year) and to make the arrangements for the Annual Dinner and the AGM.

Further information can be obtained from John, G3LAS, or Peter himself. This is your chance to have a say in the running of CDXC and to join a group of hard-working, dedicated and congenial Committee members.

Chiltern DX Club - Aims and Objectives

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

Membership Full details are available from the Secretary.

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

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

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

C H I L T E R N D X C L U B

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Issue 4

1st November, 1983

Editor: G4DYO

This edition is not so comprehensive as the foreign newsletters for the week 23rd October onwards have not yet reached me — probably because G3ZAY has been busy spraying large amounts of RF around GJ land.

VIDEO PRESENTATION Full information for those attending will be sent with this edition of newsletter.

BEEB COMPUTER Peter, G3XJS, reports that the maximum price should be £350 inclusive and if sufficient orders are received this could drop to as low as £320. The order list must be closed within a day or two. The machines will come with a full Acorn warranty. For those contemplating purchase, G3XJS and G4DYO have a wealth of software for the Beeb B in either tape or disc format — and access to more. NOTE. A BBC B Computer with integral “Wordwise” word processor chip and an Epson MX80 printer are used to produce this newsletter.

LF BANDS Dave, G4GED is starting on the long and frustrating road to LF stardom and asks if those with high LF scores might be persuaded to pass on some tips for us lesser mortals. There is insufficient space for a vast thesis but if Roger, Bill or Henry care to pen a few words I will gladly print them. Could the Gray Line feature be expanded in any way??

GEORGE MAIN-BAILLIE Z24JS On Thursday, 27th, the “Wokingham Branch”, ably assisted by CDXC Chairman G3MCS, entertained Z24JS during George’s short visit to the UK. George is one of Africa’s leading DXers with 335 confirmed and requiring 4 to reach a full-house. Incredibly, the four needed are BY, ZA, IAØ and KP Desecheo. It seems that propagation is slightly different in Z2-land and what would be a push-over for us can cause the boys there a lot of heart-ache. During the evening and much to his amusement George was presented with the first WAWARD — Worked All Wokingham Amateur Radio Drinkers — award. This commemorated George’s first visit to Wokingham and, perhaps more significantly, well over 1000 QSOs with Peter, G3VIE! A truly memorable achievement.

THE DX SCENE

CQ WW SSB If anyone has produced a statistical analysis of countries/zones worked per band I would be interested for next week’s edition. I was otherwise occupied at Heathrow for most of the contest but did hear a few good ones on 160 — notably TR8JD on the Sunday evening. I got the distinct impression that propo into the West Coast and the Pacific was particularly poor??

UL7IBZ has been active on 40m cw around 1900 hrs with a strong signal.

JARVIS ISLAND The dxpedition is “go” after a few difficulties. DJ8NK and DJ6SI have had to withdraw after the boat skipper refused to take more than 5 operators. It also transpires that what he calls “full-board” you and I call “French breakfast”!! H44SH confirms that no linears will be taken. There is a chance that a short stop will be made in T32 on the way home for a short cw operation.

ANDAMAN ISLAND Rumour that there will be an operation 7-15 November by VK3DNW (?) using call VU7WCY. Knowing the problems surrounding licencing in India this must be doubtful but those needing it would be well advised to srew their ears down hard that week.

ZONE 2 Randy, VØ2CP, vy QRV. He is often to be found in a net on 3785 around 213Øz and from about 22ØØz works DX between 278Ø and 38ØØkhz. Thereafter he oftens switches to 4Øm e.g. 26th Oct. 2245z 7ØØ1mhz 579 wkg EU. During our evening we have an undoubted advantage over the rest of EU on this path.

IVORY COAST Tom, TU2NW, has determined that 16Øm operation is permissible and plans to erect a 16Øm antenna shortly. He has applied for a J5 licence and plans a trip between now and February. He also holds the call 5T5NW and has applied for a TZ call.

YASME Lloyd and Iris left HK on 1st November for a one month stay in HC thence to OA, CE and CEØ (Easter?).

CHINA Rumours about forthcoming SSB operation but you are recommended to keep an ear open from Nov. 1 onwards – 14145khz and 21245khz have been mentioned. BY8AA has been QRV recently on 14Ø16khz.

NIGER 5U7 Chuck, KC7UU/5N23, plans to visit 5U7 on December 9th. Not known if operation will be possible.

GRAY LINE As usual, times are for SR and SS in London:

5th Nov.. SR Ø7Ø2z = SR in CT, 6W, VP8 Adelaide Is.
= SS in UA9, JA, P29, VK/LH, ZL4.
SS 1626z = SS in TT, TL, 9U, 9J, Z2, 3D6, ZS2MI (!)
= SR in W6, T32, KH8, ZL/C

SR and SS times for DX locations during UK darkness:

SR:	KH6	163Øz	SS:	KL7	Ø13Øz
	ZL	17ØØz		KH6	Ø33Øz
	FK8	181Øz		5W	Ø515z
	P29	183Øz		YJ	Ø63Øz
	VK6	21ØØz		ZL1/2	Ø64Øz
	DU	2115z		ZL4	Ø71Øz

WATCH FOR: 6YØ....G3AAE/VP9....VK2WU/LH....S79SM....3D2ZM....FGØHTB....TN8AJ

Grateful thanks to DXNS, LIDX, TDXB, QRZDX, DX-NL, DXPress, The DXers Magazine (W4BPD)

DX an' all that

Don Field, G3XTT *don@g3xtt.com*

Important Announcement for UK DXers

from 11 Downing St, 1 April 2007

It has come to the attention of the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, that the amateur radio pursuit of DXing is not 'green'. An analyst in the Treasury recently calculated the effect of the N8S, Swain's Island expedition. Some simple assumptions of 100 amateurs calling at any one time, running an average of 500W, and with the expedition lasting for some 300 hours or so, means that there was a total energy usage of something like 15,000 kWh. But if just one station called at any one time the energy usage would be just 1% of this figure.

In future, therefore, UK amateurs will be asked to schedule a contact with the DXpedition beforehand. You will be allocated a time and frequency to call – this will be based on the best available propagation predictions between your location and the DXpedition (a new department of the EU will oversee this process, to achieve full international harmonisation)). Requests for multiple band-slots will, naturally, incur a green tax, payable to HM Revenue & Customs, as these will use more energy than a single contact. While every effort will be made by DXpeditions to accommodate your requirements for a sked at a convenient time, skeds for popular periods (before work, evenings, weekends) will, naturally, incur a further congestion tax (this tax will ratchet up for busy contest weekends).

Additionally, QRP operators will in future pay a £10 a year band tax, those running barefoot (no more than 100W) will pay £50 a year and QRO operators will pay a tax of £100 a year. This system is fully in line with that recently introduced for 4 x 4 gas-guzzling cars. Of less relevance to DXing, but amateur radio foxhunting is banned from the same date, as there has been concern about cruelty to the foxes.

Swain's

I am sure the N8S Swain's Island operation will get plenty of coverage elsewhere in this issue. To me it brought back shades of the old CDXC, when members shared the excitement of the chase on 144.525 MHz. In this case it was the first 'big one' since the CDXC Reflector came on line and it was great to see the excitement building through the various messages posted on there. Of course it helped that several of the Swains operators made a special point of standing by for the UK at times of best propagation (and, funnily enough, it tended to be ops

like K3LP and N6TQS, not necessarily the European ops). Most of those who wanted a QSO got one in the end, even some M3 operators running their 10W. Not surprisingly, it was much easier towards the end of the operation rather than in the first few days.

30m proved to be the 'money band' from the UK – a reliable path almost every morning. 20m was also reliable, but less focused on the UK, so we were having to compete with much of Europe during that morning opening. 40m, when it opened, was also good for us, with much of the rest of

Europe having lost propagation by the time it peaked here, so we had the path almost to ourselves. The northern lads (GM, northern England) also had an 80m opening from time to time, while those on the south coast had a few opportunities on 17m. I was amazed to see some comments from UK amateurs, even at the end, to the effect that they still hadn't heard Swain's. Laurie G3UML was posting regular reports of hearing them at good strength on his wire loops and others made solid contacts on verticals and dipoles. The pile-ups on some bands were still pretty intense after 117,000 QSOs, illustrating just how great the demand is for a suitably rare one.

This total, incidentally, is the fourth highest DXpedition total of all time and, I believe, the highest from an uninhabited location. This is extremely commendable, especially as temperatures were frequently 40°C or more, which is no joke when there is no air-conditioned hotel to escape to. YT1AD says the first QSL cards will be available after 15 May.

Scarborough Reef

Lack of news about the previously-announced BS7H operation has led to the CDXC Reflector carrying some public nail-biting by those who are looking forward to this for a new one. Whatever we think about whether Scarborough Reef should count, the fact is that it does and therefore there will be a huge demand, given that there hasn't been an operation for some years and the last one was cut short when a Philippine gunboat sailed over the horizon and almost brought about an international incident.

By the time this appears we will know what the outcome has been. Let's hope the team did indeed manage to pull it off. If so, it will have been a diplomatic as well as an amateur radio triumph, because I feel sure there will have been grave reservations by the Chinese authorities as to whether or not to allow this operation to go ahead at all.

Actually, it's fascinating to reflect on how expectations change. The tone of some recent postings has been along the lines of 'these guys have announced a BS7 operation and I expect my QSO'. One of the reminiscences I brought up in my recent talk at the CDXC Dinner was of how China itself came back on the air in the early 80s after a prolonged absence and Roger, G3LQP, was able to use his access to the international Telex network to set up skeds with BY1PK for several CDXC members. While we worry nowadays about whether an obscure reef might be activated for us, back then there will still large countries that were QRT – China and Albania to name but two.

I guess it's happening again at the moment, with countries like EZ and 7O refusing to allow amateur radio, more's the pity. Even the licences that were granted to US and UK forces in Iraq have been revoked recently. The arguments still seem to be based around 'security', although nowadays that rings hollow, given that the Internet is all-pervasive - so why would anyone wanting to communicate covertly decide to do so via amateur radio?

5A7A Controversy

I hadn't realised until I read some recent reports that the 5A7A expedition late last year had generated quite a bit of controversy. Apparently their licence forbade them from working stations from Israel. As a result they seem to have been targeted by some unpleasant sorts who have accused them of anti-semitism and have created spoof 5A7A QSLs bearing a swastika. You couldn't make it up! There are clearly some short memories out there.

Even US amateurs have had to obey a 'banned' list of countries, although not for some years thank goodness. Here in the UK I don't believe we have ever been subject to such a list. But such lists do still exist, particular in the Middle East. It's unfortunate, but what should the Germans who went to 5A, for example, have done?

Decided not to go at all? Many hams would have lost out as a result (the group made over 100K QSOs). Decided to ignore the restriction? They would almost certainly have been closed down and thrown out of the country, or maybe even jailed. Or done what they did do, which was to make the best of a less than ideal situation?

DXCC News (from ARRL)

Effective immediately, the 10-year rule has been dropped and DXCC card checkers have been authorized to check cards for current entities only, dating back to 15 November 1945. Card checkers are still not allowed to verify cards for 160m contacts, nor cards confirming contacts with deleted entities. In addition, DXCC card checkers now may check applications for the Worked All States Award (WAS) and VHF/UHF Century Club Award (VUCC), if they agree to do so. For more information, please contact DXCC Manager Bill Moore, NC1L (dxcc@arrl.org).

The ARRL has expressed concern recently about the use of 5 MHz by DXpeditions (Swains used 5 MHz and other recent operations have also done so). The RSGB has echoed these sentiments. The channelised nature of 5 MHz and its shared nature mean that it is not suited to pile-up

type operations. In any case, 5 MHz QSOs do not count towards DXCC although, human nature being what it is, 5 MHz enthusiasts will naturally be keen to catch any interesting new ones when the opportunity arises.

DXCC Statistics

Dick Pooley, W7HUY, posted some analysis recently which might be of interest. Here it is:

We hear of the total numbers of amateur radio licenses in the US and worldwide, like the US with over 750,000 and Japan at over 1 million. We hear of the efforts and costs associated with DXers visiting rare countries to 'put them on the air'. But do you know the real numbers of DXers?

Recently I was asked by a ham (Technician) "How many hams have achieved the status of 'Honor Roll?'". That is worked nine (9) less than the total number of countries or entities as they are known today? I could not answer that question, so I did some counting and came up with the following. (Please note the numbers below are approximate as I got tired of counting - from the ARRL DXCC webpages in late January). It goes like this:

Mode	Total pages	Approx. no.on list	Total at #1	% at #1	No. on HR	% on HR
Mixed	61	18034	3680	20.4	5262	29.2
Phone	43	12780	1931	15.1	2912	22.8
CW	25	7100	749	10.5	945	13.3
RTTY	7	1500	21	1.4	78	5.2

This represents the totals for Worldwide. There appear to be some 48-58% foreign hams on the list, depending where one takes their sample. I also note that there are some 5% inactive accounts. Do not try to add these lists together, as many calls will appear on one or more of the modes shown,

ie they have a DXCC certificate for, say, Mixed and CW, etc. Also recognise that these numbers represent only those Worldwide hams that have an ARRL DXCC listing. There are some Worldwide hams that have chosen not to be credited through the ARRL DXCC program (maybe 5-10% -

who knows) [*probably well above this for non-US hams – XTT*].

Well back to the DX chasing.

Cluster Resources

Ian, G3KZR, writes:

“Ref cluster sites, I have drifted away from DX Summit because it doesn't seem to cope well in busy times, even though its archive system can be very useful. I now use the Swiss site www.ham-radio.ch/dxc/ and occasionally DXwatch, which is not so reliable (not a Swiss watch!). Direct access to the Telnet system is also available to me through either MixW or Turbolog but, for a quick snoop to see what's around, the Swiss site is good and quick.”

Personally, I am indebted to Michael, G7VJR, who has recently launched his DX Lite webpage, intended for mobile phones and PDAs. I can now carry my PDA round the house and use our Wi-Fi network to check the Cluster wherever I am at the time. But I am also finding the site a much faster alternative to DX Summit, even on the main PC. The only downside is that it doesn't refresh automatically (this is quite deliberate, to save mobile phone bills), but it updates so quickly that this isn't an issue. The URL is dxlite.g7jvr.org. Also Jim, AD1C, reports there are some DX Clusters that are optimised for mobile/wireless/WAP devices at

www.dxcluster.info/links.htm#WAP

YouTube

While on the topic of Internet resources, I have recently been looking at some of the amateur radio related postings on YouTube and I am amazed at how many there already are. Very few from the UK, though – maybe we need to put that right! YouTube is (so I'm told!) popular with the younger

generation, so it's a great way of putting the hobby over to them. Come on guys – maybe the G6PZ contest group, for example, could post a video of their operations, or GUØSUP could post one showing the screen of his PC the moment when he works N8S on RTTY!

SR/SS Times

Kerry, GØLCS, draws attention to this page as being a handy resource:

<http://lipas.uwasa.fi/~jpe/sun.shtml>

DXCC Challenge

Since I last carried a list here, two of our GU brethren have had enough cards checked to appear on the Challenge listings: MUØFAL 1114 and GU4YOX 1008. Well done both.

73 Don, G3XTT

CDXC
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Borneo Bulletin

Steve Telenius-Lowe, 9M6DXX

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The March 2007 *CDXC Digest* arrived just a few days ago (well, post *does* take a long time to reach us here in the wilds of Borneo) and, having just completed reading it, it struck me that the deadline for the May issue would occur when I was away in Vietnam. So, fingers to keyboard must, and here's the latest 'Borneo Bulletin'.

We leave for two and a half weeks in Vietnam and Kuala Lumpur early tomorrow morning (4 April), meaning that unless I am exceptionally lucky and work N8S around dawn local time I will miss this Swain's Island operation too. Although I was here in Sabah for the first operation from Swain's, I had no antennas up at that time. At this stage I'm not even sure if N8S will have put *their* antennas up by the time I leave for the airport.

While in Hanoi I will try to obtain a Vietnamese licence. There are no plans for radio operation on this trip, but flights to Hanoi are cheap, so if I am able to get a licence, I'll be back.

Visitors to Sabah

2007 is officially 'Visit Malaysia Year', so perhaps it shouldn't come as a surprise that there has been quite a spate of amateur radio visitors to Sabah recently. First was Lynn Baker, K7LUH, from Great Falls, Montana, who made a side-trip here with his wife from a business meeting they were attending in Singapore. Lynn operated as 9M6/K7LUH for a couple of days from the rental shack at the Langkah Syabas Beach Resort and John, 9M6XRO, and I went along to meet him. Those who do not recognise the callsign K7LUH (as I didn't) may well recognise K7ABV, Lynn's neighbour and a major player in contests on the left coast. Lynn is a frequent operator at

K7ABV in multi-op contests. Lynn apparently enjoyed the pile-ups from 9M6 so much that he plans to return for a longer period next year.

Then Pete, SM5GMZ, with whom John, 9M6XRO, and I had operated in Cambodia in February (see March 2007 'Borneo Bulletin') came to Sabah once again and was active as 9M6/SM5GMZ for just over a week before travelling with me to 9M8 for the *CQ* WPX SSB contest, of which more later.

Also over at the time of the contest were no fewer than four other overseas amateurs. JA9AG, a frequent visitor to Sabah in years past, joined 16 members of the Borneo Amateur Radio Club including John, 9M6XRO, for a multi-single club entry as 9M6BRC from the newly set up BARC station.

Meanwhile Peter Jenus, DJ8XW, and Heinz Riedel, DL2QT, travelled to Sabah to stay at the Hillview Gardens resort in Keningau, a 2½-hour drive over the mountains from Kota Kinabalu. Peter did some casual operating from the station there while Heinz put in a single-operator WPX contest entry as 9M6AAC.

This operation surprised me a little as I had been under the impression that the Hillview Gardens Amateur Radio Club had closed down. I met Peter and Heinz when they returned to Kota Kinabalu the day before their flight back to Singapore and they explained that although Hillview is no longer being promoted as an amateur radio resort, the station and at least one antenna is still functional. Because they had stayed at the resort in previous years they were welcomed back.

Also visiting Sabah – although without any radio equipment – was CDXC member Malcolm Harwood, MØXAT, from Workington, Cumbria. Malcolm and his wife, Lily, were staying at the Nexus Karambunai Resort, a 30-minute drive north of Kota Kinabalu in a stunning setting on the coast. I drove up to meet them just after returning from 9M8 and Malcolm and Lily kindly bought me lunch as we chatted about things DX and life in the Far East.

There are at least four more overseas amateurs planning visits to 9M6 that I'm aware of, including a couple of very well-known names, so maybe 'Visitors to Sabah' will become a regular feature of the 'Borneo Bulletin'?

CQ WPX SSB Contest

In 2006 Pete, SM5GMZ, was in Sabah at the time of the *CQ* WPX SSB contest at the end of March and we combined forces to make a reasonably serious multi-single entry as 9M6DXX, scoring 7.1 million points from 2,800 QSOs. Since Pete was going to be back in Sabah at the same time this year, we decided to repeat the operation, but from a better equipped station.

We were extremely fortunate to receive an invitation to operate from a superb station in Sarawak, 9M8, which came equipped with an FT-1000MP, a large valve linear amplifier, and a 140ft tower. On the tower was a TH5 beam and just beneath it a Cushcraft 2-element 40m beam. An 80m sloping dipole and a 160m inverted V completed the antenna line-up.

This station is at a private home and is not generally available for rent, so you will forgive me for not revealing its precise location. The only problem was the callsign: we did not want to use 9M6DXX/8 as it is rather long-winded for the contest, nor did we want to use our host's callsign for fear of inundating him with both QSL cards and requests to use his station! Our host worked

wonders and managed to get 9M8Z allocated at 4.55pm on the Friday before the contest, literally five minutes before the licensing people went home for the weekend. This involved numerous phone calls over a period of two days – and a very polite but persuasive manner.

The contest went extremely well. After last year's effort, we set ourselves a target of 10 million points, but it quickly became clear that we would achieve this easily, so we revised our target to 15 million. We did not quite make this, due to very poor propagation conditions on the second day of the contest, but we ended up with a claimed (raw) score of over 12.8 million points from just over 4,000 QSOs (just under 4,000 without dupes). In fact conditions had been much better in 2006, so we felt we would have made the 15 million had conditions been as good as last year.

It is interesting, though, that even with a dipole at 140ft and a fair amount of power, we were still unable to get even a 'QRZ?' out of many European stations on 80m, some of which were S9+. The same applied, at times, on 40m even with our beam, although to be fair at other times we did manage to attract a large pile-up on that band. Our best bands, though, were 20 and 15m, with 1,653 and 1,481 QSOs respectively. The TH5 is a good tribander, right enough, but just imagine what it would have been like with monobanders at 140ft!

BARC Club Station

John, 9M6XRO, and I, along with several local members of the Borneo Amateur Radio Club, spent several consecutive weekends in February and March preparing the BARC club station, 9M6BRC, for their entry in the *CQ* WPX SSB contest. The station has a superb location on a 1,000ft hill with a clear 360° take-off overlooking Kota Kinabalu city and then the South China Sea.

At the shack is a 100ft tower which until recently sported only 2m repeater antennas, and a 30ft tower with a Cushcraft A4S tribander that never seemed to work properly. Although only 30ft high, the small tower is located right on the edge of a cliff with a very steep drop of several hundred feet from NW through N to NE – by far the most important directions from here.

We felt that the beam *ought* to work well because of the superb location, but in numerous A/B tests with me at my home station (using a KLM KT-34A at 45ft, but at the bottom of a hill and surrounded by higher land) I was consistently getting 1 S-point better reports than 9M6BRC. This made *me* feel good, but added to the feeling that something was not quite right with the club's beam. Its SWR was acceptable, but not brilliant, and was sharper than it should have been. Also, while the beam exhibited some directivity, it was nothing like the clear pattern that you would hope for.

Rahim, 9W6RHM, climbed the tower and brought the beam down, and John and I checked all the dimensions. A few were out by an inch or three, but there was nothing that would cause the beam not to work. We replaced the balun with an RF choke balun that I made up from a length of RG8 coax. When the beam went back up it still did not feel right, so a week later down it came again.

After much trial and error and head scratching we eventually discovered that one of the 10 traps had been placed the wrong way round when the beam had been originally constructed. This had been many years previously, as the beam had only been partially dismantled when moved from location to location in the past. Since traps are passive devices, neither John nor I thought it would make much difference

which way round they were, provided they were in the right place within the elements, but the instructions were quite explicit: there was a right way and a wrong way. Unfortunately the arrows which indicated which was the correct way, and all the other text printed on the traps, had long since been weathered off by the UV and tropical rain, so it was not at all obvious that one of them was the wrong way round. This corrected, the beam went back up the tower yet again and thereafter functioned just as we had hoped it would.

Rahim also climbed about 75ft up the 100ft tower and mounted a pulley, using which we pulled up 40 and 80m dipoles. There was a bird nesting on the top of the tower which started to attack him as he went higher so, while it is egg-hatching season at least, that is as high as the low-band antennas can go.

9M6BRC made around 2.8 million points from over 1,000 QSOs in the contest, a score with which they were pleased as most of the operators are Class B VHF-only licensees with very little experience of HF operation, let alone the cut and thrust of *CQ* contests!

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Montserrat, the Emerald Isle of the Caribbean, and VP2MTE

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After some deliberation and research Jim, G3RTE, and I decided to see if Montserrat was a possibility for our 2007 DXpedition. Although not particularly rare, there appeared to us to have been little or no CW activity for some time previously.

Consequently, in October 2006 I made contact with Art, WA7NB, who had been active as VP2MDY in the recent CQ WW SSB contest. Art recommended that I contact Bruce, VP2MB, President of the Montserrat Amateur Radio Society, who readily agreed to help us with the licensing process. Bruce told me that the licences ran from 1 January to 31 December, cost East Caribbean \$14.40 each (about US \$5.55) and that we should each complete and send him an application form downloadable from the OH2MCN web site, together with the usual copies of our UK licences, passports etc. to arrive with him in early January 2007. He also offered to assist with the customs formalities and suggested that we join the Montserrat Amateur Radio Society for the princely sum of US \$20 each, to which we were pleased to agree.

At this stage Jim and I invited my good friend and non-amateur Bill Vincent, to join us. Bill had travelled with us to Kenya for the Wasini Island DXpedition (5Z4WI) in March 2000 and had planned to join us on our ill-fated visit to Midway Island in 2002. Besides being a very easygoing character, tolerant of radio amateurs and extremely good company, he would also have an almost empty suitcase, which Jim greatly coveted!

The next step was to find suitable accommodation and searches on the Internet showed that there were lots of luxurious villas to rent, but only two hotels on the island. As, at that stage at least, we didn't feel like self-catering, I floated an e-mail to

the Vue Pointe Hotel who had space available for the 21 to 28 February and were quite happy for us to put up aerials, even allocating us cottages next to some tall trees.

Flights were booked from Gatwick to Antigua with Virgin Atlantic and from Antigua to Montserrat with Winair, a local Caribbean-based airline. I enquired of Virgin about through-ticketing, but they were unable to help.

In September 2006 there had been an announcement in the OPDX Bulletin that an American group of nine operators, led by Scott, NE1RD, were planning a DXpedition to the island in early February, which was a little worrying. Billed as the 100-pound expedition and using Buddipole antennas, it transpired they were more interested in scuba diving and sightseeing than making QSOs and made about 3,000 between them, over 2,500 of which were on SSB.

History

One of the Leeward Islands, Montserrat is only 16 km long (north/south) and 10 km wide (east/west), covers about 104 square kms and comprises three volcanic massifs of differing ages, two of which are forest-covered. Discovered by Columbus in 1493, he merely sailed past and named it after a monastery near Barcelona. Originally populated by the Arawak and Carib Indians, the island was first settled by Europeans in 1632, largely by English and Irish Catholics fleeing persecution because of their religion. African slaves began to arrive shortly afterwards to work in the sugar cane plantations. Whilst Catholicism wasn't encouraged, the Irish population began to swell and the census of 1678 showed that the Irish population exceeded the combined total of English, Scots and Africans. Even today, Montserrat is the only country in the

world (apart from Ireland) where St Patrick's Day is a public holiday. However, Montserrat remains a British Overseas Territory, still refers to itself as a Colony, proudly flies the Union Jack from its public buildings and stamps your passport with a shamrock. The national symbol is Erin - a symbol of freedom for Ireland - on a harp.

Seismic activity had occurred at the Soufriere Hills Volcano in the south of the island for most of the 20th century but, after many decades of lying dormant, it started to erupt on 18 July 1995 and over a period of several weeks buried the once bustling capital city of Plymouth and much of the south of the island in ash, later extending to the then airport. About half of the southern part of the island was declared an Exclusion Zone and more than three quarters of the 12,000 inhabitants left the island for safety. Eruptions have continued ever since and in 1997 a large eruption resulted in the deaths of about 20 people.

Volcanic Problems

The Volcano Alert Level was increased from level 3 to level 4 (on a scale of 5) on 24 December 2006, in response to heightened volcanic activity. In early January 2007 several volcanic events suggested that a more major event might follow. In mid-January the island's government declared a precautionary extension of the designated Unsafe Area (formerly the Exclusion Zone). Unfortunately for us, this extension included the Vue Pointe Hotel, which was forced to close at very short notice.

There was now a very obvious real problem of where to stay, although Carol Osborne of the Vue Pointe was very helpful and offered to try to find us a villa to rent. After a few nerve-racking weeks and with Carol's help, we were eventually offered the Sea Dreams Villa by Tradewinds, a villa rental agency operated by Susan Edgecombe. Susan understood our requirements exactly as her late husband was Eddie, VP2MEE.

Located in Olveston on the west side of the island and having three bedrooms and two bathrooms it seemed just perfect, even having Bruce, VP2MB's seal of approval as being in a good radio location. Carol arranged a hire car for us, which we found to be indispensable. Bill Vincent also came to our rescue and declared that he actually quite liked cooking.

Licensing

I sent off to VP2MB all the licence application paperwork by snail mail in mid-November 2006 but, despite several e-mails, was unable to establish whether he had received them. In desperation I phoned him in early January, when he told me that he had a lot of unopened mail and he would check and let me know. Needless to say, he had not received the letter and it was then a mad scramble to get duplicate copies to him by e-mail.

On 1 February I received an e-mail from VP2MB to say that the callsigns had been issued, that Jim had been allocated VP2MTE and I had been allocated VP2MPW. He promised to send the licences by fax over the next few days. This was great news and we agreed that we would use VP2MPW for the DXpedition. Consequently advance publicity information was sent to the various DX bulletins and the various Internet QSL route databases were updated. In addition to our usual CW-only activities, Jim was interested in making some RTTY and PSK31 QSOs from the island

A few days later, on 13 February, the actual licences arrived by fax as promised, but mine was issued as VP2MWH. A few checks revealed that VP2MWH was a re-issue of a 2006 callsign, so we had to re-issue very hastily our publicity material after agreeing that the DXpedition's callsign would actually be VP2MTE.

A couple of days before we were due to travel I received an e-mail from Susan

Edgecombe saying that we may have to use a different villa, the Alta Loma, although no reason was given. Susan said that the villa was situated on the west side of the island in a large garden and that there was plenty of room for our 'paraphernalia'.

There was a nasty moment whilst checking in at Gatwick as the clerk decided to weigh our hand luggage. Jim and I were both over the 6 Kg limit and even by redistributing things to Bill we couldn't meet the requirements. Thus, amidst fear and trepidation, I had to repack the hold baggage, swapping the TS-570 with the power supply. Jim had similar problems. This meant that my hold baggage now weighted 31 kg and the hand luggage about 7 kg, but this seemed to satisfy the clerk and there was no mention of any excess baggage charges.

Arrival

Our flight was slightly late arriving in Antigua and we were concerned as to whether we could clear immigration, collect our bags and check in in time for the 20-minute flight to Montserrat. Unfortunately the baggage handling facilities in Antigua are rather slow and ours hadn't appeared by the time we had cleared immigration. Fortunately there was a Winair employee within the baggage area with a large 'Montserrat' sign and who was enormously helpful, taking our baggage check details, ushering us through customs, checking us on to the Winair flight and arranging for our bags to follow on the next flight later that afternoon.

Thus we arrived at Gerald's Airport, Montserrat, in the late afternoon of 21 February with what clothing we stood up in and our hand luggage. Costing some US \$18.5 million, the new airport was dedicated in February 2005 by Anne, Princess Royal, and the facility formally opened on 11 July 2005, allowing the resumption of regular commercial airline services to the island for the first time since 1997, when the old

airport was completely destroyed by the volcanic eruption. Between 1997 and 2005 Montserrat had only been accessible by helicopters or boats.

Having obtained the shamrock stamp in our passports, we were met as arranged by Joe, VP2MBP, who is a taxi driver, and I explained to him our lack of luggage. Coincidentally, also meeting someone on our flight was Bruce, VP2MB, who promised to bring our licences to the villa and have a drink with us later in the week. Joe suggested that we wait for the next flight, and we duly repaired to the bar for our first Carib beer of the DXpedition. The flight duly arrived about an hour later, but without our bags. Frantic phone calls to Antigua revealed that there had not been room on the Twin Otter aircraft for our bags and that they would definitely be on the first flight the next morning. I was more than a little disappointed as I'd convinced myself that there was still enough daylight left after our arrival to get at least one antenna up and a station on the air that evening.

Having collected our local driving licences, Joe then drove us to the villa, where we were expecting the hire car to be waiting for us. It wasn't, having been left at the Sea Dreams villa, so a further journey was required to collect it before inspecting the Alta Loma. What a wonderfully luxurious place! Three double en-suite bedrooms, lounge, dining room, kitchen and swimming pool surrounded by about three acres of garden, some very tall palm trees and overlooking the Caribbean from the top of a 50m-high cliff. Jim and I claimed rooms at opposite ends of the building to minimise mutual interference and so, after a quick visit to the local supermarket for breakfast essentials, we went out for an early dinner before collapsing into bed. We later discovered that Susan Edgecombe had moved us from the Sea Dreams to the Alta Loma as there was a strong possibility of the Unsafe Area being further extended to include the Sea Dreams!

The following morning we were at the airport in good time for the first flight, but only Bill's and my bags arrived. Having cleared these through customs without difficulty, more phone calls promised that Jim's bag would be on the next flight, about an hour later. Good to their word, the bag arrived and we went back to the villa to get started on putting up antennas. The take-off to the north (USA) was straight over the sea, whereas the take off to the northeast (Europe) was over a small hill. After some difficulty with the catapult, I managed to get my antenna support over a 16m-high palm tree and rigged my usual doublet as an inverted V facing northeast. I also added some extra wire to make it usable on 160 metres. Jim's antennas were much easier, as by now I was getting used to the catapult and the palm trees at his end of the villa were not quite so high, although the ground fell away steeply. We rigged both a doublet and individual sloping dipoles for several bands.

With the antennas up, we started to assemble the stations. All was fine as long as I ran QRP, but as soon as I wound the power control above 15W, the TS-570 went dead. I was in the middle of checking this out when Jim came into my room to say that his power supply appeared to be faulty. Suddenly the penny dropped – the standard mains voltage of the island is 220V, but our villa had US-style socket outlets. A check of the appliances in the kitchen revealed that everything was rated at 110 volts. We later discovered a large transformer adjacent to the electricity meter. Fortunately both power supplies had a 110V setting and the laptops were dual voltage, which solved those particular problems.

QRV at last!

Both stations were ready to go by just after 4 pm (2000 UTC) on 22 February and I made the first QSO with W5EK at 2032 on 17m. Jim's first QSO was with VE3EN at 2103 on 15m. Initially Jim had some computer keying problems which took him

a day or so to resolve and couldn't tune his antenna on 17m. My antenna wouldn't tune on 80m with the 160m extension wires connected, but was OK without. So Jim concentrated on 80m whilst I made lots of QSOs on 17m.

Jim's antennas had an unfortunate habit of falling down during the night, probably because he was using plastic string that the palm fronds quickly wore through under their movement with the wind. Consequently, on most mornings I got lots of catapult practice replacing the halyards.

Stations calling to make duplicate QSOs are a particular nuisance, especially when you've spent a minute or so sorting a weak station from under the pile-up only to find it's a duplicate. I often wonder which part of 'QSO B4' they don't understand? Jim and I discussed this over several bottles of Carib, but didn't come to any conclusions. I never log duplicates, whereas Jim says he only logs the first two!

The pile-ups were furious, particularly on the lower bands, and the QSO totals racked up nicely. Conditions on the higher bands were poor, to say the least, and although we made a number of QSOs on 15m, neither 10 nor 12m opened during our time on the island. However, Jim's promised digital activity came to nothing as he ran into some serious computer problems which were only resolved by re-loading XP when he got home. The path to Japan is particularly difficult from the Caribbean and Jim was particularly pleased to find a daily opening on 20m between 2100 and 2300 UTC. We also made QSOs with Japan on 17 and 30m, working almost 200 stations between us.

160 metres

I tried 160m on the Friday evening (23rd) and managed to work six US stations. The band was unusable for CW over the weekend due to the CQ WW 160m SSB contest, but on the Monday (26th) I worked a further 27, including 13 European and three

UK stations, even though the QRN level was particularly high. However, I made only one further QSO on the 27th as the QRN level drowned all signals, which was particularly disappointing given the successes on 160m I had achieved from the BVI last year.

On the 23rd we awoke to find the whole of the external area of the building, including the bottom of the swimming pool, covered in about 2-3mm of volcanic ash following a venting by the volcano and a change in the prevailing wind direction the previous evening. We drove down to the northern end of the Unsafe Area, where we could see clouds of steam rising from the slopes of the mountain, as well as large clouds of ash spewing into the sky and drifting over the ruins of Plymouth. A truly depressing sight! The following day, the pool maintenance man turned up and vacuum cleaned the bottom of the pool and swept the patio, returning it to its previous pristine condition. It really was amazing how the local people took such occurrences in their stride.

The final QSO count was 8,720, with 104 DXCC entities and 5,318 individual callsigns, including no more than a handful of SSB QSOs by Jim and slightly less than the total from VP2V/G6AY last year, primarily as a result of poor conditions on the higher bands. A detailed analysis appears in the table below. Judging by the spots and comments on the DX Cluster and the number of direct and e-mail QSL requests that I have received so far, we seem to have satisfied at least some of the Deserving.

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, probably in early 2008.

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. The log is fully searchable on my website at www.g3swh.org.uk.

Our particular thanks go to our XYLs, Cheryl, Jan and Shirley for allowing us to go; to Bruce Farara, VP2MB, for arranging the licence; to Joe Phillip, VP2MBP, for showing us around the island; to Bill Vincent for his culinary skills and to Susan Edgcombe of Tradewinds Real Estate (www.tradewindsmontserrat.com) for renting to us the beautiful villa Alta Loma for making this DXpedition possible, as well as to our sponsors, EUDXF, GDXXF and the Clipperton DX Club for their support.

VP2MTE QSO Analysis - Mixed				
Band	CW	SSB	Total	DXCC
160	34	0	34	7
80	884	0	884	54
40	1076	0	1076	64
30	2314	0	2314	82
20	2338	10	2348	75
17	1686	0	1686	65
15	378	0	378	38
12	0	0	0	0
10	0	0	0	0
Total	8710	10	8720	104

The Commonwealth Contest from Antigua - V25XF

Nigel Cawthorne, G3TXF

The purpose of a three-day visit to Antigua was to take part in the 2007 RSGB Commonwealth Contest (BERU). 2007 was the year of the 70th BERU. The operation as V25XF was from the V26B contest station, which is available to rent by visiting DXers and contesters.

The V26B contest station is located inland on Antigua next to a builders' yard and just down the road from a brand-new sports stadium which has seen use during the recent Cricket World Cup. The centrepiece of the V26B contest station is the collection of four 80ft towers.

There are stacked monobanders for each of the three HF bands and a pair of two-element beams for 40m. For 80m there are two fixed wire beams, one on EU and the other on the USA. Each of the stacked HF arrays is configured such that one of the beams is either fixed on EU or the USA and the other can be rotated. This allows their use as either two antennas stacked firing in one direction or two beams firing at right angles with one on EU and one on the USA. Although this V26B contest station has been used many times for CQ WW and ARRL contests, it has not been regularly used for the Commonwealth Contest. Gavin, GMØGAV, used the station in BERU as V26XX in 1998. Tom, GM4FDM, also went there for IOTA a few years back.

More recently the V26B contest station has also been used by CDXC members John, G4RCG, as V25G and Nobby, GØVJG, operating as V25V.

Although V26B is described as a rent-a-shack, visitors need to bring their own equipment. G3TXF travelled to Antigua with two heavy suitcases containing a TS-570, a small Acom 1010 amplifier, station accessories and a laptop. The station

accessories included a high-power ATU. This was taken along just in case there were major problems matching any of the LF antennas, and particularly the 80m wire arrays on the CW end of the band. The V26B station had been used for the ARRL SSB Contest during the weekend prior to my visit. In the event the ATU was not needed, as the 80m wire-beams appeared to match reasonably well on CW.

Getting the Licence

Applying for and obtaining a Licence in Antigua is easy and efficient. Contact had been made with the licensing department some weeks before departure and the availability of the requested callsign (V25XF) was confirmed. An application form, copy of the UK licence and photo were all sent by e-mail. An appointment to visit the licensing office was made prior to leaving the UK. The licence had already been printed out by the time I arrived at the licensing office (on the fourth floor above the main Cable & Wireless shop in St John). The licence fee had to be paid directly to the Inland Revenue office situated a few hundred yards away. Once I returned to the licensing office and gave them the receipt, I received my brand-new V25XF licence. Now it was time to go to the station.

Getting set up at V26B

The V26B station is a bungalow located close to the four main towers. With most visitors to the station being from the US, their main power outlets are all 110V. However, before leaving I had checked with the owners, who told me that there was 220V available in the shack. This was the first and only real major technical challenge of the trip, ie to find a 220V outlet in the shack. The mains outlet which seemed that it should be 220V had nothing on it.

Fortunately I had taken a few tools with me, including a small multi-meter. After much searching one socket was found to have 220V, but that was in the kitchen. Unfortunately none of my mains adaptors would fit this, so a trip had to be made back to St John to find the correct type of mains plug. After visiting several stores one was eventually found which had a seemingly little-used type of 220V plug.

Once my station equipment had 220V power it was time to try to get familiar with the numerous antenna rotators and antenna switches in the V26B shack. Fortunately the organisers in the US of the V26B contest station provide a comprehensive station description, which is downloaded from their website. Without this visitors would be totally confused by the huge number of RF and power cables strewn around the shack.

It was already Friday afternoon and the plan was to get to bed early because the contest was to start at 6am local time on the Saturday morning. So once the station was found to be working OK, a CW pile-up on 20m was run for a short while to get the feel of the huge 20m antenna. There was also a WARC beam at the site. The operating was then switched to 30m to continue running an EU pile-up until mid-evening local time. A quick sniff of RF was fed into each of the other antennas, just to make sure everything looked OK, before packing up to go back to the hotel in order to get some rest before the contest early next morning.

QRV, but only just in time!

After a quick meal back at the hotel the alarm was set for 4.30am Saturday morning. Although there is sleeping accommodation at the V26B station, it is quite basic. It's probably fine for staying over during a multi-op contest weekend, but operators who prefer to be reasonably comfortable while on a DX trip would do better to stay in one of the many hotels in Antigua.

The hotel used on this short trip was the Royal Antiguan Hotel. It was selected mainly because it was one of the seaside hotels nearest to both the V26B station and to the capital St John. Some years ago the Royal Antiguan Hotel had also been the site of another rent-a-shack installation with the callsign V26DX. The V26DX station and its multi-element Opti-Beam antenna high on the hotel's roof had been used by Bob, G3PJT, for BERU in 2004. However, the V26DX antennas have since been removed and there's no more shack in the hotel.

It's Saturday morning. A taxi had been 'booked' for 5am. This would give me plenty of time to get to the station, warm up the equipment and get on the air ready for the 6am (1000z) start. 5am came and went and there was no taxi. Despite several phone calls there was still no sign of any taxi by 5.30am. It finally arrived at 5.40am, which meant that V25XF only just had time to get to the station and turn everything on before the start of the contest. The contest started before dawn (1020z) in Antigua. Much to my surprise there were several UK stations that could be worked on 40m at the beginning of the contest soon after 1000z. However, the very first station in the BERU log was CDXC member VK4OQ (G3HCT) on 40m at 1003z.

The 24-hour contest

Antigua is four hours behind GMT, and unusually for an international 24-hour contest BERU runs from 1000z to 1000z. I had intended to operate the full 24 hours of the contest, but by 9pm local on Saturday evening (0100z) the QSO rate had dropped dramatically. There was nothing more on HF and virtually nothing to be found on LF.

So it was decided to take a 'one-hour' nap. The alarm in the mobile phone was duly set. However, the alarm had no effect and it wasn't until three hours later that V25XF woke up and was able to get back into the shack. Fortunately this was still well in

time for the crucial opening to the UK on 80m just before sunrise in G.

A good number of UK stations were worked on 80m before moving up to 40m for the post-UK-sunrise opening. The last hour of the contest was very slow, with just six QSOs. However, by the end over 1,000 QSOs had been made in the 2007 Commonwealth Contest across the four HF bands. Despite several accompanied QSYs to 10m with both Gs and VEs, only one QSO (Dave G4BUO) was made on 28 MHz.

A worldwide contest which is only 24 hours long (as opposed to 48 hours) is a major challenge from the propagation point of view. You only get one chance at each particular type of opening. It's all too easy to miss a key opening when operating from an unfamiliar station and location.

Commonwealth activity

The main QSO volumes in the Commonwealth Contest come from the UK and Canada. The set-up at V26B is perfect for working both these areas on both the HF and LF bands, propagation permitting. However, it's also important to chase the other Commonwealth call areas which are scattered around the globe.

Other DXpeditions that were timed to coincide with the 2007 Commonwealth Contest included ZS3/G3LZQ, E51PJT (G3PJT), J88DR (G3TBK) and VP8KF (G3VPW).

The Commonwealth Contest is unique in the mix of stations which are active. In which other contest could you hope to work two Falkland stations (VP8NO and VP8KF)?

After the contest

With BERU ending at 6am local time on Sunday morning, it was time to go onto 20m CW and run a non-contest European pile-up for a few hours. The great advantage of using a rent-a-shack is that there is no work

required at the end of the visit to take down and pack up the antennas. Disconnecting the few boxes (rig, amp, keyer, laptop) that made up the station at V25XF took only a few minutes. As my flight back home was not until mid-evening there was also time to have a few hours' snooze back at the hotel before heading for the airport.

Taking part in BERU from a DX Commonwealth country is a real pleasure. V25XF logged exactly 2,000 QSOs. The total time spent in Antigua on this mini-contest DXpedition was just under 72 hours.

73 Nigel, G3TXF

Which countries are these?

(answers on page 51)

1.



2.



J2ØMM - Djibouti

Silvano, I2YSB, and Alfeo, I1HJT

There are illnesses which require medicine to cure them and sometimes the patient gets accustomed to them. In other words the illness is never cured definitively, but we could not leave out the medicine.

DXing is the same, once you experience the pile-up on the 'other side', which means the DX expedition side. You couldn't do without the sensation experienced and the 'DX illness' can be cured only by injecting a robust amount of 'pile-up' into your veins.

That is why, while still on the aircraft flying back home from Somalia a year ago, we started a discussion about where to go for our next 'pile-up fix'.

Of course the reference point is the Most Wanted list, so we started the selection by scrolling it from top to bottom.

The top ranks are immediately rejected. They are a dream for all of us, the same for the exotic places in the Pacific Ocean – and only a few solar spots do not encourage such an effort. The range is getting smaller and the number of the possible destinations is now drastically reduced.

We spent months looking for contacts and references. There are also a number of unknown situations and it is necessary to be very careful.

Rwanda, 9X, was one of our dreams, rapidly destroyed by the quick and hopeless replies from the local authority.

Even Eritrea, E3Ø, would have been a good target. Alfeo had already gone to Asmara and - until a short time ago - getting the licence was not an issue. As far as the logistics, our friend IK2RZP was in contact with a local industrial enterprise. Unfortunately, and despite a spasmodic

effort to reach the right contact, we got negative feedback. The evolution in the political situation does not allow the release of the radio amateur licence.

Time was running out fast and we began to be in a rush. We turned our compass East and focused on Bangladesh, S2, as a possible target, even if the low solar activity would not help us. We immediately got a fast and positive reply from the local authority, but just in time the news appeared in the 425 DX News that a Spanish team had already planned activity from S2. We were astonished.

Again we restarted our search on the net and finally Djibouti appeared, with Moucha island, AF-053.

The country was far from the top Most Wanted, ranking #92 - and AF-053 confirmed by 27% of island chasers. Matching the two situations, the country and the island, together with the assumption that on the low bands the rank for the USA would be much higher than shown by the top Most Wanted list, our conclusions were positive.

Once more Alfeo started to look for the contacts. At the time Eric, J2ØSAT, a Belgian guy in Djibouti on business, and Jean Claude, J28JA, a resident Frenchman, were active from Djibouti.

Immediately they replied to our mails in a very collaborative way. Some more problems arose to find the right channel to the Communications Ministry, but finally we got the green light.

The decision once taken, we immediately opened the webpages and forwarded the official announcement.

Some days later, looking at the guest page, we found a message from Danko, a Bosnian radio ham (we omit his call due to his job there), in which he wished us good luck and said he was in Djibouti. He immediately replied to our e-mail and sent us a huge amount of information, including pictures he had taken on Moucha island - very precious stuff for us!

The island looked flat, with rare and low vegetation, but luckily there was a resort with some bungalows.

Unfortunately Google maps do not help us as the area is still in low resolution and it is not possible to get further details.

We finally found a local tourist operator who provided us with all the necessary details. We understood that in that place we could not expect a night life like in Rimini (a famous Italian summer holiday resort), but we were not looking for discos or night clubs, so the site looked perfect.

Last but not least, we finally convinced the resort to provide us with electricity round clock, using some big generators.

There was no reason to change a winning team, so all the operators engaged in the previous DX expedition to 6O, Silvano I2YSB, Alfeo I1HJT, Carlo IK1AOD, Angelo IK2CHR, Marcello IK2DIA and Vinicio IK2CIO were ready to start again. Only Carlo, IK1HJS, who was at that time tentatively engaged in another important DX expedition, could not join us. A new member, Stefano IK2HKT, did. He was new to the DX expedition, but had huge experience in contests, being one of the IH9P team.

At this point Silvano's challenge started to become a headache because of the logistics: over 400 kg of equipment is no joke, but thanks to the previous DX expeditions in the end he succeeded in producing a miracle.

Our departure meeting was on 31 January at 0530 in Mortara, close to Milan. Most of us needed to drive some hours to get there, but there was a heavy fog all over northern Italy that morning and most of us were late. Finally we could set off, after having loaded all the stuff into Angelo's van. Our destination was Paris.

As soon as our feet touched the Djiboutian soil we immediately realised that the down payment we sent to the local tourist operator was a good investment. They were waiting almost under the aircraft, ready to take us to the island. The moment you go through customs is always a critical one. A lot of boxes and tubes cannot pass unobserved and sometime easy questions like "Where are you going, doing what, why?" do not always provide the customs officer with a convincing answer. OK, we know there is nothing illegal on our side, so we are not worried, but it may result in a waste of time and a little panic arises when you discover that some stuff cannot be freely imported. None of this happens in this case. Our travel operator has taken care of all the stuff and no formalities were necessary. Just matter of minutes, then our equipment and us are ready to go to the harbour where a fast motor boat is waiting for us.

Only Alfeo and Vinicio stay on the mainland, as it's necessary to go to the Communications Ministry to get the radio amateur licence.

The officials are very kind and collaborative. All the documents are ready, which we anticipated by e-mail in advance. We asked in advance for the callsign J2ØM and J2ØR but there is a misunderstanding because they can not issue any callsign with only a single-letter suffix. We were not aware of this and finally they agree to issue us with J2ØMM and J2ØRR.

Immediately we forward the news to the pilot and to some friends in Italy - to start our activity without delay and without any confusion over the calls.

To land on Moucha island we have to sail for 10 miles. A fast boat takes approx. 30 minutes. We go past Maskali island in the same IOTA group, which is not fully accessible due to some military installation. Before getting into the Moucha lagoon we have to avoid the reef and some seaweed banks.

From the boat the island looks exactly as we imagined it to be, thanks to the pictures we got from the Internet and from Danko before our departure. A dozen nice brick bungalows, just in front of the sea on the northern part of the island, some building for the personnel and for the services, generators and equipment to purify the salt water.

Unfortunately no trees, just shrubs - and, in the resort area, some ornamental green and a couple of palm trees imported from the main land. In the Southern part there are some mangroves as well.

The first job once we are on the island is to install the SSB station, which consists of a IC-7400 transceiver, an ACOM 1000 amplifier, a 2-element SteppIr suitable for 6 through to 20m, a vertical antenna for 30, 40 and 80m, a 200m-long Beverage north oriented. In the afternoon we are ready and the operation from Moucha island can finally start.

The second station is ready before sunset. It is a low-power station, almost a spare one, with an IC-706 Mk2G barefoot and a vertical antenna built by I1UJX which covers seven bands from 10 to 40m, 3.5 kg weight!

No activity on the air during the night. We were all tired because of the trip and the job during the day. We needed to have our rest.

The following morning, after a good rest, even with earplugs because of a certain local 'noisy background' coming from some of the operators, just after the sunrise we start to install the CW station, which

consists on a IC-756 PRoIII, an ACOM 1000 amplifier, a 5-band Spiderbeam antenna (4 elements on 10m, 3 elements on 15 and 20m, 2 elements on 12 and 18m), a vertical quarter-wave on 30 and 40m built by Silvano, I2YSB, a Battlecreek for 80/160m. This last antenna was successfully used by us in Somalia last year. Today's version is lighter and stronger, as we have used high-resistant aluminium pipes which we procured in the USA thanks to Piero, W1NA. The result is a very light 15m-high antenna, as flexible as a fishing pole.

To avoid any unpleasant surprises on site, the antennas were assembled and tested in Italy by Silvano, I1UJX, and IK1IZB. When reassembled on Moucha island we are not able to find any resonance peak or a decent SWR on our MFJ antenna analyzer.

We scroll all the possibilities, from a bad contact to the failure of the trap capacitor which is on top of the tubes. We drop and lift the antenna several times under the Djiboutian sun - without any result. We were getting more and more nervous and irritable. At last we understand that the problem is the MFJ, perhaps some strong broadcasting signal in the area is making the antenna analyser go crazy once we connect the radials! In fact once we connect the antenna to the radio directly the SWR is OK and the resonance peak is just in the band. That it is not the end, as we can only get a reasonable SWR when four 40m-long radials are connected. By also connecting also the four 20m-long radials for 80m the SWR rises to an unacceptable level.

Our conclusion is that the Mucha island soil, which is made of fossil shellfish and coral, greatly influences the antenna features.

We pay peculiar attention to the receiving antennas, knowing that our signals would be quite robust thanks to being so close to the sea, but the noise would be strong as well.

We have the chance to compare the features of the EWE and the K9AY. The impression

is that the former is more efficient in our case. Perhaps the soil is affecting the receiving antenna performance. As the K9AY is rather small it makes this antenna interesting when a large amount of space is not available.

We have amazing pile-ups, huge on all bands. The feedback from our pilot station and the spots on the Cluster confirm our impression that our signals are strong on all bands, the result of this being that all are calling us, both the big guns and the 'little pistos' who, seeing our strong signals on the S-meter, are encouraged to QSO with us.

From our side the result is the S-meter way over the S9 mark and we are often in trouble detecting the callsign out of the noise floor ! We are forced to use all possible tricks, to call by numbers, switching on the attenuators, to spread out the split etc. to catch some of the calls! Furthermore, in most cases the lack of discipline by the callers makes the situation even worse.

We have no Internet connection on the island, which means we do not have realtime feedback, but we get used to sailing to Djibouti every 3 – 4 days to upload the logs and to download the mails and the spots from DX Summit. But this information is late and not really useful enough.

On the high bands we are careful to exploit the propagation openings. We are able to operate both SSB and CW stations on the same band and often, as soon as we realise that an opening is in progress. We have some very good ones 10 and 12m and are present in both modes at the same time.

On the low bands we are on air almost every night with two stations on SSB and CW. We also have an intense activity on 160m, sharing the time with the operation on 80m CW, looking for Japan and the USA during the grey line period. According to the predictions, we expect worse propagation and a higher noise level on the low bands in

to coincide with the days on which we have good openings on the high bands during the hours of sunlight.

Sometimes on 12 and 15m the bands are blocked for quite a long time, 10 to 20 minutes, by a very strong jammer - some high speed pulse at least 50 kHz wide. Taking into account the numerous military installations in the area it is not surprising that some electronic countermeasure specialist wants to test his rigs on our equipment!

The low-power station performance is surprising. Just barefoot with 100W and an ultra-light vertical antenna we log almost 8,000 QSOs - 3,500 of them on 30m in spite of the fact that the IC-706 front end suffers overload from the strong signals.

As for the weather, the temperature is around 40° C (104° F), but thank God a breeze is blowing all the time, which helps us to feel comfortable. Not feeling so hot, we do not realize how strong the sun is close to the equator. We cannot avoid some sunburn, but once we are back home all our friends will be envious of our suntan.

Surprisingly we do not suffer any mosquito attacks seeing as there are o mosquitoes on the island, so we can stop the malaria prevention cure.

At nighttime the temperature often drops to 25° C (77° F) and sometimes it is necessary to put on something warmer.

The sea is calm and clean all the time. Once or twice per day it is nice to swim in the warm water to recharge our batteries. An amazing tide range: almost 1.5m!

There is nothing to do on the island, no entertainment other than scuba diving. Just during the weekend, which falls between Tuesday and Friday in the Islamic area, some visitors reach the island. Some tourists come there just for diving, some groups of French or American soldiers come to spend

some free hours. On a few occasions some visitors stay on the island overnight just for one or two days.

Once, on a Friday, Jean Claude, J28JA, comes to see us together with his wife. It is a real pleasure to spend the whole day with him!

An unexpected meeting is one with J28AD, Emo, an Italian guy who has been living in Djibouti for 50 years: amazing and indefatigable despite his 76 years of age. He is together with General Christian Estribeau, the commander of the French military hospital in Djibouti, a bright and friendly guy, who surprises us when he invites us as guests to a party at his house on the Tuesday night, just before our departure to Paris.

The two weeks pass quickly. It seems like only yesterday when we arrived and now it is time to leave. Suddenly we dismantle all our stuff to sail to Djibouti.

We are sure it was the first time that a 7-man team stayed for such a long time on that island. We believe it will not happen again soon. Our relations with the personnel were getting friendly, and now that we are leaving we feel a little nostalgia. We will miss the solitude and the quietness of the island and the rush of the pile-up. They will miss, perhaps, the vivacity of the seven Italians who, for a while, put poles and wires everywhere.

To reach the French general's house we must enter the French army base. Emo comes to pick us up in Djibouti and gives us the formal invitation to show to the guard on the gate.

After two weeks of Djiboutian food, finding French cheese and wine on the table full of huge quantities and varieties of food was an

enjoyable experience! The aircraft to Paris is almost empty, so a good opportunity to occupy more seats to lie down and sleep deeply. Of course you might expect some inconvenience. Indeed on leaving the airport in Paris one of the main roads across the city is blocked due to a crash and it takes us more than five hours to get out of Paris!

We learnt a lot from this DXpedition, both on the technical and operating side. It was a great human experience as well: two weeks together without a single disagreement or problem between us. In the end we logged more than 48,000 QSOs. It was difficult, but we are happy as we are convinced that we did our best to make the largest possible number of friends around the world happy.

A special thanks goes to all our sponsors and to our numerous friends. Thanks to their support we were able to conclude this challenge in a very successful way.

NCDXF, INDEXA, GDXF, SDXF, EUDXF, ARI Scandicci, SWODXA, TCDXA, Clipperton DX Club, LA DX Group, GMDX, CDXC, ARI Casale Monferrato, ARI Broni Stradella, DX Nanchette, ARI Bergamo, Rizzie Elettronica, Tasti I2RTF, ECO Antenne, DAE, Cubicom, Spiderbeam, Cavel, Viaggi dello Zodiaco, ARI, 425 DX News, ISØVSG, W5BXX, W1NA, W6OAT, IK2DFZ, IZ2CPQ, I1FQH, I2UUA, I1KFB, IZ5BRW, IZ2DPH, IK2HFE, I2WOQ, IK2BLA, IK2UTT, IK2UWR, IK1HJR, IZ1HJA, IK1LWK, DD3JA, DL1EKO, DK8NC, DDØNM, MØCSD, JR1NHD, JM1PXG.

73 Ciao

Silvano, I2YSB, and Alfeo, I1HJT

SXW Corner

Roger Western, G3SXW g3sxw@btinternet.com

Merging Databases

[Disclaimer: this is personal opinion, not factual nor authoritative. It's just my little bit of wishful thinking. But first I must plead the 73rd amendment: 'E & OE'. Ex-accountants know this as 'Errors and Omissions Excepted', loosely translated as 'None of my errors are my fault'].

Someone asked recently, "Why can't my CQ WW contest log automatically be credited to my DXCC score?". I can't answer the question, but here are some comments. The quick and simple answer is to submit your CQ WW log to the contest robot and then also upload the same log to LoTW - err, is that unnecessary duplication?

What about the longer answer? Well, we have the technology: the terabyte storage, faster-than-light comms, unlimited bandwidth. We also have extremely clever software and IT people. Therefore all things are possible, right? Well, yes it may be conceptually easy to envisage merging of databases, implementation might take a little longer, but let's at least consider future directions.

Since the successful introduction of Logbook of the World thoughts about merging databases come naturally. The core of DXCC is all on a validated and secure database and systems are in place for updating. Indeed ARRL themselves (owners of DXCC and LoTW) have hinted that other awards such as WAC and WAS could be supported in future, but we await further news on this.

A second related thread here is IOTA. A similar question could be, "Why can't my IOTA contest log automatically be credited to my IOTA Awards scores?". With the greatest respect to all other awards

programmes perhaps we should limit this discussion to ARRL, CQ and IOTA. That's quite enough of a mouthful for starters.

Few people would disagree, I suspect, with the concept that accreditation is only needed once for an award. Why submit more than once? If your application has been received and confirmed, then why not permit accreditation for all manner of awards to which those QSOs apply? The concept, as we have already said, is easy.

Other ARRL Awards

ARRL has indicated that they will move towards supporting other ARRL awards via LoTW. Why not right away? There are two significant issues: data integrity and cost. As you may know, LoTW for DXCC has digital signatures to assure data integrity. This system needs to be bled over into the other awards programmes.

But the problem, I do believe, is cost. Software development doesn't come cheap; that's why programmers all earn huge salaries (joke!). Unfortunately those costs have to be paid somehow. ARRL, like RSGB, is a corporation running a large business which needs to manage its expenditures and match them to income-generating products and services where possible. This never sits easily with me, because amateur radio is a hobby. But whether we like it or not, the large sums of money do need to be managed efficiently in a professional way. In recent times both ARRL and RSGB have, in my personal view, become overly obsessed with cost containment and trying to match costs too directly to a specific income stream. Many times, even in large commercial organisations, the benefits derived from an expenditure cannot be directly related in this way. For example, the RSGB QSL bureau is

a 'free' service, so the cost of running the bureau cannot be directly offset against a specific source of income. Instead, there is a 'catch-all' income stream: membership subscriptions. The question then becomes, "If there were no bureau, would the money saved be more than offset by loss of subscription revenue?". Not to mention, "If we can't deliver core services. then why are we in business?". Let's not be side-tracked into discussing the RSGB QSL bureau: it is mentioned only as a valid parallel where costs cannot be directly attributed. This same thinking applies to ARRL and DXCC and LoTW: there is a direct income stream generated by the awards programmes, but there is also significant income from ARRL membership subscriptions, magazine sales and advertising revenue that might otherwise not be generated.

Some linkage, however, is required so that membership services are provided in a cost-effective way. ARRL and RSGB deliver a wide range of services to their members, some used by more members than others. It would be wrong for a minority of members, for example VHFers or Satelliters or DXers, to command a disproportionate share of the cash.

That is a roundabout way of saying that they can't afford to develop the merging of databases. Or that we can only afford to develop things more slowly than we would wish, because there is not enough cash. This balancing act will always promote discussion.

CQ Awards

Cost is the main issue, but building in CQ contests and awards also demands collaboration between ARRL and CQ Magazine. I am not at all privy to any discussions that may have taken place, but I can indeed imagine that establishing ground rules and setting up such a large project, already quite complicated enough, would prove all the more difficult when two

distinctly separate organisations are involved.

Wouldn't it be nice if your CQ World Wide log automatically updated your DXCC score via LoTW. Yes, of course it would, and maybe this will happen one day - but not, I reckon, in the near future.

Aside from cost and collaboration of two organisations, we should also refer again to data integrity. A contest log is not submitted with the security of digitally signed DXCC/LoTW claims. There might be much more to all this than meets the eye and (I say again) I'm no expert.

IOTA Awards

However, there may be good news about IOTA. It seems that soon IOTA contest entries (if matched by logs from the other side of the QSO) will be accredited for IOTA award points. When this happens, apparently, it may be backdated to also include IOTA contests from some recent years. I have no idea how they will maintain data security, but no doubt all will be explained.

This development will be welcomed and congratulations will be due to those responsible for this breakthrough. The whole IOTA contest programme appears to be run with great efficiency. So, how do they manage costs?

Volunteers?

I suspect that the answer to this last question is that software development has been carried out by dedicated volunteers, thus incurring no cost for RSGB. So why not export and expand this volunteer model to ARRL and CQ Magazine? There is already a solid track record of volunteers running the CQ contests, but would those with the necessary skills be prepared to come forward and take on such a large software development project, to merge CQ WW contest logs with DXCC? In this day and

age these volunteers could be located anywhere in the world.

Should we widen this discussion and promote even more volunteer effort all round: it is a hobby after all. Then perhaps even ARRL could make headway with expanding the inputs to LoTW.

Food for thought. Meanwhile let's resist complaining that not enough progress is being made quickly enough. If we do complain, maybe we will be challenged to offer our volunteer time to progress these projects!

QRZ.COM Etiquette

There are several good databases for looking up QSL managers, such as IK3QAR and GO-LIST, but it does seem that QRZ.com is very widely used. I get the impression that it is probably the most popular. The system works, it is easy to navigate and, importantly, it is easy to add new callsigns and sub-data.

As soon as you search on a callsign the page shows how many people have previously searched for that call. This easily gets into the thousands. For example, we spotted that the recent trip by G3SWH/G3RTE to activate VP2MTE had over 3,600 searches by the time their operation closed down. In the old days we used to come back from a DXpedition and THEN add details (QSL route etc) to QRZ.com. But the world moves so much faster these days. It must be that on many occasions folks turn to these QSL manager data-bases to look up the QSL route as soon as they have made the QSO.

So, rule number one must be to add the DXpedition callsign and the QSL route to the databases BEFORE going on a trip. In the VP2MTE case mentioned above, Phil and Jim had forgotten to do that and so 3,600 people were disappointed not to find the information that they needed. As SWH

and SXW are similar callsigns and both are heavily into QSL managing, it is perhaps not surprising that I received a small number of one-to-one e-mails asking me if I was the manager for this callsign. No problem there, and this case is only highlighted because it is so recent, just as an example.

The amount of information added to the record is up to the individual. You may add long/lat coordinates, locator square, contact details, QSLing 'rules' etc. and you can add a photograph. Some records are very full and the information contained is almost like a blog.

Another 'rule' must be to NOT add someone else's callsign to the system. Each callsign is 'owned' by whoever added it in the first place. Someone had added 'VP2MTE' as a new database record, but had provided no other information at all, not even the QSL route. Pretty much a waste of time! The problem here is that the system, very sensibly, prevents anyone other than the 'owner' from editing the record. In order for the real owner to add stuff he must firstly get it unlocked by the originator. This can be troublesome and take time. So, if you notice that a callsign is absent from the database, it is best NOT to add it, but to find out who the operator is and send an e-mail to suggest that HE adds it.

Congrats to QRZ.com - a great service which works really well, reliable and consistent. Not to demean the others, like IK3QAR, which also works very well, providing reliable information. Each has its own characteristics and advantages.

Meeting a 'Local Hero'

The local hero in question is Tony, T77C. CDXC granted this coveted award to Tony in 2005 to recognise the enormous good work that he has done to help DXers around the world to work a 'new one'. Tony has made over a half-million QSOs and QSLed

nearly half of them! The chance to shake his hand came when we took yet another day-trip with Ryanair. We found out that 'Bologna' flights actually land in Forli, which is only an hour's drive to Tee-Seven. Hence Ian, G3WVG, Lionel, G5LP, and Roger, G3SXW, met at Stansted airport at some ungodly hour for breakfast to embark on yet another day-trip adventure.

But firstly, what about San Marino? This is an independent republic, an enclave surrounded by Italy, with some 20,000 population, measuring about ten miles by five. The main town (also called 'San Marino') sits on top of a 2,000 ft mountain, very picturesque. It is NOT in the EU, yet there are no border controls! They speak Italian, eat pasta and drink strong coffee!

We flew to Forli on 6 March and drove a hire car to T7, where we called Tony on the mobile and arranged lunch. We also had the pleasure of meeting T77EB. This was smartly followed by a visit to Tony's QTH and then to the club station, T7ØA. Mountain locations are notoriously difficult because there is usually some significant blockage by the hills. So it is somewhat astonishing that both the T77C and T7ØA locations are unblocked and have great take-off in all directions. At Tony's QTH he has a steep hill, a 200 ft pimple on which his antennas are planted. Really stunning! Now we know why T77C is always so loud! At the club station, T7ØA, they have a permanent, nicely furnished building with several rooms and all facilities. San Marino, speaking generally, is economically successful and it shows: the place is nicely appointed, neat and tidy, and (so we were told) the Italians are quite envious! The real Sammarinese (such as Tony, who is 13th generation) are Italian in many ways, but are proud of their nationality.

So, then we did what comes naturally to DXers – and got on the air! There are two operating positions, so two of the three were QRV at any one time for an hour or so. G3SXW on 40m, G3WVG on 30m and

G5LP on 20m. We were surprised by the size of the pile-ups and quickly racked up 400 contacts. This was announced to the DX Cluster and appeared on next morning's Daily DX, although our operation was just an hour or so, very much fly-by-night!

This was yet another example of the worldwide community spirit amongst radio amateurs: the hospitality and friendship was really fantastic. The meeting of minds was instant and palpable. We thank the ARRSM members for their warm welcome and for providing another memorable experience.

Unmet Friends

When you are a radio amateur you are part of a worldwide family. Sorry if that sounds a bit mushy, but it's true! When travelling the globe you can almost always find someone of like mind, who is interesting to meet and almost always very hospitable. Owning a callsign is like having a second passport.

We have known this for a long time, but it particularly came home to me this week when visiting Wroclaw, Poland. Lionel, G5LP, and I had booked a day trip with Ryanair (return cost about £35) for a day out, to a country that neither of us had visited before. This was just to have a mini-adventure, to have a few laughs, and to score another point for DXFC ('Feet'). Three weeks before the trip I happened to receive a direct QSL request from Richard, SP6FXY. When replying I mentioned in a note that we would be in his city for a few hours on 3 March.

What then transpired was really amazing and so unexpected. We were not told about the plans that the local SP6 DXers had made. We were met at the airport by Richard, SP6FXY, Wlodek, SP6EQK, and Jerzy, SP6BAA, and given a tour of the city, by car, for about an hour, followed by a visit to the bar of a brewery in the town centre - and then a really lovely lunch, with

traditional Polish fare. Yum-yum. Late afternoon we were taken to the SP6PRT club station.

There we were met by about 25 DXers, all wearing their callsign badges. There followed coffee, speeches, exchange of greetings, a presentation of the TZ5A story and a short burst on the air from their permanent club station. Lionel showed them a WWII Polish-built clandestine TX/RX, made in UK circa 1942, which was a major hit, with all the knobs labelled in Polish. The whole event was filmed for Internet-TV, we swapped QSL cards, were presented with SP-DX Club tee-shirts, and then we shot straight back to the airport for the flight home.

So the point about 'Unmet Friends' is... hey, how can you be friends with someone that you have never met? Maybe you don't even have a common language with that person. So, OK you have contacted him on the air, but all you said to him was '5NN' and the QSO lasted ten seconds. The answer lies in callsign recognition. When you work someone whose callsign is familiar, you do feel a rapprochement, a familiarity, an extra smidgeon of pleasure. You still send the bald '5NN', but there's a little extra brain activity that says: "I know that person". If this happens fifty times over a period of 20 years, you do indeed feel like he is a friend, even though you don't even know his name and have never said more than 5NN.

And so here, in Wroclaw, I met the owners of many callsigns which were so familiar to me: SP6BAA, SP6AAT, SP4Z, SP6M, SP6NIN, SP6IXE, SP6CIK, SP6A and several more. I had worked these guys in pile-ups and/or in contests many times and it was like bumping into old friends. Yet this was the first time we had met.

The wonders of amateur radio and DXing! We had a truly memorable day, fantastic hospitality, so thoroughly enjoyable: the worldwide family at its best.

DXFC - What's That?

The 'F' in DXFC stands for 'Feet'. This is for DXers who like to travel. It's just a bit of fun. It works on the DXCC entity list - you have to step foot in a country to count the point.

In these days of low sunspots we look to new sources of fun. This is one of them. Like many good ideas this one has developed gradually over recent years. G3TXF has maintained a spreadsheet for simply ages which records which countries he and Ian, G3WVG, and me, G3SXW, have visited. We then found that Stewart, GM4AFF, was ready, willing and able to set up a website: www.dxfc.org/index.php.

Here you can see the overall points of the 179 DXers who have so far listed their scores. Just register with your callsign, then tick off the countries that you have visited and the system totals them up for you. These DXFCers have so far visited 315 of the 337 possible DXCC entities between them!

The leader by a mile is Pete Hoover, W6ZH with an amazing (at the time of writing) 176 entities visited. Pete has been a traveloholic for several decades. Here is the leader board:

W6ZH	176
K5VT	135
G3WVG	132
G3TXF	129
OH6PN	122
W4OI	102
OH2GJL	101
XE1KK	100
W3PP	99
G3LET	96
HP1WW	95
G3SXW	91

The website lets you re-order the listing alphabetically on callsign, and you can drill down to see which countries any DXFCer has visited. Or you can go to 'Countries

Visited' and drill down to see WHO has visited a particular country. The leading countries (maximum 187) are:

DL	157
F	155
USA	148
G	145
I	141
PA	131
HB9	130
EA	128
OE	125
ON	120
OH	113
SM	109
VE	101
OZ	100

Finally, there is the facility to add your 'DXFC+QRV' score: just tick the boxes of all those countries where you have actually been on the air. The leader table here looks like this:

K5VT	69
9A4QV	55
G3SXW	51
G3TXF	49
N6ZZ	47
VK6DXI	45
OH2KI	34
UA3AB	34
XE1KK	32
KØBJ	32
KC7V	32
G3ZAY	30

Do join in. It's good fun. Travel is so cheap these days, and by the way: don't bang on about carbon emissions. We are being indoctrinated these days about airline-travel, but that's just because it's an easy target, easily measured and governments are not to blame. But it's less than 2%. Worry about power stations first. And, hey, think about the huge contribution to the health of the world when you travel and meet people.

The international club of radio amateurs is what it's all about: a meeting of minds and

exchange of friendships, views, experiences and knowledge. Thanks, Stewart, for a great website, it really works.

The Anti-Contest Brigade

Is it just me? Why, oh why does the RSGB insist on printing anti-contest letters in their 'Letters to the Editor' columns? The same old tired complaints are made year after year, the same old pro-contest arguments follow. What is the point? We have had the debate. The tiny number of anti-contesters have lost it. It is so overwhelmingly obvious to any sane radio amateur that contesting is GOOD for the hobby, brings all manner of advantages, develops new technology, fills spectrum which otherwise would remain empty etc.

So, OK, we accept that a few continue to disagree. So what? They have expressed their opinion on and off for many years. Nothing has changed, they have nothing new to say. So, if they are not prepared to just give up their crusade, then at least they deserve to be ignored. Surely RSGB can find more valuable material with which to fill their precious column-inches. (How about more contest results for starters? HA!).

In the long run our free and democratic societies work by folks voting with their feet. The very fact that thousands of contesters get on the air and participate does rather suggest, does it not, that the odd net or two which suffers QRM is drowned out by so many folks who are enjoying themselves. Anyway, let's be honest: there are only eight or ten days of the year when the volume of contest QRM becomes an issue. I have to conclude that the Anti-Contest Brigade continues to bleat only as a matter of principle. They have lost the battle and the war, but hate to admit defeat. They should just migrate to the WARC bands or to the gardening or walking the dog. Everyone would be so much happier then.

RSGB, please stop giving them air time. The debate has run its course. There is nothing new to say. Thank you and goodnight.

The Mandingo Empire

DXing is many things to many people. I have always been enthralled by the chance to interact with things foreign: geography, travel, language, people, culture. Many trips to West Africa have given our contest group a marvellous insight into a geographic area which is little understood.

We all know about the Chinese, Greek and Egyptian civilisations and the Roman empire. Our own present day 'civilisation' is more recent: Magna Carta was first published by King John in 1215, preceded by the Charter of Liberties by Henry I in 1100. This laid the foundations for British society and we are proud of our long history.

But not many are aware that there was a great civilisation in West Africa. By and large we just assume that the 'dark continent' is devoid of such history and cultural development.

When the VooDoo Contest Group visited the town of Kangaba in Mali after CQ WW CW we were shown historic sites and battlefields. This was the capital of the Mandingo Empire, developed in the 13th century and which at its peak covered most of sub-Saharan West Africa, an area the size of Europe. These days the Mandé people of the Mandingo region are primarily to be found in Mali (TZ), Guinea (3X) and the other coastal countries.

The Kouroukanfouga Charter

During our many visits to this area we have so often encountered the core of a civilisation whose moral code is enviable. The Mandingo charter, called a constitution, was laid down in 1236, at about the same

time as our Magna Carta. Here are some articles from the Kouroukanfouga Charter. Hopefully not too much has been lost in translation.

- The 'nyamakala' [masters of the written word, or griots] must tell chiefs the truth and defend established rules with the written word
- Boys and girls born within three years of each other belong to the same age group
- The 'kangbé' [classes between young and old] must take part in major decisions
- Everyone has the right to life and to the preservation of his or her physical integrity
- Any attempt to take a neighbour's life is punishable by death
- Disputes between groups must be dealt with in a spirit of teasing and humour to prevent them from degenerating
- Everyone must take part in bringing up the children
- Let us send each other mutual condolences
- If your wife or your child runs away, do not pursue him or her in your neighbour's home
- Never offend your wives or mothers. In addition to their daily activities women must have a share in decision making
- Respect the spoken word
- Do not mistreat slaves. Give them one day of rest a week and let them stop working at a reasonable hour
- Do not pursue the wives of your chiefs, your fetish-men, your marabouts, your friends or your partners
- Vanity is a sign of weakness and humility a sign of greatness
- Never harm a foreigner
- A dowry consists of three cows: one for the fiancée, the other two for her father and mother

- Go to the assistance of anyone who needs it
- Any found object belongs to the finder after four years
- A heifer's fourth calf belongs to the herder. One egg in four belongs to the keeper
- Satisfying hunger is not theft if nothing is taken away
- The chief hunter is in charge of preserving the brush and its inhabitants
- Before setting a fire, look up towards the treetops to see which way the wind is blowing
- Respect relatives, marriage and neighbours
- Kill your enemy but do not humiliate him
- Tolerate each other in an assembly
- Balle Fasseké, the great master of ceremonies, is the main mediator. He is allowed to joke with all the tribes and with the royal family
- Anyone who breaks these rules will be punished and everyone is responsible to make sure that they are applied.

[Source: 'Guinea Today' by Mylène Rémy].

Trouble on 195

I never listen to 14.195, but I read almost every day on the CDXC Reflector complaints about an Italian called Nino, IT9RYH. Apparently he has an alter ego called Toni, IK1JUO, who behaves in a similar way at the top end of 80m.

By all accounts these 'gentlemen' are not radio amateurs as we understand the term. They seem intent on blowing their own trumpet with as many kilowatts as possible and upsetting as many people as possible. They must be extremely twitter and bisted, maybe a creation of over-zealous potty-training.

Action?

After reading so many postings on the reflector which express extreme frustration, I get the impression that this is indeed a problem. But there's no point in continually complaining without developing some thoughts about how to solve or alleviate the problem. A number of possibilities come to mind:

1) Surely our reaction must be to IGNORE HIM. Or at least he must be given that impression. This seems to be an ego thing, so we should stop stroking that ego by arguing or pleading with him.

2) Local pressure. I gather that the 'authorities' have visited his QTH and decided to take no action. Italians are not known for enforcing regulations (cf. EU), so this is no surprise. Local peer pressure, apparently, has already been attempted with no success: Italian DX luminaries have given up trying. Presumably his ARI membership has been suspended and he has been kicked out of DXCC? Direct contact offering rational arguments also have failed, apparently.

3) DXpeditions should spread out. What's wrong with 14.160 or 14.245? Surely it is anachronistic: in the days of yore a calling frequency was established on 14.195 so that DXpeditions could be found. Now that we have the DX Cluster, surely they will be spotted within nanoseconds of appearing anywhere on the band? I don't buy the argument 'because it's always been done that way'. CW DXpeditions tend to favour 14.018-14.030, but many can be found elsewhere. Better still, maybe spend more time on the WARC bands. These offensive Italians probably don't even have antennas for 17m. It seems that the problem is 20m, so DXpeditions could give lower priority to that band.

4) Stick pins in his coax. If that fails, hire a JCB to bulldoze his antennas, or hire an M16 tank.

To help alleviate frustration and anger I suggest that we all add to this list of corrective possibilities and submit them to the CDXC *Digest*. Perhaps friendly fire by an F16 would work?

Changing the Rules

Confucius he say: "Contester who cannot win propose rule changes which only benefit himself".

73 de Roger, G3SXW

Long Path (LP) Experiment using ZL6B

Gwyn Williams, G4FKH g4fkh@btinternet.com

When I started this exercise on the morning of 15 November 2006, I was looking for evidence of Sunrise/Sunset enhancements, commonly called greyline. I have actually been checking the HF bands for a number of years for evidence of this phenomenon without success. That is not to say that it does not happen on the lower bands. Just that the NCDXF beacon chain only covers 14MHz to 28MHz. Finding a suitable and reliable source of HF energy has proved difficult to say the least, that is why I use the NCDXF beacon chain with the monitoring program, FAROS.

When I started recording data with the above program, ZL6B was being received from about one hour following sunset at ZL for about 145 minutes each morning, these signals as confirmed by FAROS were LP. As ZL is almost at our antipode, I was extremely suspicious that the program was getting it wrong. FAROS measures the time taken for the signal to arrive to make this decision. The time difference for signals arriving via SP and LP is only 9 milliseconds.

To eradicate any confusion I asked Derek G3RAU, who has a beam, to check the arrival path for me. He was able to confirm that signals were actually arriving via both paths but at the times that I was recording LP the signal strength via that method was

higher. This concurs with FAROS, that software will choose the bigger signal when both paths are working.

Apart from operating (CW) my interest has always been propagation. Therefore I was intrigued as to which mode the signals were utilizing. From my QTH, LP to ZL is over the edge of N. Africa and the southern part of the Atlantic then clipping the Antarctic. I attempted to get ionosonde data from several stations in the Antarctic region, but the only one that has been available is Casey, which is roughly 13 hours (daylight time) from my reflection point in the Antarctic. Stanley data is available, but I considered this too far north of my reflection point for data extrapolation. One thing that the Casey data was able to show me and verified to some extent by the Stanley data was that blanketing sporadic-E was prevalent each day at my reflection point if I extrapolated the data forward. This would then cause the circumstances depicted in Fig. 1 (below) to be observed at my reflection point/s.

Because as I've said there is lack of confirming data, there are two possible modes at the Antarctic that would account for my receiving enhanced signals here.

Both are shown in Fig. 1 on the next page:

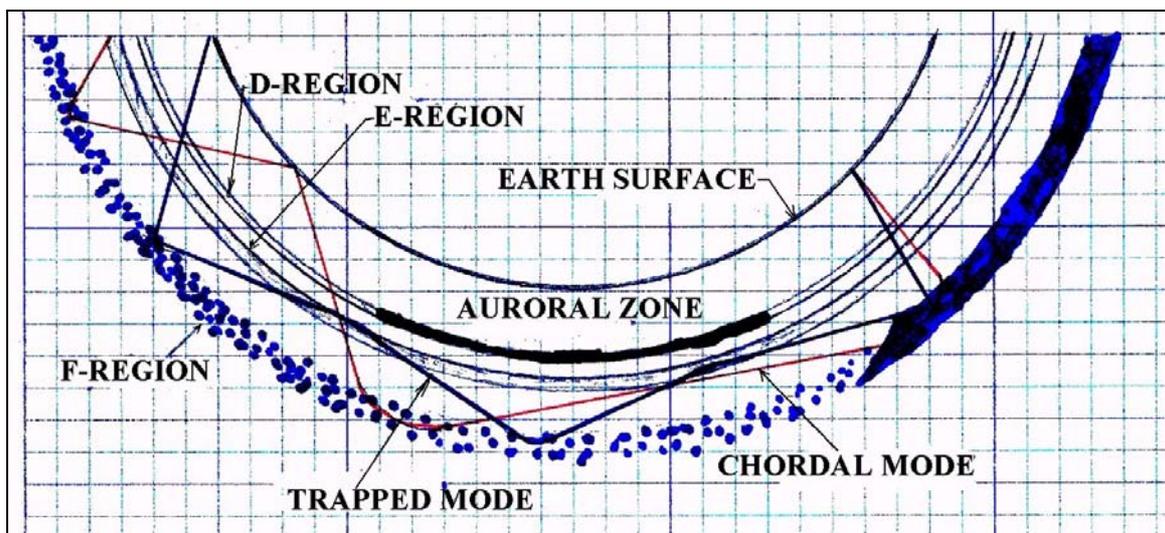


Fig. 1: Mechanisms for LP. Two paths are shown, Chordal Hop and Trapped Mode. These are accommodated without intermediate ground reflections in the Pole area. No scaling attempt has been made.

The first is a trapped mode, which traps a signal between the F-region and either the E-region or the sporadic-E region. The other mode, which I believe to be more likely, is the utilization of a Chordal hope mode at the Antarctic reflection point/s. Either of these circumstances would enable the signal strength at the receiver to be enhanced enough for reception.

This experiment lasted from 15/11/2006 to 07/03/2007 when LP disappeared. The duration of received signals showed a sinusoidal curve, as I would expect because the time difference of sunset in NZ and sunrise here grew apart, then got closer and grew apart again. The co-incidence of sporadic-E at the required place in the Antarctic follows the same pattern.

Received signal strength remained pretty stable, at about 1 S-point during the reception periods.

I believe that keen DXers would know that LP is available with ZL at the above time of year, but I wonder how many are aware of

the exact mechanisms involved? My experiment showed that LP to ZL is available between (or before) November and March. To take better advantage, I use a multi-band dipole; a beam of some description is necessary. The signals would then be lifted up to about S5 or S6. The reception of ZL6B was on 14.100 MHz; nothing was heard from this station on any of the higher bands during this period.

Good luck and good DXing.

Gwyn, G4FKH

CDXC
CHILTERN DX CLUB
 The UK DX Foundation

IOTA News

Roger Balister, G3KMA

A new IOTA Directory is available from RSGB HQ. With it is published a revised schedule of charges for participation in the IOTA Programme to apply once the new software has been launched (date is imminent). The main details are:

For electronic applications made online on the RSGB IOTA website
(www.rsgbiota.org)

Administration Charge for an Application for the Starter IOTA 100 Islands Certificate

Checking Fee for processing up to 120 cards	£10.00
For each additional card from 121 to 320	£ 0.06
For each additional card from 321 upwards	£ 0.05
For each claimed credit from the IOTA Contest Database (charge will be reviewed in February 2008)	no charge

Fee for IOTA 100 Islands Certificate sent electronically or by post no charge

Administration Charge for a Subsequent Score Update

Minimum Update Administration Charge before discounts	£ 5.00
Checking Fee per card for up to 300 cards	£ 0.06
Checking Fee per card from 301 upwards	£ 0.05
For each claimed credit from the IOTA Contest Database (charge will be reviewed in February 2008)	no charge

Fee for Certificates sent by post
One Certificate (the IOTA 100 & 1000 are free of charge) £ 4.00
Two or more Certificates requested at the same time, each £ 3.00

Fee for Certificates sent electronically
Each Certificate (the IOTA 100 & 1000 are free of charge) £ 2.00

From the total administration and certificate fees above deduct, where applicable, a 15% discount for RSGB membership.

For non-electronic applications made on paper

Administration Charges are double the rates above. This is to reflect the additional handling time.

Minimum Update Administration Charge before discounts	£10.00
Fee for an IOTA Record Sheet for the Starter IOTA 100 Islands Submission	no charge

Fee for subsequent Record Sheets, each £ 2.00

Fees for Certificates sent by post are the same as above

Prestige items

750 Islands Plaque of Excellence £55.00

1000 Islands Trophy £68.00

In both cases add postage to this price: For the UK £8.00 (trackable); Rest of Europe £8.50 (trackable & insured £15.00), Rest of World £15.50 (trackable & insured £21.00).

Plaque & Trophy Shields, each £ 2.00

Here are some examples for RSGB Members (after discount) **applying online**

- First time applicant, 120 cards £ 8.50
- First time applicant, 300 cards £17.68
- First time applicant, 500 cards £26.35
- Update, up to 83 cards (minimum charge) £ 4.25
- Update, 150 cards £ 7.65
- Update, 325 cards £16.36

Applying on paper

Double these rates!

Update of data in IOTA Directory (2004 Edition)

New IOTA reference numbers issued (but not confirmed)

OC-277P	V63	Sorol Atoll (Federated States of Micronesia)
SA-098P	OA6	Arequipa/Moquegua/Tacna Department group (Peru)

Operations which have provided acceptable validation material

AF-020	J5BI	Bubaque Island, Bijagos Archipelago (March 2007)
AF-032	5H1Z	Zanzibar Island (January 2007)
AF-070	V51VV/P	Possession Island (August 2006)
AF-074	5H3VMB/5	Songo Songo Island (December 2006/January 2007)
AF-075	5H3VMB/3	Kwale Island (January 2007)
AF-088	C91VB/6	Mocambique Island (December 2006)
AF-103	C91VB/4	Inhacamba Island (December 2006)
AS-106	VU7MY	Minicoy Island (January 2007)
AS-126	E21EIC/P	Lipe Island (December 2006)
AS-126	E21YDP/P	Lipe Island (December 2006)

AS-126	HSØEHF/P	Lipe Island (December 2006)
NA-004	KL7HBK	Endeavor (Endicott) Island (through to March 2007)
NA-115	XF4K	Clarion Island (November 2006)
NA-219	C6ARI	Elbow Cay, Cay Sal Bank Cays (January 2007)
NA-246	XF2K	Larga Island (February 2007)
OC-022	YB3MM/9	Menjangan Island (March 2007)
OC-057	FO/KM9D	Maupihaa Island, Maupihaa group (Sept/Oct 2006)
OC-084	T32MO	Fanning Island (January/February 2007)
OC-126	DU1/CT1EAT	Lubang Island, Lubang Islands (January 2007)
OC-191	A35TN/N	Niuatoputapu Island (December 2006/January 2007)
OC-244	DU1/CT1EAT	Romblon Island (January 2007)

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

Roger Balister, G3KMA
RSGB IOTA Manager

18 April 2007

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For Lexophiles (lovers of words)

1. A bicycle can't stand alone; it is two tired.
2. A will is a dead giveaway.
3. Time flies like an arrow; fruit flies like a banana.
4. A backward poet writes inverse.
5. In a democracy, it's your vote that counts; in feudalism, it's your Count that votes.
6. A chicken crossing the road: poultry in motion.
7. If you don't pay your exorcist, you can get repossessed.
8. With her marriage, she got a new name and a dress.
9. Show me a piano falling down a mine shaft and I'll show you A-flat miner
10. When a clock is hungry, it goes back four seconds.
11. The guy who fell onto an upholstery machine was fully recovered.
12. A grenade fell onto a kitchen floor in France resulted in Linoleum Blownapart.

[with thanks to G4IRN]

The RTTY Column

Phil Cooper, GUØSUP *pcooper@guernsey.net*

Since my last trip to Friedrichshafen, when I submitted a DXCC application, I made it an aim to try and get DXCC on 40m.

I appreciate that the DXCC certificate for single bands is not endorsed for RTTY, but at least I would know, and that is what counts.

At the time, I had 95 worked, and less than 75 confirmed.

Many that were missing from my log weren't difficult ones, or even exotic DX, so I made a note of the easier ones, and crossed them off the list as and when I worked one. I had countries such as CN, 3A, T7, IS, EA6 and EA8, so these were entirely feasible, although I appreciated that 3A and T7 may be down to activity from there, as this isn't quite as common as one may think.

To go some way to achieving this, I spent more time on 40m in contests, and generally spent more time CQing than I usually would.

CQ WW RTTY gave me quite a few, and direct cards to some were favourably received and returned. A few, such as EA6 and EI, have been a dismal failure in getting a card.

I also spent some time in the shack on those cold wet evenings, just seeing what was around, and picked off a few more in that fashion.

Up to the time of writing this I have 117 worked, with 103 confirmed.

Over the last few months, I have notched up quite a few new ones on 40m, including HVØA.

Both cards and LoTW confirmations will form part of my DXCC application this year

in Friedrichshafen, and I am hoping to receive the 40m certificate.

Whilst chasing DX on 40m, I also worked as much as possible on 30m and 17m. ZD8WX was a nice one for me on 17m, and the following evening, I found him on 30m calling CQ without much response, and bagged him again.

I also found J5UAP (Peter, HA3AUI) on 17m RTTY, and when I worked him he thanked ME for a new one on RTTY! This was a new entity for me altogether, so doubly pleasing. I later managed to work him on 15m for another new band-slot.

Whilst doing this, I have also bumped up my 30m and 17m tally quite nicely, but I am still a way off DXCC on those bands.

It really is worth listening on 30m at odd times, as the band can suddenly open, and once you get a few contacts going, many other DX entities seem to join in the fun. I've only worked around 65 countries on 30m, so I often find new ones to work. Sometimes, it just needs a session of CQing, and you get a few callers, then they start CQing, and it builds up quite nicely, and this also attracts others to start.

Working HVØA was a very pleasing time for me, as he had a huge pile up, and as it was a new one for me on 40m, I decided to give it a try. The cluster was full of negative comments, mainly about the amount of time being spent trying to work him. This is when it can pay off just to sit and watch how the DX works.

After every QSO, he took a few seconds before sending TU QRZ UP 2 – 5.

Listening to what he was working, it was clear that he wasn't actually listening up 2-5, but listening up about 1.5, and was

working stations very close to that frequency only. As he was working mostly Europe, it was easy to hear who he was working. Once I was happy that he wasn't deviating too much from that plan, and having listened for about 15 minutes, I simply sent my call just the once, tail-ending the DL who had just sent his report.

He came straight back to me, and HVØA was in the log. OK, I realise that this only works when you can hear both halves of the QSO, and sometimes the DX doesn't always work in a specific way, but sitting and listening for some time before attempting a contact really can pay off.

Sometimes, it can pay to go beyond their specified range, ensuring that you are in the clear, leaving the pack to crawl all over themselves. Whichever tactic you decide to employ, it is worth remembering to take time to listen to the DX, and see how they operate.

Once I had logged him, I sat and watched the party for a while, and the thing that amazed me was the number of stations (possibly new to RTTY!) that were sending HVØA HVØA HVØA DE MYCALL MYCALL MYCALL. Usually, by the time they had got to their part of the call, he was working someone else.

I guess some of these folk just wanted HV on any mode, and were possibly trying RTTY as a last resort. Again, it can pay to watch what is happening, and seeing how others (that DO get in the log) actually manage it.

One thing is puzzling me at the moment! Why is there a sudden increase in the use of JT65A on 20m? For the last few weeks, there have been lots of stations using this

mode on 20m, and mostly to work other Northern Europeans.

I really can't see why it is necessary to use such a mode for close contacts.

If the activity was on 10m, that might be understandable, but to use 20m seems to be rather dull, and not very adventurous.

So far, activity seems to be centred on 14.076 and 14.075. The cluster shows a good many spots, mostly involving DL and Scandinavian countries.

Maybe I will put out a packet message asking why the interest in this mode on 20m, and see what answers I get!

That's it for this time, but do enjoy the RTTY, and try calling CQ on 30m at some point! There is some good DX out there waiting to be worked.

73 de Phil GUØSUP

CDXC
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The UK DX Foundation

Contest

Lee Volante, GØMTN

After my fluke contest QSO with VU7 I reported on last time, I had high hopes of working N8S during a recent 80m Club Championships session, but alas it was not to be.

The last couple of months have seen the Commonwealth Contest, and the high-activity Russian DX Contest and WPX SSB contests. Only the most optimistic of commentators would call the recent conditions 'good'. I think a kind appraisal is that 'everyone made the best of what was available', although experiences such as the very low 3am rates, closed bands, increased congestion and QRM seen weekend after weekend are enough to separate the men from the boys. I definitely fall into the latter category, by the way. It's certainly understandable why a number of testers would choose to give some events a miss for a while, or not participate seriously, until conditions improve. It's all the more impressive then to see, as more results from 2006 DX contests are made available, that records are still being broken even at the bottom of the sunspot cycle.

There was a discussion made on the UK-Contest reflector after the Commonwealth Contest to perhaps change the rules, arguing that QSOs between UK DXCC entities would be beneficial. Whilst it would certainly increase the number of QSOs made, would it be at the expense of some DX QSOs, and more importantly, change the whole feel of the event as a DX-based one, and alter the strategy required to do well? The other contests seemed to have escaped much criticism, apart from the usual comments about poor operating techniques regarding band plan adherence. We'll see what the recent IARU meeting discussions will bring to help start solving this thorny issue.

Marketing in action

The contest organiser's marketing machines continue to work – an A4 results booklet and some certificates recently arrived here following last year's Russian DX contest. If they did produce almost 2,700 booklets for all of the entrants and post them all, then it can't be without some considerable sponsorship. There is a single advertisement in the booklet itself which can't be called excessive. Congratulations to them for their continued efforts in promoting a contest, delivering timely results, and a great website – all this resulting in a doubled entry submission count in the last five years. Even with poor conditions, the activity levels sustained the event. What might become a slow 36- or 48-hour event, the 24-hour format keeps the adrenalin flowing right to the finishing bell. The decision to include the event as a WRTC qualifying contest is a sound one, and should contribute to even more activity for the next couple of years.

A results CD from the SP DX contest recently arrived too, which is more cost-effective, and also allowed a 'bonus feature' of some of Robert, SP5XVY's photos from the 3YØX trip. In the past we might expect results to appear, along with awards, just prior to the subsequent running of the contest 12 months later. Now there's a common trend to have the results ready in two to six months, but crucially, send off results or awards just at the 12-month mark, which can act as a reminder and good incentive to have another go at the same event. There's sometimes a slight hiccup when the peculiarities of the postal system mean this reminder arrives too late, but generally this idea works well and must pay dividends.

Out of curiosity, a few months ago I did research the costs of mass producing CDs, along with their packaging and posting. Whilst it's probably less expensive than paper booklets, it's still not cheap. I was wondering if a complete copy of contest rules and results, free contest software, beginners' guides, or even some of the higher quality videos of contest operation that appear on video-sharing sites like YouTube would appeal to testers and inspire the non-testers, if it was delivered right to their door. At the moment it's just a pipe dream. Other suggestions for positive pro-active marketing are welcome.

Why don't we see more entries?

Whilst collating the scores and activity reports this month from my club, I realised that most of the casual activity reported was not submitted as entries. There are continual pleas for logs to be sent in to contest organisers, no matter how small. From helping to improve the log checking accuracy, to giving a better impression of the contest participation trends, there are lots of reasons why it's a good idea. As is also often quoted, with improvements in modern software, it should only take a few minutes to prepare and submit a contest log via e-mail.

So why did so many of my friends reply that they had not sent off entries for the contests they took part in? I could think of a few reasons – as non-serious entrants, perhaps, they were not sure they had not violated the rules, or they couldn't easily find the submission e-mail address. Maybe they didn't want their callsign appearing at the very bottom of the results listings. So it was interesting to hear the responses. I know this isn't an exceptional case: Roger, G3SXW, usually finds dozens of UK stations that made significant numbers of QSOs in the CQ WW DX SSB and CW contests, but hadn't submitted a log. With a little bit of persuading, hopefully most of them do then submit an entry.

In the case of my local club members, a lot of the casual contest operating was done using 'everyday operating' logbook software, not a contest-specific one. I could see how it could be a little arduous to extract the appropriate contest QSOs, if interspersed with ragchew, DX, or other QSOs not valid for the contest, and then convert it to Cabrillo format. Several of my club's members are taking part in an annual DXCC ladder competition, and often use contests to collect band points. The casual operator is already 'doing their bit for contesting' by giving away points. The hope is that more of this casual operating could be done with a specific contest logger, the output from which is usually simply imported to the main station log after the event, also allowing a Cabrillo log for the contest to be produced at the same time.

I've no qualms myself about appearing at the bottom of results tables – although perhaps it happens to me a little too much! Some top operators seem not to submit entries unless their entry will put them at the top, which is disappointing. I think it's plain to see when a top station has been operating only for a few hours. For the mere mortals, there can be a moment of comic relief too: "I've finally beaten DL / I / G / RA**** in something", even though your 20-hour effort might only just have eclipsed four hours of operating by the other operator at his superstation.

There were also comments that it was not wished to burden the adjudicator themselves, but I think if a reasonably formatted log can be produced, this will never be the case. For my club's own internal Christmas contest, to maximise the number of logs given I went as far as to suggest that scribbles on the back of a beer mat would be acceptable. It's not hard to guess what I received one year...

EUHFC Results

The results of last year's European HF Championships have just been published,

courtesy of the Slovenian Contest Club. As well as the individual listings, each year the SCC have produced a National ranking, made up from the points scored by the entrants. With the UK being counted by its separate countries / entities, it might appear that participation is slightly lower relative to our European neighbours than we might think.

For 2006, the rankings are: G – 15th, GW – 27th, GI – 33rd, GU – 36th. Where was GM last year? Summing the points score together would bring us up to 12th place with about 800,000 points. This compares favourably with other countries like EA in 21st place with 493K points, or the Ukraine with 619K points. This time we trailed countries like DL (1.9 million) and SP (1.1 million) and the heady heights of LY (6 million) or European Russia (10 million) seem a long way off.

Looking at the results from a few years ago, the UK's result was higher, often beating DL and SP, although it would take a superhuman effort to beat Russia and some of the Baltic and Balkan countries. I wonder if our ranking will improve again with the sunspots. Are UK contesters more fickle than others when deciding when to operate?

So how could we improve our national rating both for this contest, and all others where we can add up the number of entries by country from the results listings? The 80m CC can help us out here. In part they were designed to be a training event. The first part of the process is to get people onto the bands to try out these events. I'm sure everyone agrees this has been really successful – perhaps even more successful than was originally envisaged. With several people also taking in guest operators and using these events (and also the AFS contests) as true training events, we're building up the ranks of contesters.

The next step would hopefully be to get contesters to try a few different events, spurred on by their interest and new skills

learned in the 80m CCs. A few years ago there was a series of “Why not try...?” articles in the Contest column, which gave a précis of the rules and rationale of a particular contest, why it's a fun event to try, and maybe even some strategy tips. Would this be of interest or use to today's *Digest* readership? If you'd like to publicise your favourite event, especially if it's one of the less well-known ones, please send me a few words.

EU Sprint

The recent spring CW EU Sprint suffered greatly from clashing with a number of other contests, which reduced participation, and caused some confusion and QRM. The couple of ongoing USA QSO parties had no real effect, the JIDX contesters were operating low in the band, but the DIG-QSO party, and most notably the Russian WSEM contest caused the most headaches. (and yes, there were some poor DXers and ragchewers trying to avoid all of the above and probably having the hardest time of all)

It was doubly disappointing, as it seemed that there was a bumper participation from the UK this time around. It was pleasing to see a number of North American stations calling in, though, which was previously quite rare for this event. I dare say they were disappointed to find activity levels nothing like their own domestic sprints. When propagation and a lack of other coincident events permit, the popularity of EUSprint has been growing, so that the rate and feel of the event started to match that of its NA cousin. To make a bad pun out of the athletic analogies: it wasn't so much a Sprint this time, it was more like the hurdles – the hurdles being the other contests running at the same time, and the difficult propagation.

The spring and autumn EUSprint contests have separate SSB and CW events on successive Saturdays. The Spring SSB and CW weekends were recently swapped to avoid a clash with the Russian event, but it

seems that WSEM also moved again this year and is once again coincident.

I hope mutually agreeable places in the calendar can be found for these events. Correspondence on the UK-Contest reflector indicated that it is the market forces of the casual and serious operators that determine where the activity lies for particular events. As touched on in the last *Digest* column, it would be a shame if the 'everyone works everyone', or 'sit on a frequency and work people' events squeeze out others like the EUSprint that have a distinct flavour, and greater skills required to persevere.

It's also disappointing if contest organisers move events that will then clash with others, where it's likely the incumbent event will suffer because of it, especially when there's no direct correspondence between them.

N6ZZ SK

It was sad to learn of the passing of Phil Goetz, N6ZZ, in late February, at the age of 64. Phil had the distinction, along with his friend Dick Norton, N6AA, of being the only people to have operated the CQ WW contests from all 40 CQ Zones. The many tributes paid to him on the Internet highlighted his enthusiasm for individual and team contesting over many decades, a great sense of humour, and the support he was able to give to CQ WW log checking and the WRTC judging process. It's a great shame to lose another of radiosport's real characters.

Time, Gentlemen, please!

One of my more useful shack accessories is a large radio-controlled clock, keeping exact time, and letting me know exactly when I'm meant to start and finish my contest operating.

Reasonable PC clock synchronisation is also easily achieved automatically for anyone

with an Internet connection. In the shorter, high-rate events, where the final winner is sometimes decided by a single QSO, starting 30 seconds early, or completing a QSO after the end time, could give a distinct unfair advantage. It's not amusing to be 30 seconds into a contest and find another entrant already on QSO number 8. It doesn't cost much to measure time accurately enough for contesting, nor take much will power to stick to the rules, and I hope the *Digest* readers will say I'm preaching to the converted here.

Finally...

If you can put up with my usual plea one more time, PLEASE PLEASE send me some comments or submissions for the column. The amount of contest write-ups submitted recently has been very low, and being able to learn from others experiences would make a welcome change.

73 Lee, GØMTN

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Which countries are these?

Answers

1. HC, Ecuador
2. S2, Bangladesh

N8S – One man's experience

Peter Chadwick, G3RZP

peter.chadwick@zarlink.com

So there we were with an all-time new country coming on. Otherwise needing only KP1/Navassa for the number 1 DXCC spot, there was a degree of incentive to work N8S.

Problem #1. Amplifier died: in September 2006, rebuild started. Work got in the way. Amp still not finished. So we're going to have to get N8S with 100W. OK, other people have done such things. Bear in mind that for three days during the expedition I have to go to the south of France for a business trip. But isn't life too short for QRP?

6 April, 20m CW. Pile-up. Big spread. Keep calling. Try to find out where he's working people. Keep calling on what is thought to be the right frequency, Ah! G5LP got through. Lionel's up at 14.032. Second VFO on Lionel. Go! Bingo! Gottim!

Query. When he comes to DL**** why do SMS, OKs, HAs etc. (and even Gs - CDXC members too) keep calling? Don't they realise that the QRM actually slows down the QSO rate?

10 April. Cats want to go out at 0530 local (0430 UTC). OK, get up, make tea., look at DX Cluster, switch rig on. Hear b****r all. Read BBC News, e-mail, Dilbert cartoon. N8S appearing on 7 MHz at 0530 UTC at readable strength. Get in there. OK, 100W, sloping dipole, how much chance? Don't know until you try. 0617 UTC, "G3RZP 599 K".

"DE G3RZP R TU 599 73 DE G3RZP"

Done it on two bands!!

Go on business trip. Back late Friday, 13 April. Get up early Saturday. Upset sleeping cats. Tough s**t!

N8S on 10 MHz. Start fighting at 0640 UTC. 0733 UTC: "G3LZP 599 K"

"DE G3RZP G3RZP G3RRRRRRZP G3RZP 599 599 599 TU 73 G3RZP G3RZP K"

"G3RZP TU."

Check online log. B****r! Not in log.

Sunday, 15 April. Wake at 0550. Up. make tea, switch on rig, switch on computer. Yes, he's on 10 MHz. Any sign? No b****y way!

Read e-mail, Dilbert, BBC news. Signal comes up out of the noise. The more eastern stations have a better chance than we do. Still, it's even worse for the EIs – spare a thought for them. Get in there, boy. 0611 UTC, "G3RZP 599 K"

Gottim!

Try an hour later on 20 SSB. No way. 100W and a 4-ele SteppIr at 60 ft aren't going to crack an EU pile-up where the propagation favours middle to eastern Europe, and I don't have a linear. Try until the voice gives out. Be happy with what you have.

So OK, but why do people call the guy when he's come back to someone else? Tail-ending? That's done at the end of the QSO, not when he's just come back to someone else. It gives exposure to your callsign? B*****s! More likely to get you blacklisted – or even worse, worked, and then the dreaded 'NIL' – 'Not in Log'.

It's somewhat like transmitting on his frequency when working split. Yes, we've all done it by accident. 50 people screaming "UP! UP! UP!" and "Idiot UP" don't help. Or the shouts of "Spleet! Spleet! Spleet!"

But the consistent calling when the station is operating split, when the guy has come back to someone else, this beats me. But even CDXC members with older call signs than mine are doing it. My only comment is ‘D*****d! I was taught that in a pile-up, when he come back to someone else, you wait until he sends “TU” or “QRZ?” before transmitting. That way moves the pile-up fastest. Or am I missing something by being too old fashioned?

Still, spare a thought for the G3S** (callsign suppressed to protect the innocent) calls several times on 10 MHz – Sunday, 15 April.

N8S comes back to him: “G3S** ‘599”.

No answer.

N8S calls him again: “G3S** ‘599”.

No answer.

N8S calls him again: “G3S** ‘599”.

No answer.

N8S calls “QRZ?”.

G3S** starts calling N8S again...

Anyway, I worked N8S. Now when is Navassa coming on?

1AØ – a new one for DXFC

Martyn Phillips, G3RFX

Like the Vatican, the Sovereign Military Order of Malta (SMOM) have several properties dotted around the place. On a train trip into Rome from FCO/Fiumicino Airport I was surprised to see that they also have their own railway carriages.

I dragged Jane along to their main HQ, the Palazzo Malta, Via dei Condotti 68, close to the Spanish Steps and where the 1AØs rub shoulders with the likes of Gucci, Fendi and Versace. Parked outside was a car with the registration ‘SMOM 1’, so presumably the Grand Master was at home.

We walked inside the main entrance. A bit further on there was a security gate, so we rang the doorbell on the right-hand wall. The gate opened and we were now at the porter’s lodge. Unfortunately the porter spoke very little English, but what he did eventually do was dial an internal number and handed me the phone. Now I was obviously talking to a fairly senior

employee and one whose English was excellent. She immediately asked me whether I was Ambassador Furness? I was reluctant to disappoint her... but no, I said, I was Martyn Phillips from England and simply keen to find out more about the SMOM (I thought it might be better not to confuse the issue by mentioning amateur radio, let alone DXFC...). She asked me whether I was a member of the Order, the answer to which was obviously no. In that case, she said, I’m afraid I can’t help you any further, although you can e-mail us and request permission for an official visit to our premises.

But I wasn’t going to leave it at that. I wanted to know for certain whether I was now standing in a sovereign state, even if I was only at the porter’s lodge. Oh yes, she said, you are. We are extra-territorial just like the Vatican, but obviously not as big as they are. I also asked her about the SMOM’s own wonderful postage stamps

and where I could buy these. She told me that their post office was just round the corner in another part of the Palazzo. This was fully accessible to the public, although she thought it might be shut by now, as indeed it was. A pity in a way, seeing as I'd been firmly planning on sending Roger, G3SXW, a postcard from this new one of mine for DXFC – and one he hadn't been to at the time.

I then asked the porter if it might be possible to walk through a second gate into the main courtyard of the Palazzo, with plenty more SMOM-reg cars parked inside. I wanted to clinch it even further! He clearly had no objections and let us through. Jane then took a photograph of me standing in

the central courtyard in front of the large Maltese Cross on the wall.

In fact you must automatically be in 1AØ as soon as you leave the pavement of the Via dei Condotti and step foot inside the main entrance of the Palazzo Malta, with the façade of the building forming the border as it were. That's similar to most entrances to the Vatican too.

And after 1AØ? Well, back to the Vatican and past the Swiss Guard for a leisurely Apfelschnaps or two with my highly distinguished, white-haired German friend Joseph, who now runs the place, jawoll! I hadn't seen him since he was Archbishop of Munich.

About the SMOM

The Sovereign Military Hospitaller Order of St. John of Jerusalem of Rhodes and Malta, better known as the Sovereign Military Order of Malta [SMOM], is one of the oldest institutions of Western and Christian civilisation. Present in Palestine in around 1050, it is a lay religious Order, traditionally of military, chivalrous, noble nature. Its 12,500 members include Professed Friars and others who have made vows of obedience. The other Knights and Dames are lay members, devoted to the exercise of Christian virtue and charity. What distinguishes the Knights of Malta is their commitment to reaching their spiritual perfection within the Church and to expending their energies serving the poor and the sick.

The Order of Malta remains true to its inspiring principles, summarised in the motto 'Tuitio Fidei et Obsequium Pauperum', defence of the Faith and assistance to the poor and the suffering, which become reality through the voluntary work carried out by Dames and Knights in humanitarian assistance and medical and social activities. Today the Order carries out these activities in over 120 countries.

The Sovereign Order of Malta is a sovereign subject of international law, with its own constitution, passports, stamps, and public institutions. The 78th Grand Master, Fra' Andrew Bertie, was elected Head of the Order for life in 1988. The Order has diplomatic relations with 96 countries - many of which non-Catholic - and missions to major European countries, as well as to European and international organisations. The Order of Malta is neutral, impartial and non-political, which is why it can successfully act as a mediator between States.

[from the Order's official website at www.orderofmalta.org]

FSDXA St Brandon DXpedition – Bulletin No.4

Plans for the September 3B7C FSDXA DXpedition to St Brandon are progressing well. A suitable boat has been chartered to take the team and its 6 tonnes of equipment to the island, the licence has been received and all permits are in place for our stay on the island.

The team will be operating from Isle du Sud, the southern end of which is shown on the charts as Cocos Island (not to be confused with Cocos Island in TI9 or the Cocos-Keeling Islands, VK9). Lighthouse on the Air enthusiasts might be interested to note that Cocos Island has a beacon for WLOTA, Ref. LH 1017. This will be an all-time new one for lighthouse collectors - assuming the light is accessible from Isle du Sud.

Team changes

Some of the previously announced members have, unfortunately, had to drop out of the expedition. These include G3VMW, G4KIU, SM5AQD, WF5T and W3WL. However, we are delighted to announce that they will be replaced by Bob, MDØCCE (also known as N2BB), Pete, SM5GMZ (recently QRV from 6W), Gordon, G3USR, and Clive, GM3POI (well known as a low-band expert living in the Orkney Islands).

3B7C brochure

We now have a four-page, full-colour brochure setting out more information about our expedition. This can be downloaded in both high and low definition PDF format from our website at www.3b7c.com, which is now up and running.

FSDXA awarded Calcutta Key

At their meeting on Saturday, 16 March, the RSGB Board unanimously agreed that the Five Star DXers Association be awarded the 'Calcutta Key' for the Association's outstanding service to International Friendship.

FSDXA approach to DXpeditioning

Having now QSLed nearly 100,000 3B9C QSOs, we calculate that we achieved an average busted call rate of 0.5%. We believe this to be a good figure, although we shall try to improve on it at 3B7C.

Learn about the techniques we use. Get 'DXpeditioning Behind the Scenes' from Nevada Communications. Now available at a special price of £12.95. Go to www.nevada.co.uk (Amateur Radio/Books).

Don Field G3XTT, NK1G (g3xtt@lineone.net)

FSDXA Publicity Officer

24 April 2007

Not the GB2RS News

This week's headlines:

- New health and safety regulations
- Top UK DXer honoured
- CDXC Reflector goes from strength to strength

New health and safety regulations governing electronic installations come into force on 1 June 2007, with serious implications for the UK's amateur radio enthusiasts. From that date it will be an offence to plug in, switch on or operate any item of amateur radio equipment without a qualified electrician present. Any maintenance or repair work on such equipment, especially involving a soldering iron, will also require the presence of an officially approved electrical contractor.

Top UK DXer Roger Western, G3SXW, was recently honoured with Ireland's highest award, the Guinness Star, for his outstanding contribution to the Irish airline industry. The award was presented by Michael O'Leary, Chief Executive of Ryanair, with whom Roger had flown at least 100 times in the first three months of 2007 alone. "Well, I only did it for my DXFC", Roger explained. Meanwhile one is left wondering as to whether Michael O'Leary knew what DXFC was.

The Chiltern DX Club's Reflector continues to go from strength to strength. During the N8S Swain's Island DXpedition over 500 messages per day were dropping into CDXC members' Inboxes, much to the delight of us all. In due course watch out for the results of CDXC's new 'Top Reporter' competition to find the Reflector user posting the most messages of all during 2007. First prize: a trip to North Korea, one-way only, and no radio or Internet.

Now news of some special event stations:

IQØMSB will be active until 31 December to celebrate the 500th anniversary of the first spaghetti tossing competition held in Montelasagne di Spaghetti Bologna in 1507.

C3ØAND will be on the air throughout June and July to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Principality of Andorra no longer granting licences to visiting radio amateurs, thus ensuring that Andorra remains a veritable haven of local on-air tranquility.

Finally, the contest news:

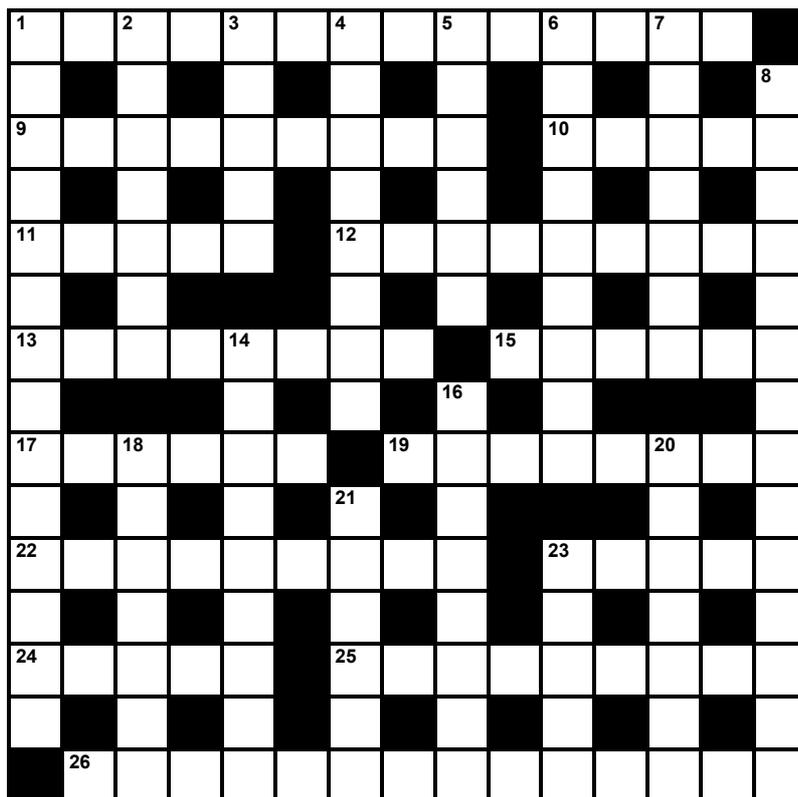
The Phishers International contest takes place between 0000 UTC on 2 June and 2359 UTC on 3 June on the 1.8 to 28 MHz bands, CW only. The exchange is the usual 599 report plus your credit card number, the exact name on the card, the expiry date and your security number. *[I can't see many people taking part in that one, especially if they don't work CW. Ed.]*

Solution to Prize Crossword 21

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

Digest Prize Crossword 22 *by RFX*

The winner of Prize Crossword 21, March 2007, and that brand-new tenner: Richard Limebear, G3RWL, Enfield (via e-mail).



ACROSS

- 1 Food to go with gastrectomy, say, performed by surgeon from Madras? (6,8)
- 9 Strange tools at Bournemouth Airport destined for somewhere in Switzerland (9)
- 10 Creation of 8 to his friends - and his callsign in the Ukraine? (5)
- 11 Had a meal college talked about (5)
- 12 Fan of Latin works? (9)
- 13 Chelonian found in wrong river (8)
- 15 Old vessel causes anger in the British Museum at the end of June (6)
- 17 Instructions loud, not quiet, in this city (6)
- 19 Darn Kurd demolished boozier! (8)
- 22 Military attack causing injury (9)
- 23 Spells in Northern Ireland, surrounded by mayhem and carnage initially (5)
- 24 City recalled in Cambrian eisteddfods (5)
- 25 Awful experience featuring a dark horse? (9)
- 26 Laws of heretics rewritten in a straight line (2,3,4,5)

DOWN

- 1 Lewis's boss to vet soldiers on CW (9,5)
- 2 Opener makes 501 eventually, we're told (7)
- 3 Start of play cut short in part of London (5)
- 4 Only a couple of ladies (or gents), we hear, in this city? (8)
- 5 More compassionate German children (6)
- 6 A Latin duo cultivated hero worship (9)
- 7 Fatty's son to replace centre of balun in type of antenna (7)
- 8 The Rev. Spooner's 20th century author's birds for a 19th century one (7,7)
- 14 French composer from city near Frankfurt (9)
- 16 Rapid succession of notes featured in unusual opera gig (8)
- 18 Boxes in annoying people in the auditorium, by the sound of it (7)
- 20 Bread in Kabul or Kandahar (7)
- 21 The best prison, we hear, offers external courses (6)
- 23 Theme taken up in Amalfi tombs (5)

Deadline for entries: 20 June

DX and Events Calendar

Compiled by G3XTT

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

till 26/06	SC5L: special event call (Sweden)
till 30/06	DS4DRE/4: Hong Island (AS-093)
till 30/06	HL22: special call by DS5SWL
till Jun	OX3PG: Greenland (NA-018) by KD4POJ
till 07/07	AO5: special prefix (Spain)
till 31/08	TU2/F5LDY: Ivory Coast
till 09/09	8N3IAAF: special event station
till Sep	ZD9BCB: Gough Island (AF-030)
till 01/10	ON6ØAF, ON6ØAP, ON6ØBAF: special calls
till Nov	8Q7IM: Maldives (AS-013) by IK5ZUI
till 31/12	6H1, 6I2, 6J3, 6E4: special prefixes (Mexico)
till 31/12	9A6ØK: special callsign
till 31/12	GB6OTR: special callsign (England)
till 31/12	LX2ØØ7L, LX2ØØ7G, LX2ØØ7D: special event stations
till 31/12	LZ17ØVL: special event call
till 31/12	LZ5ØDX: special callsign by LZ1AF
till 31/12	ON5ØEU: special event call
till 31/12	SG6ØRK: Gotland Island (EU-020)
till 31/12	SX1ØØVAR: special event station (Greece)
till 31/12	YU6ØBCD and YT6ØW: special callsigns (Serbia)
till 31/12	YUØ7HST: special event call
till 31/12	ZY51ØØSCOUT: special callsign by PY5CA
till Feb 2008	DPØGVN: Neumayer Base (DL-03, AN-016)
till Apr 2008	6W/EA4ATI and 6W1EA: Senegal
till 31/03/09	A52VE: Bhutan by JA8VE
15/05-05/06	VP9KF: Hamilton Parish, Bermuda (NA-005)
19/05-21/05	IQ9PA: Isola delle Femmine (EU-166)
21/05-26/05	4A3IH: Ixtapa Island (NA-183) by XEs
23/05-31/05	TO3T: Martinique (NA-107) by VE3KF
25/05-06/06	GB1ØØTT: special event station (Isle of Man)
May	RP3YGA/P: special event call
May/June	3D2AG/P: Rotuma (OC-060)
10/06-13/06	TF7/SM5ELV: Heimaey Island (EU-071)
06/06-18/06	3B6: Agalega (AF-001) by SPs
11/06-17/06	HIØ: Isla Cabras (NA-122) by HI3CCP and others
17/06-22/06	SY8WT: Skyros Island (EU-060) by SVs
23/06-28/06	9A/I6GFX: Croatian islands (EU-170) by I6GFX & I6QIZ

05/07-21/07	A2: Botswana by K5LBU and others
20/07-22/07	VYØ: East Pen Island (NA-231) by VE3LYC and G3OCA
24/07-02/08	G3RCV/P and M8C: Isles of Scilly (EU-011)
24/07-30/07	UT3IB/P, UT9IO/P, UX2IQ/P: Zmeiny Island (EU-182)
26/07-02/08	GS3RCM and MM3M: Isle of Arran (EU-123)
26/07-31/07	J48IO and J48YL: Proti Island (EU-158) by DLs
26/07-01/08	VA7AQ: Quadra Island (NA-091)
27/07-30/07	C6AXD, C6AQO, C6APR: Crooked Island (NA-113) by Ws
27/07-05/08	CU2/EA1FCH: Sao Miguel (EU-003), Azores
27/07-29/07	MMØLSB/P: Outer Hebrides (EU-010)
27/07-30/07	YW1DX: Cayo Sombrero (SA-089)
28/07-29/07	5B4: Agios Georgios (AS-120)
28/07-04/08	TM7BA: Batz Island (EU-105) by F5NCU and F6EHJ
28/07-29/07	GMØB: Isle of Bute (EU-123)
21/08-24/08	XP: Rathbone Island (NA-243) by PA3EXX
26/08-24/09	YB9/PAØRRS: Bali Island (OC-022)
01/09-30/09	HF4ØPAZ: special callsign (Poland)
07/09-24/09	3B7C: St. Brandon Islands (AF-015)
Sep-Oct	P2: Nukumanu Island (OC-284) by SM6CVX and G3KHZ
Sep-Oct	P2: Takuu Island (OC-283) by SM6CVX and G3KHZ
17/10-30/10	C52C: The Gambia by OMs

Some new words for 2007 (and some not so new, but worth repeating)

BLAMESTORMING: Sitting round in a group, discussing why a deadline was missed or a project failed, and who was responsible.

SEAGULL MANAGER: A manager who flies in, makes a lot of noise, cr@ps on everything, and then leaves.

ASSMOSIS: The process by which people seem to absorb success and advancement by sucking up to the boss rather than working hard.

PERCUSSIVE MAINTENANCE: The fine art of whacking the hell out of an electronic device to get it to work again.

404: Someone who's clueless. From the WWW error message '404 Not Found', meaning that the requested document could not be located.

BEER COMPASS: The invisible device that ensures your safe arrival home after a booze cruise, even though you're too drunk to remember where you live, how you got here, and where you've come from.

JOHNNY-NO-STARS: A young man of substandard intelligence, the typical adolescent who works in a burger restaurant. The 'no-stars' comes from the badges displaying stars that staff at fast-food restaurants often wear to show their level of training.

CDXC Clothing

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

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

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

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

ORDER FORM:

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

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

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 2007 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.**

