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Club News and Views

Editorial

Martyn Phillips, G3RFX

I very much enjoyed the RSGB AGM and Dinner here in Bristol on 19 April. And let's face it, I couldn't really not go. It was also a marvellous opportunity to show off my brand-new CDXC badge. Nigel, G3TXF, was also there and wearing his.

And by all accounts the Novotel Bristol Centre was more than adequate. I only wish they could have done a little bit more to turn down the volume, as it were, on a group of rather high-spirited Irish lads who had obviously met up in the hotel bar at the crack of dawn and were already slightly the worse for wear ("Hic!"). They eventually moved off at around lunchtime. I couldn't help asking one of them where they were going now. "Oh," he said, "we're off down to de harbour to foind a pub where we can have a drink." And for all I know, they might still be there.

For me at least the Open Forum in the afternoon was perhaps a little more accessible than the AGM itself in the morning, although here Treasurer Nigel was in his element, a veritable glutton for highly detailed figures and statistics. Whereas I never did get O Level Maths or whatever they call it now. Latin, yes.

And at the Open Forum I asked a few questions, one of which wasn't entirely serious and related to the move of the RSGB QSL Bureau to Norcomm in Halifax. "I'm sure they'll do a grand job - but was this a *wise* move?" I asked, to be immediately reassured that it was. "In which case," I said, "this is a perfect example of what you might call 'Norcomm and Wise'". Well, at least it raised a groan.

If there were around 75 of us at the AGM and Open Forum, it was about half that number by the time we got round to the Dinner in the evening (Yes, I know, when else do you have a dinner?). Jane and I also agreed that by mass-catering standards the food was pretty good. Well, assuming you call providing food for around 35 people 'mass catering' (or is 'mass catering' what priests do in the Catholic church?). The company was pretty good too and we had a lot of fun.

Anyway, I gather that the next RSGB AGM will be in Sunderland or thereabouts. Unfortunately I can't quite see me travelling up that far, but then you never know.

I'll finish with a brief moan in the direction of some of our foreign contributors: yes, we welcome your DXpedition articles for the *Digest*, but please make sure they're translated into English properly first, ie by an English native speaker. I recently received an article from a Frenchman who had somewhat unwisely called on the translation services of Google online. Merde alors! The English was largely incomprehensible. I hasten to add that I have neither the time nor the inclination to sit there translating this sort of stuff myself. So there.

Elsewhere in this *Digest* you'll find plenty of references to the next highspot of the CDXC year, the AGM & Summer Social on Saturday, 19 July, at the home of Neville and Trish in Herefordshire. I look forward to seeing you there. Neville assures us that the weather will be a lot better this year.

73 Martyn, G3RFX

Chairman's Chat

John Butcher, G3LAS

Two months ago I was writing of all the exciting DXpeditions which were keeping our bands tingling with activity. Alas, I can't do the same this time. At least from my viewpoint things have been relatively quiet in recent weeks, this in spite of the welcome appearance of the first few sunspots of the new cycle. The predicted solar index for the immediate future is around 70, which, while good in terms of the recent past, is still only a promise of better conditions to come in the next few years. It wasn't so long ago that people were saying gloomily, 'Soon the solar flux index will be falling below a hundred', as if that were the worst fate man could face.

It has been said often that, in spite of receiving little help from our local star, DX communication is never so bad as it might at first appear. This has been proven time and again by the success of the well-organised and well-equipped expeditions. If someone puts out a signal, even on 10 or 12m, it is surprising who might hear it. Nevertheless, it will be good when those bands are again full of S9+ signals from all round the world – although we will probably wish at times that someone would turn off the cluster network.

Having written the slightly gloomy words of the first paragraph, I thought I'd better check the recent reflector posts to see if there was hot news which I'd missed. Sadly this is not so. Members are still finding much to discuss, but it is mostly peripheral to our mainstream activity of working DX. Our stalwart Treasurer Nigel, G3TXF, is doing his best in a quest to operate from every DXCC entity known to man, but there has been little else. Nigel and the team from YK9G enlivened things for a few days, but I suspect that YK is more in demand in California than in the UK.

Now a success story. After a few lean years in terms of entries, the CDXC LF Challenge has blossomed again. No less than 22 members entered via the ClubLog table and there may well be more mailing directly to Jim, G3RTE. This should be an enormously popular competition for some excellent trophies and it is great to see an upsurge of interest. Undoubtedly it has benefited from the ClubLog facility enabling members to post their scores into an online table. If you haven't checked this out, just go to

<http://clublog.g7vjr.org/lfchallenge.php>

Thanks are due to Michael, G7VJR, for this initiative. How about going for 50 entries next year?

I'm sure no-one will be unaware that the social event of the year is coming up on Saturday, 19 July. This is the CDXC Annual General Meeting and Summer Social at the QTH of our President Neville, G3NUG. You may recall that this should have happened last year, but Neville forgot to make his usual sacrifice to the weather gods, with the result that he was surrounded by flood waters and narrowly escaped becoming G3NUG/MM. He has promised that this year the event will be bathed in sunshine, but even if the odd cloud appears, the company will be entertaining enough to make it all well worthwhile. Add to that the food, drink and the renowned raffle and we can guarantee a great day out. We're hoping for a record turn-out in the 70s, so sign up and bring the family. Full details, including travel directions, are on the website under CDXC News. *[You'll also find the details on pp. 8 – 9 of this Digest. Ed.]*

73 es gud DX

John, G3LAS

President's Patter

Neville Cheadle, G3NUG

The Committee members have been quite busy of late. We have a new website that in my view is really excellent. Thanks to Michael, G7VJR, for his work on this. Any comments or suggestions to Michael please. MØC cards can now be requested through the website.

Jim, MØZAK, has the MØC QSLing up to date and has uploaded all the logs including the MØCDX logs to LoTW. This includes the operations as MJØC, MUØC and MCØCDX. Bob, MDØCCE, will be using the MDØC call in the forthcoming IARU contest. The MIØC, MMØC and MWØC calls have still to be activated - any volunteers please? We are very keen that the MØC call is used as much as possible. Operators do not need to worry about QSLing, uploading logs to LoTW etc. Jim will look after these tasks for you. The Club will sponsor the QSL cards too.

We thank those who have sponsored the colour centre pages. These are proving to be very popular and we think that we're now getting the colours right – they were too bright at one stage. We are seeking further sponsors. The cost is £100 for four sides for one edition.

The new badges seem to be very popular too. Our thanks to Gordon, G3USR, for his work on these. Personally I think the badge is very attractive and readable; I particularly like the magnetic clip that will not damage those silk shirts or suede jackets!

A date for your diaries – Saturday, 19 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'.

I can guarantee that the weather will be better than last year's. This is a pretty fair bet as the chance of having two 100-year events in 2007 and 2008 is pretty remote. In any case there is plenty of room for everyone to mingle indoors if the weather is foul. I wrote the following last year and have no reason to change it.

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 is 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 relatively 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 for many years. All are welcome, caravaners too; do bring the family. There's parking space for 500 cars!

Another 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 is 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 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. There are also 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 Travelodges at Ludlow and at Wofferton, south of Ludlow (Tel: (0870) 191 1586.) – these are very close to Lower Withers Barns. There are also many local B & Bs and generally the standards are pretty good. Contact Leominster Tourist Information (Tel: (01568) 616460) 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.

A further thought: don't rely too much on your SatNavs to find us. Our postcode is about two miles square. The directions are published elsewhere in this Digest. The key is to get onto the A49. It's easy from there.

That's the end of the commercial – well, almost! Incidentally it isn't true that I have applied for the job of Herefordshire's Director of Tourism! 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 HF/6m/VHF transceiver



This is an excellent unit – see www.yaesu.co.uk for the full specification. We will have some other super prizes too.

Meanwhile Trish and I look forward to seeing many members here on 19 July. As usual the AGM 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.

19 July, CDXC AGM and Summer Social – make a note in your diary now!

73

CDXC

CHILTERN DX CLUB
The UK DX Foundation

Neville

G3NUG

New Members

CDXC offers a warm welcome to the following new members:

Call	Name	Location
GØBBB	Uri Grunewald	Warfield
GØDWV	Chris Danby	Norwich
G3VOF	Martin Foster	Torquay
G3WVG	Ian Pritchard	Woking
G5LP	Lionel Parker	Wellingborough
MØAEP	Graham Dawes	Brigg
MØLRB	Ralf Bächle	Cambridge
MØTNX	Kevin Haworth	Bootle
MØVKY	Simon Billingham	Wolverhampton
M1BXF	Gavin Nesbitt	Royston

New CDXC Club Membership Badge

Our new CDXC Club Membership Badge was recently launched on the Club website and announced on the CDXC Yahoo! reflector. In the *Digest* photo section you will find a badge image. An order form is also included as a *Digest* insert.

The new badge bears the CDXC logo in red, with personalisation comprising name and callsign in black against a silver background. The actual size is 75 mm x 45 mm and the badge fixing is by a magnet on the back. The cost is just £8.00 each. Ordering is straightforward and the process is detailed below. Either use the order form in this *Digest* or print one off from the Club website. The form is available to members as a PDF and can be found by navigating to 'Merchandise' and selecting 'Callsign Badges'. Or you can send your details to Gordon, G3USR, by e-mail (see the address on p. 2 of this *Digest*).

Payment must be in advance and should be made either by a direct bank transfer (preferred) to CDXC, NatWest Bank, sort code 60-60-02, Account no. 44532385 with your callsign as the reference - or send your cheque made payable to 'CDXC' to Gordon. Non-UK based members might like to consider ordering a badge at the same time as they remit their annual subscription. Alternatively contact Gordon via e-mail for the foreign payment arrangements.

Please note that the delivery time may be up to 12 weeks, as orders are batched to obtain a reasonable price. However, you may receive your badge considerably sooner as actual timings depend on the number of other badge orders received at the same time.

Your Committee hopes that you like the new badge - why not order one today?

NB: the old-style CDXC badge has been discontinued.

Treasury Notes and Subscription Reminder

Nigel Cawthorne, G3TXF

Unless you have already paid your 2008-09 subscription well in advance (and yes, believe it or not, one or two members pay their subs as early as January each year) you will find enclosed with this May 2008 *Digest* both a subscription reminder notice and (for UK members only) a standing order request form.

Your current subscription to CDXC runs out with this *Digest*. The July 2008 issue is the first *Digest* of the new subscription year. CDXC's subscription year runs from 1 July to 30 June. After remaining unchanged for about five years, the CDXC subscription for the UK has been increased to £18. The overseas subscription is now £24 (US\$48, or €40).

Important: new Standing Orders pse!

All UK members who pay by standing order are asked to complete the enclosed standing order request form and hand it to their bank. Even if you haven't used a standing order for paying your CDXC subscription before, you are encouraged to do so. It really does help CDXC significantly.

A new standing order will need to be set up for the annual £18 subscription. Please do not send the standing order request form to CDXC. Send it to your bank. Your existing standing order should also be cancelled.

For members who have online banking, use the bank account and sort code information on the enclosed standing order request form to set up a new standing order with your bank online. Setting up standing orders online is usually remarkably easy these days. A few clicks of the mouse and the new standing order is all set to go. Our thanks to all the CDXC members who have taken the trouble to set up a standing order. Standing

orders make life easier for members. Members don't have to think about making a subscription payment each year. It also significantly helps your Club by reducing the administrative hassle of handling cheques and the cost of chasing subscription renewals.

Electronic Online Transfers

Subscription renewals can also be paid by online electronic transfer. See the enclosed reminder notice for the all important sort code and bank account number.

Please use your callsign as the reference. Every year one or two transfers arrive with no reference. It always takes some considerable detective work by your Treasurer to work out whose subscription it is. Last year one member, none too helpfully, used the two words 'my callsign' as the reference on the transfer!

Overseas subscriptions

Overseas members who do not have a UK bank account can make their CDXC subscription payment by PayPal to **nigel@G3TXF.com**, by credit card or by sending cash. As always we are grateful to Martin Lynch at ML & S for his assistance in processing the credit card payments.

CDXC also actively collects subscriptions (particularly from overseas members) at various DX conventions around the world. Your President will doubtless have been collecting a few subs from US members while in Visalia, California. Similarly 'Ham Radio' in Friedrichshafen at the end of June is always a good venue for collecting cash subscriptions from several of CDXC's European members.

73 de Nigel G3TXF

CDXC AGM and Summer Social 2008

The Annual General Meeting of CDXC will be held on **Saturday, 19 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.

AGM AGENDA

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Minutes of the 2007 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 ever popular 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 there will be food and a BBQ for which a charge of £8.00 per adult will be made. 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. Soft drinks will be included but bring your own wine and beer.

Please bring a folding chair as only a limited number of seats are available.

We will be holding our famous Raffle during the Summer Social with a top prize of an FT-897 donated by Yaesu UK Ltd. Donations of prizes from members are most welcome. Raffle tickets are only available on the day, but in response to requests and as an experiment this year, members attending the Summer Social may buy tickets on behalf of members who are unable to attend, provided they agree to carry home any prizes for that member.

I would appreciate it if you would let me 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. Alternatively, and preferably, send an e-mail with your information to sec@cdxc.org.uk.

Chris, G3SVL, Secretary CDXC

Directions to G3NUG's QTH, Lower Withers Barns

From the Ludlow area (north)

Take the 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 the crossroads. Turn left - signposted Middleton. Keep going for another mile through the next hamlet and down the hill past new barriers on the right-

hand side of a 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 (south)

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 cross-roads. Turn left signposted Middleton. Keep going another mile through the next hamlet and down the hill past new barriers on the right-hand side of a 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.

Report on the CDXC Annual Dinner 2008

Chris Duckling G3SVL *sec@cdxc.org.uk*

The Annual Dinner is a firm fixture in the CDXC calendar, enjoyed for its social nature, the after-dinner talk and the bar chat that goes on long into the night – or should that be morning? This year we had to find a new venue, seeing as the Waterloo Hotel would not allow us exclusive use of their restaurant and had no other room large enough for us. A list of ten options was drawn up and Wyboston Lakes Conference Centre, home of the RSGB HF Convention in 2007, was the clear winner.

On the night we had 54 attendees, a record for a CDXC Annual Dinner. A number of members arrived early and enjoyed afternoon tea or watched some Six Nations Rugby in the lounge. By 7.30pm the bar was filling up and after a short delay we went through to our private dining room overlooking the lake. Up until then Wyboston had not really made a single error – but with free seating, albeit with the usual ‘reserved by QSL card’ spaces, there seemed to be one too few places. Worse than that, it was our Chairman and his wife who were left with a space to share! My fear was that I had undercounted the reservations

or that someone had slipped in unnoticed, but to cut a long story short they had only laid 53 spaces. The manager organised the additional setting and made amends to John and Rachael as indeed he should.

Our after-dinner speaker this year was Roger Western, G3SXW, who gave a superbly informative and at times highly amusing talk on ‘Seven Kilowatts from the Dark Continent’ – a canter through his many years of CQ WW entries from West Africa. Roger judged the balance so perfectly that not only did the 14 YLs stay and listen, but at least one asked where she could hear him again!

As is customary, after the dinner many members retired to the bar for some serious ragchewing. I hear the last group left at around 3am – but as that was three hours after the bar closed it was clearly serious discussion that was taking place!

The week after the dinner I e-mailed everyone to solicit some feedback. I asked for a rating on a scale of 1 (poor) to 5 (excellent) for the location, venue, meal,

speaker and organisation. The summary below shows the results - which speak for themselves.

poor —————> excellent

Location	
Venue	
Meal	
Speaker	
Organisation	

Many of the responses were straight 5s and comments such as ‘superb’, ‘one of the best ever’, ‘same venue next year, please’, ‘excellent food’ and ‘smiling friendly staff’ were common. In fact every respondent remarked on how much they had enjoyed the evening.

As always there are things that need improving. The ‘EasyJet’ approach to seating and the mess-up with the number of places were common comments, as were the slow wine ordering process and requests to have a bigger room. Some would like to see a bar extension, and others cheaper accommodation and a better breakfast service.

The Committee are most grateful for this feedback and will take the comments into account when planning next year. However, from the overwhelmingly positive feedback I think we can anticipate returning to Wyboston in 2009. And for those who were not able to make it this year – I recommend you come along next March and see what made everyone rate it so highly!

CDXC Local Hero Award 2008

Brian Otter, 9J2BO

Brian is one of the ‘old school’ – and has been soldiering away for years, primarily on CW, and doing his own thing with proper QSOs, regardless of whether trendy modern operators might wish him to switch to a boring, snappy pile-up technique, SSTV by moonbounce on 160m etc.

He's always meticulous about QSLing, which no doubt pleases many – seeing as he's by far the most active radio amateur in Zambia. He's not easy to contact other than by radio, because the mail systems are extremely dodgy and he has no e-mail – except, perhaps when he visits a neighbour on special occasions. Altogether a very good bloke.

G3LAS

I managed a QSO with Brian today for the first time in four days. He is suffering from persistent mains shut-down, seeing as Zambia is exporting power to neighbouring countries. He often disappears in mid-sentence when we are in contact.

He has received the [CDXC Local Hero] certificate and apologises for not having been in touch earlier.

We do manage a QSO most days on 15m, 21.153 MHz, at around 1530-1630z.

G3TEV

DX an' all that

Don Field, G3XTT don@g3xtt.com

I was recently going through some old copies of *CQ Contest* magazine (no longer in existence) and an editorial by Bob, K3EST, captured my interest. He was talking about the 'sound' of the bands. Not just the sound of a pile-up or of QRM, but the fluttery sound of a signal coming in over the auroral path, the tell-tale noises you get on the high bands when they are showing signs of opening, even when there may be no signals present, the whisper of a signal coming in on backscatter, the echo when you are hearing the same signal both long- and short-path (usually only when we have sunspots!), the unique sound of auroral propagation on 10m, etc. Old hands will know exactly the sort of sounds I am talking about and will be able to use them as clues as to when the bands might be open, and in which direction. Of course, you can just watch the Cluster and be ready to dive in, but, then, that's not quite the same, is it? Mind you, neither is logging on to qsonet.com and 'working' people via what's described as a "Virtual Ionosphere for Amateur Radio" – really rather worrying as this tends to imply that we don't need a real ionosphere at all! It's a strange world in which we live nowadays.

Solar news

But for those of us who still believe in making QSOs the old-fashioned way, reports that the second sunspot for Solar Cycle 24 has appeared are to be welcomed. Nevertheless, solar activity remains very low - as is evidenced by the recent YK9G operation. Not to have propagation to that part of the Middle East from the UK on any bands above 17m, except for the occasional flutter on 15m (Sporadic-E assisted?) is really quite unusual. It makes it all the more remarkable that VP6DX was worked on 10 and 12m earlier in the year. It looks as

though we still have two to three years to wait before we start getting some reasonable high-band conditions again - and as for the those suggestions that we may be entering another Maunder Minimum: well, they don't bear thinking about!

More on the Internet

I want, nevertheless, to return to the impact of the Internet, because there is no doubt that it is already having a major effect on DX working, whether we are aware of it or not. I discovered recently that, during 3B7C, some of the US stations who worked us on 160m were using their own transmit capability but listening via a link to another US amateur who had a much better 160m receive capability (a phased array in a low-noise location). There was no breach of DXCC rules in that all the equipment and antennas were in the same DXCC entity, but I have seen suggestions that, particularly in major international contests, this may not always be the case. Let's say you are a European multi-multi station on the outskirts of a major city. You can be loud in the US (for example) by using big Yagis and plenty of power, but how will you hear those 'little pistol' US stations who call you? Answer: you have a remote receiver in the US, controlled over the Internet. What's more, if that is a broadband SDR capability, you can also be tuning for possible North American mults at the same time! At least one high-profile contester has intimated that this is already happening. On the DX front, suppose you consider yourself a 'big gun' 80m operator, and a one-man expedition goes out to one of the few Pacific islands you still need on the band. Wouldn't it be tempting to throw a few kilowatts into your transmit antenna and to listen via a remote receiver in, say, Australia or New Zealand? Up to a point it doesn't worry me, as long as

it's kept at the personal level – whatever turns you on and all that - but if those same operators start appearing in the same league tables (contest results, DXCC listings) as me as though they were on the same playing field, I would take a rather dim view.

DXpedition news

There has been a flurry of DXpedition activity since my last piece two months ago, not least TX5C, 5T5DC, 9XØR and, of course, YK9G, all of them offering the chance to play the 'band slot' game thanks to Mario (5B4WN, GØWWW) and his excellent log-search facility which seems to have become *de rigueur* for expedition websites. One had to feel sorry for the TX5C guys in that they had never intended to put on a mega-effort like VP6DX but, coming hard on the heels of that record-breaking expedition, comparisons were inevitable. Neither was the TX5C team helped by atrocious weather (have you seen the video clip with rain pouring through the top of the tent?) and other logistical problems. It will be interesting to hear more of the background in due course.

Both 5T5DC and 9XØR were very workable from the UK on all HF bands, primarily because they were to the south of us. Both expeditions were well run and executed; the only problem I noted was that some of the operators identified infrequently so that DX spots would appear for the same station under both call signs on quite a regular basis. Many DXers will have worked one of the two, but thought they had worked the other. I can see the two QSL managers having nightmares when the cards start to arrive!

From my own point of view I have found the 30m band to be the most reliable under current conditions, with interesting DX on a daily basis. In the past week or two my 30m log shows stuff like 3B6FQ, 5H3RK, ZL2IFB (Gary, G4IFB), OX3XR, TO5RZ (St.Barthélemy), 9M6/N1UR (Spratly), lots of Caribbean and Africa, YK9G of course,

not to mention EA8/G3VTT, ZS3/G3LZQ, 3A/G3RTE and OE5/G3TXF. Unfortunately a vague 'sked' with KH6 failed to come off – I have over 300 entities on 30m and have never worked Hawaii! The lower bands were also pretty productive during the past couple of months and I suspect there will be something of a record entry for the CDXC LF Challenge. My own efforts were somewhat limited, both time- and antenna-wise, but it was a good excuse to chase some of the DX that was appearing on those bands.

As I write this the Norwegians have just started from the Spratlys, with some very welcome (to some at least!) datamode activity, while 9V1YC and others are on from Christmas Island (VK9X). And I can see spots for EL, 9Q, TI, 3V, SU etc., so there is plenty to chase. This raises the age-old question as to whether it is 'fair' to chase annual band-slots or expedition band-slots (with the new 5B4WN log search capabilities mentioned above, there is no doubt that these are fuelling enthusiasm for chasing slots) when others may be looking for these for a 'new one'.

There is no right answer of course – is one person's 'new one' morally more important than someone else's pleasure at working 9XØR on a band slot which he already has from a previous operation? I suspect the answer depends on your personal situation (we're all fundamentally selfish, after all!) – if you're chasing it for a new one and find yourself in a pile-up with others who almost certainly have it already, you will probably be cursing them. If you are already well up the DXCC Challenge listings there probably aren't enough 'new ones' to keep your interest in DX alive and kicking but the fact that you have a high total implies that you enjoy the cut and thrust of the chase and want to be in there whenever something out of the ordinary comes along. At the end of the day, it is probably only critical with an operation like BS7H where the sheer logistics limit the scale of the operation and there is a very large question mark over

when, or even whether, the next operation will take place.

As far as upcoming expeditions are concerned, let's hope the Glorioso effort comes about, seeing as this is one that is in great demand on most bands, although I wouldn't hold my breath, but the latest is that it has been delayed until September/October. Petrus, ZS8T, should be active from Marion Island in the coming months - while Tom, ZD7X (KCØW), is expecting to QSY to Tristan (ZD9) for an extended stay, possibly followed by South Sandwich, South Orkney and South Georgia. Next year he plans to holiday on Mustique (Princess Margaret's old stamping ground) for several months. How does he do it?

There is a big VK9X (Christmas Is) effort scheduled for July and no doubt other interesting ones in the planning stages for later in the year. I am already hearing hints of a very rare one in early 2009. Despite the concerns I aired above, regarding the negative aspects of some new technology, it is still true to say, in the immortal words of the late Hugh Cassidy, WA6AUD, 'DX IS!'

And on the subject of DX sound clips: Tom, K8CX, noted for his great 'Ham Gallery' website, has added a new page of interest for DXers. He now provides 111 DX sound clips from DXpeditions that took place in 2007. Visit the new page at <http://hamgallery.com/dx2007/>. All were recorded by K8CX.

Correspondence

Finally, Colin/MUØFAL comments, "In the March 2008 *Digest* you mention a person who states a disapproval of the funding of the larger expeditions (eg 3B9C) as opposed to the smaller trips! As a person who joined CDXC on the basis that it was capable of supporting MAJOR trips as well as little ones, I find this guy's opinion very blinkered. I wonder if he includes a few extra dollars when he works a one-man operation in a poor eastern EU Country for a new one?"

And as a final, final: take a look at this link if you want to see a 'proper' antenna array: www.kkn.net/dayton2006/K9LTN.pdf

73 Don, G3XTT

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 £18.00 for UK members, £24.00 for overseas members (US\$48 or 40 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/>

Borneo Bulletin

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OC-133 IOTA DXpedition invitation

Regular readers of the *Borneo Bulletin* will know by now that the annual 'SEANET Convention' will be held in November this year in Sabah. For my sins, I have been asked by the SEANET Convention Organising Committee to help with various aspects of the organisation, one of which is to investigate various locations for an optional 'post-convention activity'.

The thinking is that some delegates, especially those from further afield such as Europe or North America, would not want to travel all the way to Sabah for just a three- or four-day period. This suggestion was reinforced when it was realised that the CQ WW DX CW contest takes place on the weekend following the SEANET Convention; it seemed likely that some would want to attend SEANET and then participate in the contest from Sabah the next weekend. What would they do in between, though?

The obvious answer seemed to be an IOTA DXpedition to one of Sabah's many offshore islands, all of which (apart from Pulau Sebatik and Pulau Layang Layang) count as OC-133. Even those who have no interest in doing the CW contest may well be keen to stay on for several days after SEANET to take part in an IOTA DXpedition. Sebatik was out of the question because of its inconvenient location more than 500km from Kota Kinabalu and its lack of facilities, while the resort on Layang Layang is closed for the season from September to February, so OC-133 it had to be – but which island?

Many of Sabah's offshore islands are tiny coral gems with resorts that cater to overseas scuba divers. Unfortunately they

charge what they feel they can get from wealthy Americans, Japanese or Germans and yet the accommodation offered is often basic or even sub-standard. Given that most SEANET visitors will be Asians – who are always keen to get a bargain! – we investigated several of these islands and dismissed them immediately on the grounds of cost without even taking a look at them.

Labuan, however, had distinct possibilities. This is a much larger island, with a population of 78,000, and also counts as OC-133. There is a passenger ferry from Kota Kinabalu (KK), or a car ferry from the port of Menumbok, some 160km south of KK. There are also ferries from Brunei. Labuan has an international airport with flights from KK, Kuala Lumpur and Brunei. There are several hotels in the main town at the southern end of the island, plus just one beach resort, the Manikar Beach Resort, at the north of the island.

On 16 and 17 March GM-DX Club member John, 9M6XRO / GM3OOK, and I visited the resort to check its suitability to host an IOTA DXpedition following the SEANET Convention. The resort can only be described as 'perfect' for our requirements. Here's why:

- A perfect radio location with sea take-off to all areas
- Comfortable accommodation
- Very reasonable rates
- Good, if not gourmet, food
- Extremely helpful manager and staff.

The resort is about 15km from both the ferry port and airport - and transport can easily be arranged for a small charge. It is set in 15 acres of nicely landscaped gardens right on the beach. Accommodation is in three four-

storey blocks with a total of over 300 rooms, yet the resort was almost completely empty when we were there.

The Manager, Mr Jonah Tan, was extremely helpful and is very keen to assist in future amateur radio operations from the resort. In fact when we were discussing our requirements with him, he said that when he was at school in Penang 20 years ago he had been a Scout and had taken part in Jamboree on the Air (JOTA). He even remembered the callsign, which was 9M2FK. This callsign belongs to Eshee Razak and when I said that I also knew Eshee and had met him in Penang everything went like clockwork! It is appropriate that Eshee was also one of the founders of the SEANET Convention.

Of the three accommodation blocks, Block 1 is currently being renovated, so at present is not normally open to visitors. However, Block 1 is the best for siting antennas, being closest to the beach, and Jonah kindly allowed us to use a room in Block 1 free of charge to set up our station while we slept in Block 2, which has already been renovated. From Block 1 it is possible to mount a vertical antenna right at the high-water level on the beach, within a few centimetres of the sea at high tide.

Since we took a car across, we had the luxury of taking two complete stations, although we only operated one at a time. John operated as 9M6XRO/P on CW only using an IC-7000 and IC-2KL amplifier, while I operated on SSB as 9M6DXX/P using an FT-857 and Tokyo Hy-Power HL-1.2Kfx linear amplifier. The antennas were a Butternut HF6V vertical mounted within centimetres of the high tide mark, and a quarter-wave inverted-L for 80m, with a 41ft vertical section, also mounted within inches of the sea. At least one of the radials from each antenna was actually in the sea at high tide. We also used a 17m dipole on a fishing pole, but this was perhaps 30m back from the sea simply because we did not take enough coax.

The location of the resort at the northernmost point of Labuan means that there is a clear take-off across the sea for hundreds of miles from west to east through north, providing an absolutely perfect take-off towards Europe, Japan and North America. We certainly found that signals on all bands were extremely strong and far better than from our home stations using beam antennas. We made over 1,500 QSOs in one and a half days of operating. This location really is *excellent* for amateur radio!

The rooms are very large and include twin queen beds or a single king-size bed. The floors are stone-tiled and there are recessed ceiling lights. There is a ceiling fan and two air conditioning units. The rooms have televisions, but at present only one English-language satellite entertainment channel is available. The bathrooms are finished in polished marble and have wash basin, toilet, full-size bath tub and separate glass-walled shower cubicle.

The resort has a large swimming pool and a small children's pool. There are spa treatment facilities available and outdoor cabana units were being built for this when we visited. There is also a gym, but this was closed for renovation during our visit (by November 2008 all remaining renovation work at the hotel should have been completed).

There is a comfortable bar area with karaoke to be installed soon (unfortunately, in my opinion!). Beer costs only RM6 (90p) for a half-litre glass (cheaper than at any hotel in KK). The restaurant serves both Asian and Western food of good quality and at reasonable prices, although no wine is available (I am sure there would be no objection if guests brought their own. Labuan is a duty-free port and a 5-litre box of wine costs about £4.25, compared with about £11 in Sabah.).

We have negotiated a very special rate for SEANET Convention delegates of RM 150

(approx £24) including government tax and service charges *per room* per night. This rate is for either one person or two people sharing a twin room, and it includes an excellent *a la carte* breakfast.

Depending on the number of people who wish to take part in the IOTA operation, it would also be possible to set up a second station at the resort. If the second station was in Block 3 there should be sufficient separation between the two stations to allow both to operate simultaneously without causing too much mutual interference, although this would need to be tried out.

Those wanting to take part in the CQ WW DX CW contest could continue to stay at the resort and do the contest from there. Others may want to do the contest from another location, such as the Langkah Syabas Beach Resort rental station just south of Kota Kinabalu.

Here are the dates for your diary:

Thursday, 20/11

SEANET Convention delegates arrive KK

Friday, 21/11 to Sunday, 23/11

SEANET Convention in KK and Kudat, Sabah

Monday, 24/11 to Friday, 28/11

IOTA activity from Labuan OC-133

Saturday, 29/11 to Monday, 01/12

CQWW DX CW Contest
(ends 0800 local time Monday)

The SEANET website is now operational at <http://seanet.cc> (click on 'SEANET 2008') and will be updated as more information becomes available.

Apart from the post-Convention IOTA activity, if any CDXC member is interested

in activating OC-133 from the Manikar Beach Resort at another time, I'd be pleased to help with logistics if I can. Finally, for those who are retired and want to spend the winter in the sun, the manager is offering a room for a minimum period of one month for the equivalent of £425. That's £7 per person per night for two sharing and includes a full cooked breakfast each – an absolute bargain!

CQ WPX SSB Contest

I was privileged once again to be able to operate as 9M8Z in the CQ WPX SSB Contest from neighbouring Sarawak. This callsign was issued in March 2007 and was used for the first time by Pete, SM5GMZ, and me in last year's WPX SSB contest. Pete was at home in Sweden at the time of this year's event, so I travelled down to Sarawak for a single-op effort.

The 9M8Z station is at a private house which is not normally available for rental, although the owner is talking about establishing an impressive rental station at a nearby location some time in the future. The station is one of the best equipped on Borneo, with an Optibeam 17-element beam (3-ele on 40m, 4-ele on 20m and 15m and 6-ele on 10m) on a 75ft mast. Inside is an FT-1000MP and a 2 x 3CX800 amplifier.

Conditions did not seem particularly good on the Saturday, with little or no European opening on 15m, although the afternoon GMT (late evening my time) opening on 20m was good. Things improved on the Sunday with some good runs to Europe on 15m and a repeat of the evening opening on 20m. Even 10m played ball to some extent, with some excellent signals from JA and VK (which was half expected) and ZS, the Middle East and even south and east Europe (which was certainly not expected). Alan, 5B4AHJ, was particularly loud on 10m on Sunday afternoon, and I worked as far as SV, but nothing from Western Europe (although Tim, M3SDE, later reported he heard me at ESP level on that band).

The most surprising QSO was with Brazil (the antipodes of Borneo) at 2.30am local time, on 15m *long-path* on an otherwise completely dead band.

All in all I made 3,137 QSOs (after dupes) for a claimed score of 8.4 million points, one of my better single-op contesting efforts, especially so considering the state of the solar cycle. It just shows what can be done if you have 100kg of aluminium high up in the sky!

Friedrichshafen 2008

It is now nearly three years since I moved to Sabah and during that time, although we have travelled widely in South-East Asia, we have not been back to the UK. In June, however, we have booked a one-month trip, taking in Macau, Hong Kong, England – and Friedrichshafen. I have never before visited the Friedrichshafen Ham Radio exhibition, so I am very much looking forward to attending for the first time.

I'm sure there will be a 3B7C reunion there, and I'm looking forward to meeting many of the team again, as well as all other CDXC members who make the trip across.

M5AAV SK

Finally, it is with sadness that I have to report that CDXC member Graham Ridgeway, M5AAV, became a Silent Key on 25 March. I never met Graham in person, but had exchanged numerous e-mails with him over the last couple of years. When he heard about my mail theft problem in Malaysia, which meant that probably over 50% of my incoming QSLs were stolen for their dollar bills and IRCs, he volunteered to act as my QSL Manager. Graham was already QSL Manager for John, 9M6XRO, and I heard only good things about him from John, so I accepted Graham's offer with thanks.

Graham eventually became QSL Manager for 9M6DXX, 9M6DXX/P (OC-133),

9M4SEB (OC-295), XU7DXX and V8FEO, in addition to John's various callsigns. John and I both knew Graham had not been in the best of health for several years, but commented to each other that his e-mails always sounded cheery. If we forgot to send our logs to him for a week or two, we would always get a friendly nudge, which usually ended with the words 'keep smiling'.

Towards the end, though, Graham was in and out of hospital, and often our logs went unacknowledged, so we knew there must be something very seriously wrong. When the news eventually came, it is fair to say neither of us were surprised, but we were both still shocked.

Tim, M3SDE, has taken over as QSL manager for all 9M6DXX and 9M6XRO operations, but will have a hard task to follow in Graham's footsteps. Thanks, Graham, for your service as QSL Manager and for your friendship. M5AAV RIP. Graham was truly one of the 'good guys'.

YK9G

The UK DXpedition team to Syria, YK9G, returns safely.

The five-operator team (G3SXW, G3TXF, G4BWP, G5LP and GM3YTS) returned safely from Damascus following a one-week CW-only operation as YK9G. Using two stations, 28,100 CW QSOs were made across nine bands. The full story of this UK DXpedition to Syria will appear in the July *Digest*. Meanwhile for more details see www.YK9G.com.

Guyana 2008

Phil Whitchurch, G3SWH

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Jim, G3RTE, and I first started planning our latest DXpedition in 2004. The major obstacle was getting the licence. Back then my first point of contact was by e-mail with Peter Denny, 8R1WD, who was at the time (and still is) the President of the Guyana Amateur Radio Association (GARA). Peter readily agreed to help me and I duly sent to him copies of my UK licence, passport photo page and a covering letter addressed to the Director of the Guyanan licensing authority, the National Frequency Management Unit (NFMU). Strangely, even though Guyana is a member of the British Commonwealth, it transpired that the NFMU do not recognise a UK Class A licence as being valid, despite the fact that the local exams are based upon the old City & Guilds syllabus! Shortly after I made the application, I received an e-mail from the Director of the NFMU stating their official position was that they would only accept a licence issued in either Trinidad or the USA. We decided to shelve the project at that time and went to the British Virgin Islands as VP2V/G6AY that year instead.

About Guyana

Guyana is the only English-speaking country in the whole of South America, although it was first claimed by the Spanish after Columbus 'discovered' it in 1498. The Dutch started to build settlements and trading posts in the interior around 1580, importing African slaves over the next century or so to work in the sugar cane plantations. The Dutch lost control of their colony to the British in 1796, who formally merged the several provinces into British Guiana in 1831. A few years later slavery was abolished and the emancipated blacks left the plantations and moved to the towns. To fill the labour shortage, thousands of indentured workers were brought to Guyana, mainly from India. The result is a

very cosmopolitan community, with much of the rural population of East Indian or Asian origin and the urban areas predominantly black. With an area of some 215,000 square kms (83,000 square miles), about the same as the UK, the total population is about 850,000, about 70% of whom live in the coastal areas. Amerindian people make up about 7% of the total and generally inhabit the country's interior, where they are given a great deal of cultural recognition and protection. Independence was granted in May 1966 and Guyana was declared a cooperative republic within the Commonwealth in February 1970.

Originally named Stabroek by the Dutch, the capital city was re-named Georgetown by the British in 1796. Located on the eastern bank of the Demerara river where it flows into the Atlantic Ocean, the city is presently home to some 200,000 people. Known as the Garden City of the Caribbean, it is certainly very green and has some magnificent colonial wooden architecture, sadly much of it in a rather dilapidated state. Of particular note is the Anglican St George's Cathedral, completed in 1892 and at 135 ft reputedly the world's tallest wooden building.

The northern part of Georgetown stands on land reclaimed from the sea, and much of Guyana's coastal region is about 6 ft below sea level at high tide. In the 1870s Dutch settlers began the construction of the massive concrete seawall, which runs along the shore and then for about 450 kms along the Atlantic coast of Guyana and Suriname. However, as a result of the silt deposited by the various large rivers of the region, the ocean here is a murky brown and fringed by a muddy stretch of beach.

Guyana has a tropical climate with almost uniformly high temperatures and humidity,

and much rainfall. Seasonal variations in temperature are slight, particularly along the coast. Although the temperature never gets dangerously high, the combination of heat and humidity can at times seem oppressive. The entire area is under the influence of the northeast trade winds and, around midday and during the afternoons, sea breezes bring relief to the coast. Temperatures in Georgetown are quite constant, with an average high of 32°C and an average low of 24°C in the hottest month (July), and an average range of 29°C to 23°C in February, the coolest month. The highest temperature ever recorded in the capital was 34°C and the lowest only 20°C. Humidity averages 70% year-round. Rain generally falls in heavy afternoon showers or thunderstorms.

Guyana as a whole and Georgetown in particular has something of an unsavoury reputation for violent crime. However, as we would be very much confined to the area of the hotel during our stay, we did not think that anything more than ‘sensible’ safety precautions would be necessary. Just before we left the UK, we were shocked by the news that on January 26th there had been a couple of apparent gangland massacres, one in Lusignan, on the east coast and some 16 kms from Georgetown, when eleven people, including five children were slaughtered and another on February 18th in the mining town of Bartica on the Essequibo River, when the local police station was attacked and three policemen killed as well as ten other local residents.

Project Planning

We revived the project following a conversation with Nigel, G3TXF, at the 2005 HF Convention, when he mentioned that he had been in contact with Raj, 8R1RPN, with a view to obtaining a licence for a DXpedition of his own to coincide with the Commonwealth Contest. Raj had indicated to Nigel that he believed it to be possible to get a Guyanan licence purely on the basis of a UK Class A licence, which was quite a contradiction to the officially

stated situation. I contacted Raj by telephone, who confirmed his opinion, but told me that he was not in a position to help further at that time due to business commitments. Nigel didn’t pursue those particular plans and I must confess to being more than a little sceptical about the accuracy of the information from Raj. Round about the same time I decided that it would be a good idea for either Jim or I to get a US licence. Jim wasn’t keen, and so, after a little bit of studying, I took (and passed) the Extra Class exam at the 2006 HF Convention and became the proud owner of AD5YS. I must have been one of the last to sit (and pass!) the 5 wpm Morse test, as it was abolished shortly afterwards.

After the VP2MTE DXpedition of 2007 our thoughts again turned to ‘where do we go next?’ Guyana was one of the possible destinations discussed and I contacted Peter, 8R1WD, by e-mail again. Fortunately he remembered our previous correspondence and agreed that there should now be no problems in obtaining a Guyanan licence on the back of the AD5YS licence. In June 2007 The necessary documents were sent to Peter by International Recorded Delivery, but failed to arrive. They were eventually discovered at Peter’s local postal delivery office some weeks later.

The licence for 8R1PW came through quite quickly, together with the news that Peter was also arranging licences for a pair of German operators (DK6XR and DK8XT), who planned to visit for two weeks in September/October 2007, and a further pair of Brazilian operators (PY2TNT and PY4WAS, who planned to visit for four days in November 2007. Our own plans were for a week-long visit at the end of February 2008, so we were concerned to know how these two earlier operations would affect our own plans. It transpired that both operations were primarily SSB and making about 10,000 QSOs between them, which left us the opportunity to mount a CW-only operation.

Places from where to operate are always a major consideration. Initially we had hoped to operate from Leguan Island in the estuary of the Essequibo River and which counts as IOTA SA-068, but my research could not identify anywhere to stay in what is a very agricultural community with unreliable power supplies. Both the German and Brazilian groups had operated from Peter Denny's house, but we preferred an alternative as close to the ocean as possible. Georgetown is not very well blessed with hotels and research on the Internet was not terribly successful here either.

I eventually contacted Wilderness Explorers, a travel agent and tour operator in the city, and explained what we were looking for. They came back with several suggestions, including the very up-market Meridien Pegasus within the city itself and the Ocean View Hotel a few miles south and right next to the ancient seawall. Both hotels were happy for us to put up antennas. The Meridien Pegasus has been the location of several previous operations, is seven storeys high and in a superb location right at the river estuary. However, there are a number of cell phone antennas on the roof and we were severely put off by tales of high levels of TVI and BCI during the previous operations. The Ocean View is only three storeys high, appeared to be surrounded by trees and was not such a good location. After much soul searching, we elected for the (considerably) cheaper option and booked the Ocean View.

The DXpedition

Flights were booked with Virgin Atlantic to Barbados and then onwards to Georgetown with LIAT. The outgoing flight was over an hour late leaving, although it arrived on time. Our connection in Barbados allowed us only 90 minutes between flights, and as we were unable to check the bags through to Georgetown we had to clear immigration in Barbados, collect the bags and re-check them with LIAT. Needless to say, the process took ages and we arrived at the

LIAT check in desk to be told the flight had closed. Fortunately for us there was another extremely voluble Guyanan passenger in the same situation and it was only as a result of his protests that the LIAT staff actually admitted that the flight was severely delayed and checked us in. As a result, we arrived at Georgetown's Cheddi Jagan International Airport almost two hours late. The arrangements were that Peter Denny would meet us at the airport to smooth over the customs formalities, but these were negotiated without difficulty.

However, there was no sign of either Peter or the driver from Wilderness Explorers who was to take us the 40 kms to the hotel. As we were the only white-faced people on the flight, we found this strange and when nobody had appeared after a good ten minutes, we took a local taxi on a hair-raising ride. Jim swears the taxi had no headlights, as cars coming the other way were constantly flashing him. We were also concerned about his eyesight, as we spent much of the drive on the wrong side of the road. When he stopped and got out at a sleazy night-club, we really started to worry as to whether we had done the right thing. However, we arrived safely at the Ocean View and no sooner had we checked into the hotel and fallen into bed than Peter appeared in the hotel lobby full of apologies and promises to meet us again the following morning.

At breakfast the next morning it was obvious that the Ocean View was virtually empty and that there was a lot of refurbishment work under way, although there was a religious conference being held during the following week. Petal Ridley, the Manager, could not have been more helpful and delegated one of her staff to assist us with erecting the antennas. Our rooms were at opposite ends of the large building, mine on the third storey on the northern end and Jim's on the second storey at the southern end. Jim had brought a 10-metre fibreglass pole, which we erected as a support for his preferred sloping dipoles. My doublet was

erected between the eaves of the building and a convenient, but not very high tree in the grounds.

The stations were assembled and Jim made the first QSO with K3ZO on 20m at 1523 UTC on 22nd February. My first QSO was with DL5ANT on 17m at 1533 UTC. I also made the first UK QSO with G4EZT at 1551 UTC, also on 17m. After a few QSOs Jim started to get reports of a T7 note on his K2. A quick check over everything revealed he had done exactly the same as last year and left the PSU on 220V. Once this was set correctly to 110V all was well and the K2 that Jim had bought from Chris, G3SJJ, last summer worked faultlessly for the whole of the operation. It was good to work Chris using his own new K3 on a couple of bands whilst using his old K2! The pile ups were furious and by midnight UTC on the first day we had over 1,200 QSOs in the log between us.

The next day was a very different story, as there was a very high electrical noise level (about S7), which we identified to be the result of corona discharge from the high-voltage power lines close to the hotel. This noise made operations during the mornings very difficult and only stopped if it rained, which was intermittent. Jim adopted 20m as his own and continued to work stations despite the noise, whereas my own activities on 17m were very frustrating and almost impossible. I could hear the pile-up, but couldn't read any of the callsigns. It's the only time in my life that I can remember praying for rain! Propagation improved in the late afternoons and we were able to run the pile-ups despite the noise, but Jim's QSO total gradually crept ahead of mine. I am convinced that this was mainly as a result of Jim changing his antenna from a sloping dipole to a doublet. Jim is convinced that it was due to the doublet having nulls in the radiation pattern in the direction of the source of the line noise on 40 and 20m, which were quieter than the other bands. One morning we had a power cut, and when the hotel generator kicked in the bands were

blissfully quiet. Unfortunately this was only to last for an hour. Will I ever persuade him that a doublet is better than a dipole?

The hotel itself was rather basic, but served our requirements well. Jim had no hot water in his room. I was rather pleased that our rooms were far apart, as on a couple of occasions Jim ate some very spicy food. Need I say any more? The food lacked variety and consisted of a choice of either fish or chicken with rice for both lunch and dinner. As I don't eat fish I'm sure that I would have started to sprout feathers after another day or so. Jim says when he got back home he had lost a kilo in weight.

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? As in previous years Jim and I discussed this over several bottles of Banks and I'm pleased to say that Jim is slowly coming round to my way of thinking, which is never to log duplicates.

I had planned to try to get onto 160m and am aware that this had created considerable interest. Unfortunately this was always going to be subject to site conditions and it proved impracticable to erect any sort of 160m antenna. However, I did spend a considerable amount of time on 80m and worked 649 stations on this band, about 6.5% of the total. I still need Guyana on 80m myself!

The path to Japan is particularly difficult from Guyana and Jim was particularly pleased to find a daily opening on 20m between 2100 and 2300 UTC, although signals were very weak. We also made QSOs with Japan on 30 and 40m.

We received several requests for 12m QSOs, particularly from GM3POI. Whilst I didn't think that there would be any propagation to Europe, I was eventually

persuaded to try 12m, with surprising results: 122 QSOs with eight DXCC entities in three continents.

Peter Denny visited us every day, introducing us to the delights of Banks beer and 15-year-old rum. Peter is a retired diplomat and spent several years in both Moscow and Beijing before heading a department in the Guyanan Foreign Office. He also took us on a sightseeing tour of Georgetown, including a visit to Raj/8R1RPN's QTH in the centre of the city. Raj has a 100 ft tower with a magnificent multiband array on it. Olli, OHØXX, regularly visits and operates this station in the major contests as 8R1J. We also ate lunch at a Chinese restaurant that day, which was a real treat!

One afternoon we received an unexpected visit from Esmond, 8R1AK, who is well known for his SSB-only portable operations from Leguan Island (IOTA SA-068). Esmond has a house on the island, but operates from his car using an ingenious bracket on the bumper from which he can support a 3-element beam.

My last QSO was on 40m with Nigel, G3TXF, at 0701 UTC on 29th February, just

before I fell into bed for some much needed sleep before travelling home later that day. Jim got a full night's sleep, got up early and was still making QSOs at breakfast time the same day.

Results

The journey home was long but uneventful. Even the LIAT flight was on time! I arrived home to a box full of direct QSL requests and over 1,000 e-mails to download, about a third of which were QSL requests.

We made a total of 9,863 QSOs with 112 DXCC entities. Jim has calculated that there are 5,963 unique callsigns in the log and so, judging from the comments on the Cluster and the demand for QSLs so far, we think we have satisfied at least some of the Deserving. The tables below give some more statistics. We both believe we could have made at least 1000 more contacts each if it had not been for the noise. The pile-ups seemed to be just as big at the end as at the start, which probably means there is still plenty of mileage left in another CW operation.

QSOs by band and DXCC entities:

Band	QSOs	DXCC entities
80m	649	47
40m	2,608	88
30m	2,273	78
20m	2,761	80
17m	1,257	66
15m	193	21
12m	122	8
All bands	9,863	112

The top ten entities by QSO:

	80m	40m	30m	20m	17m	15m	12m	Total
USA	137	818	548	675	612	134	112	3,036
Germany	113	292	285	419	125	13	0	1,247
Italy	33	130	178	212	81	4	0	638
Poland	29	128	156	120	16	0	0	449
Czech Republic	45	108	116	111	33	2	0	415

England	25	98	103	132	35	2	0	395
European Russia	12	148	86	116	15	1	0	378
France	32	70	68	119	35	4	0	328
Spain	15	48	60	107	35	0	0	265
Canada	4	48	34	46	37	4	1	174

Contacts with UK etc. stations:

	80m	40m	30m	20m	17m	15m	12m	Total
England	25	98	103	132	35	2	0	395
Scotland	4	14	7	19	2	1	0	47
Wales	2	4	5	7	1	0	0	19
Northern Ireland	0	2	5	3	3	0	0	13
Guernsey	0	1	1	1	0	0	0	3
Jersey	0	1	0	1	0	0	0	2
Isle of Man	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1

Copies of the licence and supporting documentation have been submitted to – and accepted by - the DXCC Desk at ARRL. The logs have been uploaded to and are fully searchable on my website at www.g3swh.org.uk/8r1pw.html. Special colour photo QSLs have been printed and are available direct with SAE and adequate return postage (recommended). Bureau cards can be requested from the website and will be processed as quickly as possible. Cards are also available via the traditional bureau route. Logs will be uploaded to LoTW after I have weeded out as many of the inevitable busted calls as practicable, probably in early 2009.

Our particular thanks go to our XYLs, Cheryl and Jan, for allowing us to go; to Peter Denny, 8R1WD, President of the Guyana Amateur Radio Association for arranging the licence; to Delice Rogers at Wilderness Explorers (www.wilderness-explorers.com) and to Petal Ridley and all the staff at the Ocean View Hotel, Georgetown, for making this DXpedition possible, as well as to all of our sponsors (RSGB, CDXC, GDXF, EUDXF and Clipperton DXC) for their support.

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A Month in the Mountains of the Moon

Nick Henwood, G3RWF / 5X1NH

nick@henwood.demon.co.uk

During my visit to Uganda last November I was asked to consider giving some voluntary help to a new community university being developed in Fort Portal, which is at the heart of the tea-growing area close to the wonderful Ruwenzori Mountains – known as the Mountains of the Moon. Close to the Congo border, you may have heard of them because of the opportunities there to see gorillas and chimpanzees.

I agreed to go for one month and set out on 22 February. I had made it clear that I would of course be taking my amateur radio gear with me (and my current Uganda licence). Fortunately British Airways have relaxed their position on cabin luggage and mine contained my Elecraft K2, a switch-mode power supply and (a last minute thought) my IC-7000, principally because it has a clever means of measuring SWR over the whole band and also works fine on digital modes and SSB.

I collected a hire car at Entebbe – or to be more accurate, it collected me - since they had confused the collection and return dates despite a phone call from the UK two days earlier. We waited for three hours near their airport office (locked, with a bare table and one chair – nothing else, not even a scrap of paper). 5X1GS had described my decision to take a car (rather than a 4 x 4) as ‘brave’, but I wasn’t planning to go anywhere too wild and frankly 4 x 4s are expensive to hire. The three-hour delay meant that I was in a poor state to drive 300 miles on strange roads and at one point I had to stop and up-end a bottle of water over my head to restore concentration. However, we made it before dark (‘We’ being myself and an Irish volunteer who I had agreed to take with me).

For the first couple of days I was in a guest house and could not get on the air because my room was not well placed - and anyway, I was busy finding out what I was going to be doing when not doing ham radio. On Monday I moved into ‘the Lodge’ – a university bungalow described to me as ‘backpacker’ accommodation. It is considerably better than that, but was on a self-catering basis together with two Voluntary Missionary Movement volunteers.

The first thing I noticed about the house was a small water tower right next to my bedroom – well, that solved the first 15 feet of the antenna. Also the house had a great take-off in most directions, being on a ridge with the land falling away except to the west and south west where the beautiful Ruwenzori mountains provided a backdrop - but not too high to block radio signals, I thought. I very rapidly got on the air with the K2 on CW. I had large pile-ups immediately and the K2 did wonderfully well: such a great receiver - and I found that it also has a decent SWR meter – which I had not realised despite building it from a kit.

There was no problem in getting a simple antenna up quite high, but it soon became apparent that the real problem is power (or the lack of it). It wasn’t a surprise, since there had been no electricity at all for the five days I was there last November. This time there was often some power, but in varying amounts (we measured variations between 158 volts and 261 volts on the same day). The metered mains voltage swayed constantly by about 20 volts. Power cuts are very frequent – and there was one occasion when there were three power cuts in an hour. However, generally it was true that if the power went off at about 7 o’clock (morning or evening) there would be no

more for about 12 hours. I was prepared for this and had croc clips to connect to the car battery – and it just reached. On my next trip I am going to re-design the leads so I can disconnect quickly – a bit irritating when the mains goes on and off during the night. Unfortunately there was not much I could do about power for my laptop (logging), although it could be charged using solar power.

Uganda has a big problem with its lack of an effective power infrastructure. One evening I sat having a meal in a bar in Fort Portal and the power lines started shorting because they were swayed by a big lorry. The flashes just moved up and down between the posts – quite terrifying. Also off-putting were the ‘bricks with a hook’ which are hung on the lower power leads to try to maintain spacing from the cable above

Anyway, I was piling up the QSOs in the two weeks before BERU. I planned to go to Kampala for BERU and borrow 5X1GS’s beam. However, he had just moved house and things were a bit behind schedule (ie no beams), so I decided to stay in Fort Portal and do my best with wire antennas in the restricted section. That needed an antenna which could change bands quickly, so I fitted a makeshift halyard to the roach pole and was able to raise and lower the inverted V dipole using a true fishing technique. You pull the halyard up a few feet. The pole bends. You wait until it is almost straight, then pull again - and eventually the antenna gets to the top. I had to reduce the length of the pole because the top two sections are too whippy for this sort of abuse. Anyway, it seemed to work and I taped a 40m vertical to the mast so I could make a 40m ground plane. 80m was more difficult as the weight of the extra section meant that it was difficult to get it up the mast. So I added the 80m extension when I needed it by adding it to the ends..

There was one other unexpected complication. About ten days after my arrival the rainy season started. It soon

settled into a pattern of cloudy mornings, hot and sunny afternoons and then a big storm – lashing rain, thunder and lots of lightning. Some storms were quick – others rumbled on for hours. The static from these storms was simply horrendous. I remembered it from many years ago when I lived in Sierra Leone. The sort of creaking noise as a lightning bolt prepares to descend is quite frightening. Well, I had lots of that for BERU and it was a problem on all bands. There was thunder around for about 14 hours of the competition and I had to close down twice for immediate storms to pass. 80m was particularly grim - high noise level and incessant crashes. I worked a few painful QSOs (including G3BJ), but the band was virtually unusable and I listened in frustration as the serial numbers of other African stations passed me. So I may have seemed a complete lid asking “Nr?” so often, but it was really hard work.

However, all in all it worked well and BERU was great fun. I wasn’t in Nigel or Roger’s class, but then who is?. The contest was its usual friendly self – although fending off non-BERU participants was often difficult. 15m opened reasonably well and there were some brief bursts on 10m. After the extreme night-time static, conditions improved on Sunday morning although there were more CQs than contacts – despite a strange frantic burst during the last few minutes of the contest.

With BERU over, I returned to operating at a more leisurely pace, dictated by the voluntary work I was doing. Sadly I chanced my arm once too often with the lightning. If I had been very cautious I would have never gone on the air when there was lightning around. After BERU (mercifully) I came on one day at 1500 hrs UTC – there was clearly thunder in the air, but I decided to bash on regardless. As I moved the antenna plug to the K2 there was a distinct ‘crack’ – and that was the last time the K2 amplifier worked! Sad, very sad – and yes, I know what I should have done.

Well, I always wanted to spend more time with the back-up IC-7000, which is a nice enough rig - but the receiver is not in the same class as the K2. I learned new tricks. For example, in a European pile-up (ie a heap including various stations running about 20 KW, strangely similar callsigns, crystal set receivers and whom you have reluctantly worked already several times) reducing the RF and AF gains to a minimal level enables you to operate in a little world of your own – but at least keep the run rate on the move.

And then there were moments of magic. A station with a quite distinctive signal who, having been worked, was followed by a station with the same distinctive signal, but a different callsign. One evening I worked about 20 Greek stations – were they all in the same taverna? There was a similar experience with a sudden rush of stations from Thailand. There were also moments of embarrassment – like being called by G3TXF just when you had completely lost control of a pile-up and were trying to decide how to commit suicide (QRT? QRT? CALL? CALL?) - and then finding that your feeble fingers can't even manage to reply without messing up your own call.

Slightly in my own defence (and as a total amateur) I think that there is a danger that amateur radio is becoming too formulaic. If you have an interesting call, you are expected to work contest-style. If you work simplex you will be told to work split - when actually I find I can work faster in simplex up to that critical moment when it all starts to fall apart. If you are on a DXpedition, apparently you assume the

whole world will stand by while you work split over a huge chunk of the band (and assume there is no-one else around with faintly interesting callsign). Deciding on a split well away from your own frequency is also tough on anyone else who can't hear the DX station, but wants a frequency and may wish to work split too. I write as someone who thought that VP6DX had gone home when I dared to call on 'their' frequency (I couldn't hear them). I also tried to keep a sked on a frequency 2 kHz above the top end of the generous calling band for 9XØR. Actually we made it despite the spreading riot. And what do you do with dupes? It's very frustrating to get up before dawn and find the first three people who call you as the band opens are all eastern European dupes. You can refuse to work them but you need to tell them – because they will just keep calling. On balance I think a few 'QSO B4s' do discourage others, but it is actually quicker to work them. As band conditions improve with more sunspots I hope we shall have more DX to go at – and that does mean that some people should pull in their horns a bit.

It was always pretty easy to excite interest (and a pile-up), although there were a couple of evenings when static levels were just too high to do anything. It was very frustrating to hear snatches of stations calling, but being unable to work them effectively. I largely operated on CW – partly because I like it, but also because of its ability to get through – and I was usually doing things other than ham radio during the day. Despite some frustrations, I was pleased with the outcome as the scores on the doors indicate:

Mode	10	12	15	17	20	30	40	80	totals
CW	23	79	754	1095	1790	1341	1207	6	6296
SSB				368	8		2		378
RTTY				56	53				109
PSK				36	7				43
Dupes									333
Total									7159

And to round off?

- How do you explain to anyone what BERU means when the British Empire ended about 50 years ago?
- Will there ever again be an occasion to hear only the person you call in a European pile-up – or will those

other poor lost souls who call continuously be condemned to a hell in which they only have a huge transmitter and an internet connection - but lack both ears and a receiver?

Just a thought. 73 Nick, G3RWF / 5X1NH

Micro-DXpedition to 3A/Monaco or Three 'Silvers' hit Monte Carlo

Jim Kellaway, G3RTE

Plans

I can't quite remember when, but some time at the end of the summer Roger, G3SXW, was visiting RSGB HQ. He had e-mailed me, suggesting that after his meeting we meet up for a drink. Luckily it was one of those very rare days when we actually had some sunshine and were able to sit outside and enjoy it. Anyway, after a beer or two the talk got round to Micro-DXpeditioning. It all sounded good fun: visiting a country, doing a bit of radio, some sightseeing and having a drink or two.

For a couple of months I had been thinking of operating from Monaco. It's not the easiest of places to work. When you get there you can see the reason why. It's tucked up under some very high hills rising to 535 feet (163m) to the north. There is not a lot of room between the hills and the sea. The Principality is only 0.75 square miles (1.95 square kilometres). All the buildings are crammed in between. So with little room to spread out, the only one way to go is up! Which is also why there are so many high-rise apartment blocks.

I ran the idea past Roger and he seemed keen. We suggested we did nothing until

2008. This was fine by me, as I was already booked for a trip to Guyana as one of the operators of 8R1PW at the end of February. The only thing left was to get it past the XYL. Funnily enough she had been down in Nice during the summer and had travelled through Monaco. She wasn't that impressed. However, she didn't object to me going. At least that was the big hurdle out of the way.

Flights and Accommodation.

Things were left dormant for a while until shortly after the HFC, when after a few exchanges of e-mails Roger and I decided to go ahead and book flights. Roger seems to be pretty good at finding out the best and cheapest flights and pointed me to the easyJet website. The return fare was £50, if we picked dates carefully. There were flights from Gatwick and Luton on the same day out, which arrived at Nice within a few minutes of each other. The original plan was for Roger to stop one night and for me to stop for two. Later on it transpired that Roger's return flight had been cancelled. So he was now going to stop for two nights. In the meantime Lionel, G5LP, had agreed to join us. He was going to stop just the one night and fly back the next day.

As I am sure you are all aware, Monaco is not the cheapest place for hotels - or for anything else, come to that. Whilst checking DXCC cards at the HFC I had noticed a card go through from some Americans who had operated from there and took note of the hotel. When I got back I checked it out on the Web and found to my surprise that they were quoting about £150.00 a night B & B. A bit more than we wanted to pay. I got my local travel agent to see what they could come up with and they were able to find a place at half the price. It looked nice and was quite close to the harbour. So three rooms were booked from 26–28 March 2008.

Equipment and Aerials

Seeing as this was a Micro-DXpedition we were going to have to keep things down to a bare minimum. We would use two K2/100s plus PSUs. For aerials Roger would take his trapped 20 and 40m dipole and I was going to take a 30m and 17m dipole. In my case I also took along a small ATU and a 30m long wire. As happens on this type of operation you just don't know what you are going to find until you get there. Best to take as many types of aerial wise as possible. Whatever happened, we would make sure to get a signal out somehow!

The First Day: 26 March 2008

The flight out from Luton to Nice was very early in the morning. Even at this time I wanted to avoid the M1 and decided to go the back way from Potters Bar. I thought it might take an hour and set the alarm accordingly. In the event it only took 30 minutes. Better to be early than late, I suppose. Getting through customs was painless - and then I just had to wait until Lionel arrived. We had no problem finding each other, thanks to mobile phones. Then we just had to wait for boarding. We started to get a bit worried when we saw on the departure board that the flight to Nice was still waiting for information for boarding, while flights before and after were already

boarding. Eventually we got the go-ahead. The flight was uneventful and we had a good view as we flew into Nice airport. After clearing customs we met Roger, who had arrived just before us from Gatwick.

We had a choice of transport to Monaco. You could go by train, bus or even helicopter. We chose the bus, as the stop was right outside the arrivals terminal. The journey to Monaco took about an hour. The bus passed through numerous tunnels and nice views of the sea, or so Lionel told me. It was a great shame that at the back the bus had some sort of mesh over the windows. This made it very hard to see out properly.

We arrived in Monaco and the bus dropped us close to where the hotel was located. At reception we asked if could have rooms on the top floor. This didn't seem to be a problem and we went up by lift to the 4th floor. Roger's and my rooms were facing north which was a good start. Also, outside there was a building site, but the nearest high buildings were some way away. It certainly looked good for hanging out the dipoles, even if they were sloping.

It had been a long day so far and we were all getting hungry and thirsty. Before doing anything else, we agreed to go out for lunch. There was a nice plaza just down the road with a few restaurants. The weather was sunny and warm. It was nice to be able to sit out in the warm to eat and watch Monaco life pass by. So much so that it was quite hard to pull ourselves away and get back to the job in hand to set up the stations and get on the air.

Setting Up and Operating

We got back and unpacked the radios. It was all done in less than half an hour. Aerials were erected by hanging them from the windows and tying them off to posts on the building site. The aerials were very close to each other, probably no more than 20ft apart at the windows, but pulled off in different directions. I was still a bit worried

that we might have problems with inter-station noise. In the event I had nothing to worry about, seeing as the K2s were superb.

I kicked off on 30m CW and Roger on 20m. I had a nice pile-up running, when Roger came into the room to say that a man from the building site was down at reception and was a bit unhappy that we had entered the site as it was a designated a 'hard hat' area. We sent Roger down to negotiate in his excellent French and it was not long before all was sorted and everybody was happy.

Operations continued until about 1900 hrs local, when we went out for an evening meal. When we got back I went on 30m again and I was surprised to find the band open to Japan! How on earth the signals were getting over those mountains beats me. By 2255 hrs local the band faded and with some 360+ plus QSOs in the log I pulled the plug. I made a mental note to make sure to get back a bit earlier the following evening to work more JA stations.

The Second Day - 27th March 2008

The following day, after a rather poor breakfast and a bit of operating, we went out for some sightseeing. We took a stroll around the harbour to see the fabulous yachts. The road along the harbour front was being laid in preparation for the Monaco Grand Prix at the end of May. They were also getting the grandstands ready along the waterfront. We ended up at the Monte Carlo Casino, but resisted the temptation to go in! Another pleasant lunch was had, although it had become cloudy and not warm enough to sit outside, but we still found a good place to eat.

Lionel was then due to fly back to Luton. So after lunch we escorted him to the bus stop, which was just around the corner from the hotel. We waved him off with tears in our eyes and went back to operating.

In the evening my plans to get back on the air a bit earlier to catch the JA opening were

thwarted. Over a couple of bottles of wine in a restaurant Roger and I got into deep discussions about radio. By the time I got back the band was closing.

Roger was due to fly back the next morning and he was going to have to get up early and take his station down and make his way to Nice. We said our goodbyes.

The Third Day – 28th March 2008

I staggered out of bed and went on 30m, but found it a bit noisy. I switched over to 40m and luckily I had brought the ATU. I tuned the 30m dipole to 40m and called CQ. I was very happy to find it was getting out nicely. I kept going till even I had to close down and pack.

With an hour to go before the bus was due to leave, I took another stroll down to the harbour. It was a marvellous day with a clear blue sky and the sun shining down on the righteous! I got to the bus stop with 10 minutes to spare. A few minutes after the scheduled time the bus swung round the corner and drove right past me and disappeared in the distance. I stood there with mouth open in disbelief. This was just like home, I thought. I now had to wait another hour for the next one. After about 15 minutes, much to my surprise another bus swung round the corner and screeched to a halt. Out came the driver, who grabbed my luggage and loaded it on the bus.

When I arrived in Nice I still had a few hours to kill. My original plan was to leave my luggage at the airport and walk into Nice. By the time I found out where to leave my case and have it security-checked time was moving on. I found I could get a bus into Nice. I bought a ticket and was able to take a walk along the Promenade des Anglais in the afternoon sunshine. Then it was back to the Airport and also back to Luton.

Now for the boring stuff:

Call	20m	40m	30	Total
3A/G3RTE	2	196	573	771
3A/G3SXW	48	474	-	522
3A/G5LP	50	8	-	58
TOTALS	100	678	573	1351

Micro DXpeditioning

I thoroughly enjoyed the trip. I would certainly recommend others to have a go, even if they do it just once. A bit of radio with good company, seeing new places. What more could you ask for?

The Old Timer - 60 Years in the hobby of Amateur Radio

James (Jim) B. Smith, VK9NS, Norfolk Island

My book is finally written. It is the story of my travel through life and my becoming involved in the hobby of amateur radio. I mention being dragged 'kicking and screaming' into the hobby, but once there I enjoyed it. These days I feel that I have participated in the hobby in many ways. I have been lucky (if that is the right word) to have travelled extensively - and often the travel has been related to amateur radio in the sense of DXpeditions. Also the huge involvement of the HIDXA and its membership: a period of considerable activity in DXing etc.

Within the 600 pages of my book you will see that I have 'been there and done that' in no uncertain manner. It was the DXpedition to very remote Heard Island (the birth of HIDXA) now almost 25 years ago that focused my mind. Would I - and, of course, our group - actually survive and live to tell the tale? A sobering thought. I have always been interested in DXing - and being able to give something back to the hobby has been lots of fun and, dare I say it, often hard work. I also like the hobby in a practical way and have always been a home brewer as well as having a great interest in the administration of the hobby. It is my hope that you enjoy my book and realise just how special our hobby is in an international sense.

The book costs US\$ 40 plus postage, which to the UK adds another US\$ 5.00, but they are very quick and reliable. The book is printed in the USA. I can accept the usual Visa and Mastercard. Please contact me at jimkirsti@ni.net.nf for further information.

73 Jim, VK9NS, Norfolk Island

Money Talks - even in DXing

Roger Western, G3SXW

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Someone once said: "Money is the root of all evil". But can it be that money is damaging the noble art of DXing?

That's a controversial question. To express any opinion in this delicate area might raise some hackles. But it's really about time that someone addressed this issue.

Funding DXpeditions

At the heart of this issue is the funding of DXpeditions. The insatiable demand of DXers to work a new one is a good thing. That's enthusiasm, passion even. We are all in favour of ambition and competition, so we encourage ever more DXpeditions.

In the good old days it was all clean, moral and above-board. Maybe it's simply a reflection of declining moral standards in society as a whole, but DXing is also becoming tainted. It's not just greed, it also involves ego. Whatever the reasons, we are seeing shady dealings these days.

Things are changing. In particular the spread of wealth throughout the world and the age of cheap travel have led to an explosion in the number of operators who are nowadays DXpeditioning. In the old days (Aha, when oi wuzz a lad!) there were few DXpeditioners, mostly self-funded or part-supported by one official organisation. They activated really rare countries. If we were lucky, there was one such DXpedition every year or two.

Compare that with today's experience. We often have more than one DXpedition on the same band at the same time, but they are mostly in locations which are only semi-rare. So the overall number of DXpeditions has risen hugely in recent times.

And the age of the begging bowl has arrived.

Opportunism

So along comes the opportunist. He is someone with the right mix of skills to mount a DXpedition: travel-wise, able to mount a field-day style operation, has pile-up operating skills. He has the experience, the time, the motivation and the opportunity (that insatiable demand of DXers).

Ah, but does he have the money? An opportunist may try to get someone else to pay, whether he has or not. So let's break it down:

- the self-funded DXpeditioner decides to mount a project and pay for it entirely himself
- the DXpeditioner who will only mount a project if someone else covers his costs.

Naturally, many fall in between these two extremes: those who pay for themselves in part, but depend on others to pay a portion of the costs. I'm sorry if openly discussing money in this way is a bit tacky. But it really is about time that we took a close look at this topic.

The opportunist takes advantage. He gains personal advantage at other people's expense. He is not an entrepreneur (an honest businessman). Instead gets other people to cough up, often without justification.

Taking Advantage?

But how can it be 'taking advantage' if DXers willingly part with their hard-earned cash in order to help someone else to mount

a DXpedition so that the donor can work a new one? Again, this is a complicated question. As with so many things in life it's a matter of drawing lines in the sand. Defining morality is a very personal thing, hard to gain consensus.

Perhaps one way to define 'gaining advantage' might be to understand the motivation. If the DXpeditioner travels and operates for the love of the hobby and pays his fair share for having enjoyed a fine holiday, then this is surely OK. At the other extreme anyone who turns this into a money-earning business should be shunned by the DXing community, especially if it's by the back door. Right? It's a hobby, after all. I know someone who runs it like a business: each trip he hopes will generate enough profit to pay for the next DXpedition. I personally find this obnoxious. This is not the hobby that I love.

Mostly the peer pressure, the cultural mores, acceptable behaviours do limit excesses in this area. But there are plenty of examples of folks who would take a little bit of advantage by skimming off some cream for their own benefit. Just because they can. They, fortunately a minority, do it without compunction because they see it as normal practice.

How Do They Do It?

So here's the rub. What is unacceptable behaviour in our eyes as true-blue DXers? This is a very personal opinion, by its nature.

Let's firstly establish a core position. My favoured starting point would be that if you can't afford it, then don't go. Others should not pay for you to travel, let alone cover your costs for a holiday on a sun-kissed beach, fly in fly out, four-star hotel and pool thrown in. At the other extreme a remote rock can only be accessed by helicopter and the clamouring demand of DXers is such that they beg you to hire that helicopter and will pay for it. I don't object to that (but

might prefer that such silly little rocks be removed from the DXCC list). This is a side-effect of that passion for climbing up the DXCC ladder, which is laudable. So, I am all in favour of both these extremes.

It is the situations between these two extremes that cause the problems: those where the DXpedition could be achieved by someone who can cover let's say £1-2,000 costs. A married man with two kids takes his family on holiday to Florida for a fortnight and spends that much. A single man (DXpeditioner) could pay the same for his trip to J7 or S7 or V7.

Specifics

I've made my point: either pay for yourself or get help if you really need a helicopter (or equivalent). But what about those in-between situations?

What are acceptable methods of raising money as and when - and if - such support is needed? I would love it if there were NO funding of DXpeditions at all if the target location offers an airport and rented accommodation. Why not? If you can't afford it then don't go. We have too many badly implemented DXpeditions these days, so if there were fewer that could be good.

The mealy-mouthed tactics that the opportunists use for raising money can be pretty nasty. They involve subtle forms of bribery and blackmail: if you pay \$5 we will send your QSL card by airmail, no delay. If you pay \$10 we will upload your QSO to LotW right away, but the unwashed masses have to wait a year. This is designed to persuade us to QSL direct with a couple of extra dollars contribution. What a huge shame that the exemplary VP6DX (Ducie Island) operation employed this gutter tactic. This was a really outstanding, record-beating project, hugely successful in all ways - until they blotted their copy-book in this petty way.

The blackmail comes, of course, with the QSL card. After all what's a QSO without a QSL, at least for award purposes. So, some managers refuse bureau requests in order to raise a few extra dollars by insisting on only direct QSLing. Others make sure to respond to bureau requests as slowly as possible in order to persuade the maximum number of DXers to QSL direct, with a couple of dollars thrown in. Some intentionally delay uploading to LotW, again simply in order to maximise income with direct cards. Some pretend that they never received the direct card (and dollars) so a second one has to be sent.

Is this mealy-mouthed? It most certainly is in my book. The extra income derived from these unpleasant tactics is a small fraction of the cost of the DXpedition. All it does is create a bad taste in the mouth. Shame on them!

Solutions

Only one case comes to mind where a QSL manager was censured by the DX community at large, that of F6FNU. The rest of these cheap-skates get away with it, perhaps because they are not worthy of being held to account, because their mealy-mouthed tactics cost each of us so little. They are sad individuals who would sell their granny for a lump of coax.

Mostly, the solution might be a cultural shift to define what is and what is not acceptable in this area. The tradition of QSLing is well understood, so let's not repeat it here. If we want to throw in \$5, that's our choice. But if we are goaded into doing so by a greedy DXpeditioner, then we should resist. We don't have to play his game. Let's, for example, wait that extra year to get the DXCC credit. Not the end of the world, is it? It would help to make the point.

The same applies with these exaggerated claims about the cost of return postage. This is just another example of back-door harvesting of a few dollars. It does NOT

cost \$3 to post a direct QSL in any country in the world.

Club Sponsors

But perhaps the main solution lies with DX clubs who sponsor DXpeditions. In recent years they have gone along with the modern trend of more and more DXpeditions, and therefore giving more and more money to DXpeditions. The sums have increased dramatically in recent years.

Maybe it is time to stop and think about the situation and draw some lines in the proverbial sand. A simple example: no DXpedition should receive financial support unless it is in the top 50 of the DX Magazine Most Wanted Country Survey. The same amount of money could be spread around fewer DXpeditions, the most deserving ones, resulting in a bigger contribution per project.

The affect of such a policy might be to stop the opportunists ripping us off with free trips to holiday resorts. (They never publish their honest accounts!). If this has the effect of reducing the overall number of minor DXpeditions, then that may be no bad thing. But I bet that would NOT be the outcome. Those seeking financial sponsorship, if refused, would mostly just go anyway and pay their own costs. These free-loaders need to be refused. They only ask for money because they know we will give it, fools that we are!

Re-appraise

My stance is fairly well-known (or at least it is now!). DXpedition funding should be treated with more suspicion. Only a very few deserving cases should successfully raise financial support. Searching questions should be asked: is this the most effective use of club funds? Maybe sponsoring an amplifier or a beam for a resident DXer in a rare country could do more long-term good.

When the RSGB or CDXC or GM-DX (the three main UK donors) each decide to give £200 to a DXpedition, should not their members feel that this absolves them of responsibility to donate personally to that DXpedition? It is their money that has been donated, after all. The example mentioned earlier of VP6DX blackmailing folks into donating money is unpleasant: these three UK organisations have already paid some £600+ on behalf of their members, some of whom are subscribers to all three organisations. Why should they pay an extra

chunk of dollars to get a timely confirmation? Yes, this particular instance has triggered this little tirade – but it is indicative of a trend.

In closing, let me make an impassioned plea. This is a hobby. Let us keep it that way. Let us maintain some semblance of morality. Let us minimise the effects of ‘the root of all evil’, whilst at the same time supporting DXpeditions to the really difficult places.

DX Cluster at the Hot End

Roger Western, G3SXW

After the DXpedition dust has settled - in this case YK9G - the bills have been paid, the lawn mowed etc., one of the fun activities is to scroll through the DX Cluster spots. I spent a happy hour reading the comments on 1,000 YK9G alerts. What DX Cluster users might try to do is to put themselves in the shoes of the DXpedition operators. This might help a little. Here are some random suggestions.

Basics

Firstly, let's start with a basic fact: the comments field is limited to 29 characters. The meaning of some spots is lost when only half of the intended message makes it. Also, PLEASE re-read your Alert before hitting the Send button, to correct typing errors. Thirdly, please try not to be entirely self-centred. Maybe the DXpedition has bigger fish to fry than working your LOC on your band, at that particular time.

The same applies to propagation. It's worth checking greyline times before asking for QSY to 160m two hours after our sunrise!

Another common assumption is that DXpeditions have directional antennas on

all bands: pse beam JA now, or when you beam PY? Even ‘now beaming EU’ presumably because the signal improved. At YK9G we only had a directional beam for 20/15/10m. The rest were verticals and dipoles. Also, the rotator didn't work until G4BWP fixed it on the second day and even then there was no direction indicator. Mostly, what you hear is what you get: it's not the fault of the DXpedition operator for beaming the wrong way!

The Internet is worth checking just before or at the start-up of a DXpedition in order to learn about the facilities: bands, modes, priorities, antennas, etc. Sorry, but there was no need to ask the world-wide Cluster ‘When RTTY?’ when we had specified CW Only. The website at www.yk9g.com gave all the basic facts.

At The Hot End

Maybe we should all assume that the DXpedition does NOT have live DX Cluster feed in the shack... unless advance publicity says so. Many spots ask real-time questions: my sunrise NOW, go to 160m NOW, QRV 17m EME tonight? (you get the drift). These are pointless, seeing as most DXpeditions cannot read or answer them in real time.

Generally speaking DXpeditions will follow a pattern of firstly working the busiest openings and then migrate to the more specific openings a day or two later. In the case of YK9G this meant working mostly Europe on 40/30/20m for the first 48 hours, thinning out the pile-up and then moving later to specific JA and USA openings and poor propagation bands like 12 and 160m. It is unreasonable to expect us to concentrate on Mid-West 17m openings on the first day!

It's also worth noting that DXpedition operators are learning their way into propagation openings as the operation unfolds. We will have done our homework with propagation prediction programs, but these never fully describe the openings that are experienced on the day. Finding the JA opening on 30m might take a day or two. What we do is to take note of any unusual signals and look for that opening the following day. There's only so much that can be done in this way, especially when the team is small. The Five Star boys have honed this skill and they have the manpower. Plus, of course, propagation changes from day to day: 'not a whisper in Fla' on the Cluster one day can become '569 bingo!' the next.

A Little Understanding!

Fortunately only a few Cluster spots are critical of the operation. To be on the hot

end of a pile-up is difficult enough without having to stomach moaning minnies. From the comfort of your leather-bound armchair with climate control and coffee on tap please allow that the guys out there are doing their very best to please all of the people all of the time. And maybe there was a good reason why they went QRT at the wrong time for *you*.

Frequently there are interruptions. We cannot announce or explain them all. Visitors in the shack (sometimes very important people locally); loo breaks; fixing antennas; checking other bands for propagation; changing batteries; power cuts; just taking off the headphones for a few moments respite. We try not to leave the pile-up hanging without an information message, but sometimes it is unavoidable. Be understanding!

Some DXpedition operators are more experienced than others. They may be able to please more of the people more of the time. How does one gain experience? By starting as a beginner. Make allowances – they are all out there doing their very best; they are not purposely operating badly just to annoy you!

DXers can be very demanding and self-centred. Be aware that your negative DX Cluster comments are noted and almost all are unwelcome.

The VooDoo Contest Group's Italian Job

John Warburton, G4IRN

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One of the fun aspects of being a member of the Voodoo Contest Group is being able to share our experiences through presentations and talks to local and national clubs on our return home. This provides an opportunity for us to meet the guys in the pile-ups and share the exhilarations, frustrations, sense of camaraderie and team spirit that we enjoy so

much on our trips. Provisional CQ WW scores posted after the 2007 CW contest indicated that we had won the Multi-Multi category. Shortly after Christmas, Roger/G3SXW received an e-mail from Stefano/IK2QEI and Romeo/IK2EAD of the Brescia Contest Group, inviting him plus one other to give a 3X5A presentation at the

'Radiantistica Expo' to be held at the 'Centro Fiera del Garda' exhibition centre in Montichiari, near Milan.

A bonus was that the Brescia Contest Group would pay for our travel, hotel costs and tickets to the Expo, plus the DX Dinner in the evening. Roger asked me if I was interested. How could we possibly turn it down!?

Off to Milan

It was an early start on Saturday, 8 March. I left my home in Thames Ditton, Surrey, and drove the 10 minutes to Roger's house to collect him at 4:15am. Roger is not a morning person, so the 35 minutes drive to Gatwick Airport was largely silent! At least the roads were nice and clear at that time of day.

Having parked at the Long Stay car park we jumped on the transit bus and felt at home straight away: lots of people on the bus appeared to be going on DXpeditions, carrying antennas in ski-bags! Of course, they were off to hit the slopes, but it did raise a smile with us. Besides, we're usually carrying ski bags when it's out of season.

The easyJet flight to Milan Malpensa Airport had the usual scrummage to get decent seats, but once settled we could doze our way to Italy trying to catch up on lost sleep. On arrival we were met by Daniele/IK2SND, who drove us to the venue, about two hours away on the other side of Milan. Daniele spoke fairly good English; by now Roger and I had woken up and we talked and laughed our way along the route.

The Exhibition

We arrived at the exhibition halls in Montichiari before noon. On the outside the venue looks something like the Messe halls at Friedrichshafen: a full-on exhibition centre. We speculated that the exhibition must be quite big. Daniele explained that the main part of the exhibition consists of a

twice-yearly electronics fair and that the Contest Group hosts a Radio Fair once a year.

We entered the halls and started exploring. Our talk was due to start at 1330, which meant that we had a couple of hours to take things in. The electronics fair was spread over three halls and the Radio event was placed in a corner of one of the halls. There were probably no more than half a dozen radio stands: Petr/OK1CZ had a stand for his amateur radio and electronics dealership in Prague; also the Czech Acom dealer, as did ARI, the Italian national society. Begali also had a stand demonstrating their fine Morse keys - and a couple of other exhibits had books and an antique wireless collection. There was also a DXCC checking facility. The electronics fair had more than its fair share of ink-jet cartridges, blank storage media and lots of junk!

Over lunch the Acom stand hosted a 'Contest Snack' event consisting of free beer and sandwiches. This was a good opportunity for us to assess how many amateurs were present and start getting ourselves acquainted with them (free beer attracts radio amateurs like bees to honey!). We guessed that about 60 amateurs rolled up for this.

The 3X5A Presentation

Our talk immediately followed lunch. Few Italians speak good English and we wondered if a translator would be needed. However, they were happy for us to talk in English because simultaneous translation would double the time required. It seemed strange at the time that many of the audience were chatting amongst themselves; it took a while to realise that they were translating for each other. We spoke slowly and clearly, also loudly as one must when addressing foreigners!

The audience responded well to our 45-minute PowerPoint presentation and made us very welcome. Our 3X5A talk was one of

a number of presentations over the weekend, including the D4C contest station by Luca/IK2NJC; the Slovenian Contest Club by Tine/S5ØA; CN3A by Matteo/IK2SGC, Stefano/IK2QEI and Saaid/CN8WW.

Evening Entertainment

After our talk Daniele ran us to our hotel, about 10 minutes away. From what we saw, the town of Montichiari is built up with lots of retail outlets - although a beautiful basilica graced the town, perched on top of a hill. As we made the short drive through town we noticed three or four huge towers topped with monoband amateur radio antennas. Daniele told us that this was the home of the Brescia Contest group, our hosts for the weekend. I can't imagine towers like that appearing in any UK town centres!

After a short rest in the hotel, a chance to freshen up and get ready for the evening, we were driven over to the restaurant where the DX Dinner was being hosted. About 100 amateurs were present. This was a good chance to meet more of the local IK2s, many of whom were keen to practise their English on us. The meal itself was very pleasant, with a seemingly endless supply of food and wine appearing on the tables.

We eventually got back to our hotel at around midnight and ended up chatting at the bar for a couple of hours with Tine/S5ØA, Kristjan/S5ØXX, Ted/S5ØX and Andy/YO3JR - before heading off to bed for the night. Voodudes do like to party!

Home Again

It was another early start on Sunday morning for the flight back to Gatwick - and we were home in time for Sunday lunch, barely 30 hours after leaving.

Of course a trip to meet Italian amateurs was a good chance to ask about our old friend, IT9RYH, and his reputation. There was a mixed response: some were completely frustrated and ashamed of his antics, while others felt he was misunderstood and that he was only unreasonable when provoked. Either way, he was always described as being part of the mafia family!

All in all we had a great trip to Italy. It was a real pleasure to meet new friends and share our 3X5A experiences. The Radio Expo was a small affair attended mainly by local amateurs, but it is worth dropping in if you do happen to be in the area.

G4OBK Down Under

Phil Catterall, G4OBK *cq@philcatterall.plus.com*

We took a holiday in Australia in February/March and visited some family we have there. After travelling around the eastern side of the country I was lucky to strike up a relationship with the Manly-Warringah Radio Society, north of Sydney. After visiting the club a few days before the contest, Committee members David, VK2CZ, and Dom, VK2JNA, agreed to help me operate using their club call sign,

VK2MB, in the 71st BERU (RSGB Commonwealth CW Contest). I had applied to Steve, VK6VZ, to join their VK team of ten operators and was accepted at the last minute. However, I did not know I was in the ten-man VK team until I returned to UK and checked my e-mail - a week after the end of the contest!

Most readers will know that BERU has a long history. It is 24 hours long, 80-10m (no WARC). There are various sections, you don't make that many contacts (compared to say CQ WW), but what you work is quality DX scattered around the world in the former British Empire.

BERU starts at 1000z, which corresponds to 9.00pm in Sydney. BERU from the UK morning usually starts by working Cyprus, Africa and the odd Oceania on 15m and 20m. In VK it's well dark, so you start on 40m and 80m working Canada, Australia and New Zealand. It was hours before any EU Commonwealth (including the UK) appeared in the log. The VK2MB Club allowed me the use of their FT1000-MP MkV, a TH3 Tribander and an 80m inverted V both at 30ft. On 40m I had a vertical dipole. I took my own laptop running Super Duper Commonwealth (SDC - thanks to Paul EI5DI) and Bencher key with USB Winkeyer. I was on my own in the club shack for the duration of the contest, save for the odd visit from club members on the Sunday to offer support and bring me strong coffee. The shack is a shared building - a 'Volunteer Services Centre' located in what the locals call 'The Bush'. It sounds remote, but it's not - a main road passes by and there is a pub nearby. The centre houses VK2MB, Coastal Patrol, Bush Fire, Flood service crews and other groups - all on 24/7 cover for any emergencies that may occur in the region.

So how did my contest go? It wasn't plain sailing. I borrowed a family friend's Saab to get me the 30 miles out of Sydney to the club, arriving early Saturday evening. I had my own key to the club shack and it took me around two hours to set everything up to my liking, leaving time for a sandwich and drink before the start.

The only minor hitch I had was when I could not get the CAT on the Yaesu to function on receive. It would occasionally kick in on TX - I never did understand why. However, within 15 minutes of the start I

realised that RF was getting into the switch-mode PSU of the 200W Yaesu - but only on 80m. The rig kept shutting down, my CW was telling the PSU to turn itself off! Great! I relocated the PSU and spaced the leads out - problem solved.

The next snag: 80m RF was getting into my Winkey and stopping the software from working in the laptop. That meant that I couldn't use the laptop F Keys to send contest exchanges and CQ calls. Nor could I vary the keying speed. I lived with that for the time being and just sent by hand when on 80m to save locking up the laptop. I fixed it later by using a separate 12V 'wall wart' PSU to power the Winkeyer rather than the 12V phono socket on the back of the FT-1000MP. So I settled in and worked 88 stations in around five hours - not such a bad rate in BERU, where searching for stations and swapping bands continually is the norm. It had got slow, though, around 2.00am local time, so I decided to go out to the Saab for a two hour kip. This sleep would get me through the full 24 hours. I returned on time, well before sunrise to unlock the shack and this was when I had a real problem. The key snapped off in the shack doorlock and my mobile was inside with the gear left on, all powered up. I noticed earlier, however, that the club members had run the coax from my temporary aerials into the shack via a rather high-up window around the back. Further investigation told me that this was too high to reach, so I went looking for assistance. I found two Aussie guys nearby drinking beer around a bonfire. They were part of a fire crew and soon found me a short ladder. To cut a long story short, one of them got in through the window and allowed me access again to the shack without problem. So I was contesting again with the minimum of delay and operated without any problems through to the finish. The lock got fixed the next day.

So how did I do as VK2MB? Better than I at first thought. On claimed scores I am 7th in the 10-man VK Team, with 3,920 points

from 219 QSOs. It looks as though we may have won the team contest too. DX conditions? Well, I worked nothing on 10m, 15m was reasonable, 20m was lousy (only four UK stations worked: G4TSH, G3BJ, GW3YDX and GM0GAV). 40m was outstanding for me, with 42 UK stations worked including many CDXC Members,

and 80m was reasonable (three UK stations worked: G3FPQ, G4BUO and G4TSH).

Yes, it was great doing BERU from Australia, so a big thank you to the friendly guys at Manly-Warringah Radio Society who really made me welcome. www.qsl.net/vk2mb/.

A brief introduction to Club Log

Michael Wells, G7VJR

Club Log - 'The ADIF Acrobat'

<http://clublog.g7vjr.org/>

Club Log is a website designed to produce reports and competitive league tables from participating members' logs, which they can upload, much like Logbook of the World or eQSL. It's being actively used by CDXC members and you are invited to join in.

How did it start, and how does it work? In 2007 I started designing a tool to provide a chart of DXCCs I'd worked, with a log search function for people who wanted to QSL or were curious if they had worked G7VJR. I wanted this tool to be completely automated. The idea was to process my ADIF logs (exported from my logging software) and create the reports and search features, just by analysing the QSOs.

I hope you are not lost at this point – have a look in your logging software and see if you can find a menu that lets you 'export to ADIF' – as you will find most do. It's a common way of storing radio logs in computer format. While I was doing some planning I decided that it would be quite interesting to extend the idea and create a service anyone could sign up and use, not just me. As well as being useful to other radio friends, I reasoned that if the database

grew to have more participants, then it could be mined to make league tables of DXCCs worked, including making league tables for specific modes or clubs (both rather intensive to do by hand). The other thing I decided to do was take the manual labour out of creating most-wanted lists. It is quite a simple task for a computer to work out which DXCC entities are logged least often, and even to break this down by mode or by time periods. It just needs to be fed a lot of QSOs and the information can be readily processed. Ideally, millions of QSOs...

So Club Log was born. It is a web-based application which uses a database to analyse amateur radio log files, which are uploaded in the common ADIF format. Using the logs it builds band-mode league tables of amateurs' QSOs, provides efficient log search tools and creates most wanted lists for DXCC entities (both over all time and in recent history - or by mode, for example). Also, Club Log can give back to its users the ability to find 'wanted' DX spots and other analysis of their logs which might be hard to do with normal logging software.

How to sign up

I realise that using new websites can be a little daunting. Please don't be put off by all the jargon. Remember, to take part in Club Log you just need to sign in and upload

your ADIF file from your logging software. If you do this, you will enrich the database and improve the quality of the most-wanted lists, so please be encouraged to join in. Obviously it's free.

To join Club Log, simply go to <http://clublog.g7vjr.org> and then click the button labelled 'sign up' in the top menus. Signing up involves filling in your name and e-mail address and typing in a single number from a sequence of about eight digits. You will be e-mailed a code to confirm your e-mail address is valid. Unfortunately I have to do these things to stop the system being abused. Thanks for your understanding – just follow the instructions and you'll be registered in a minute or two.

After you have signed in you will find you can set up one or more callsigns. For example, you might have a 'G' and a 'GM' logbook, so they are both separate callsigns. After you have added your callsigns you can go on to upload your ADIF files. Simply export your entire log (yes, even if it's really big!) and save it somewhere on your computer. Then click on the button that says 'Upload' in the menu of the Club Log site, and follow the instructions to upload the file.

It takes a while for Club Log to process new logs, because it does an exhaustive analysis of each DX call you work to try and determine where the callsign is (for DXCC purposes).

While your log is being processed, you can access the following features:

- About
This is a page of information about Club Log, including a graph of how many people and callsigns are active, and analysis of the SSB/CW/datamodes splits for the complete set of logs in the system.
- Upload

This is where you can upload new logs. You'll find it is in several steps. Please follow the instructions carefully and you will have no problems.

- League
From here you can access DXCC band-mode league tables. There are options to break the charts down by club (you can choose the clubs to which you belong on the 'Settings' page – see below). You can also access the '5 year league', which is specifically aimed at newer amateur radio operators who can't hope to compete with the old timers!
- Search
This is a log search function designed for DXpedition users who want to offer a log search on their own homepage. If you perform a search, the results will show a breakdown of bands and modes, but of course the exact times will not be disclosed, to protect the integrity of QSLing.
- Most-Wanted
This tool builds a ranked list of DXCC entities which are 'wanted'. It is based on the percentage of users who haven't worked the entity, and can be filtered by mode or time.
- Charts
Club Log will generate a chart for any of your callsigns, which will show each entity against bands. At the top of the page you can change the way the chart works to filter by mode and date. At the bottom of the chart, a graph of your QSOs per year, and your CW/SSB/Data split as a percentage are displayed.
- LF Challenge
This is a special report which shows 160/80/40 QSOs worked during the month of March. This in turn can be

used to enter the LF Challenge, and perhaps win the CDXC Penallt Trophy. Competition is fierce - for further details see www.cdxc.org.uk/awards/lf-challenge.

- Spots
Using the information contained in your log, Club Log is able to easily work out which DXCC entities you haven't worked. Using this list it can filter the DX Cluster and give you a personalised cluster that only lists spots that are about the DXCCs you need. The list updates about once a minute. Of course, if you've worked them all then you will have to wait for a new entity like Kosova to be approved!
- Settings
Use this page to manage your password, add callsigns, change the clubs of which you are a member, or (if you really need to) delete logs from Club Log. You might need to do that if you have made a mistake, like uploading a duff log or sending a log to the wrong callsign.
- Log Out
If you're on a shared PC, don't forget to log out to protect your account.

About ADIF and special callsigns

Skip this bit if you're not interested in an autopsy of how ADIF works.

In an ideal world all callsigns would resolve to one - and only one - DXCC entity. In practice, though, there are lots that don't, like VP8, ZK and (increasingly) USA callsigns used on expeditions in the Pacific. In fact there are lots of annoying exceptions and more appear every year.

Some logging tools are very advanced. When you enter your QSO, these tools generally have a specific DXCC entity number encoded against each callsign you work, and they include this in ADIF files they generate. If so, then Club Log will use this – by far the best solution provided you haven't made any mistakes.

However, some logging software doesn't encode a DXCC number (I can appreciate why – it's not easy to get it right). In these cases, Club Log will try and work out the DXCC number for you. This is fairly accurate. It uses a combination of lists, DXpedition records from the past, manual rules added by me and other Club Log users, and it also mines existing logs to see if other users have been consistently recording the callsign against a particular location. Between these sources, it can usually be sorted out. It just takes a lot longer.

If your log is being analysed by Club Log (ie you don't export DXCC entity numbers in your ADIF file), then when you upload your log, especially if you've been active for a long time, you can help me and other Club Log users by identifying any mistakes Club Log has made, and emailing them to michael@g7vjr.org.

Acknowledgements

Club Log was inspired by a clever idea from Dominic, MØBLF (called HamELog), which provided DXCC charts and log search for a single callsign. Dominic has a knack of inventing and implementing ideas like this.

I would also like to acknowledge Marios, 5B4WN, who was able to give me some good code and ideas on how to turn callsigns into DXCC entities reliably.

Logger32 – Too Good to be Free?

John Butcher, G3LAS

It's amazing how the art of writing logging software has progressed in recent years. Some readers may remember an article I wrote back in 2001, extolling the virtues of a programme called Prolog. I still think it's pretty good but I began to feel that as it developed it began to throw up a few too many issues, at least for me. I therefore did another survey, the upshot of which was that about a year ago I became hooked on Logger32, so I thought I'd tell you why.

The most important thing about logging programmes is that they cannot be all things to all men. Everyone has his/her views on what is needed or essential, so if you think you will be satisfied with any offering as it comes 'out of the tin', you will almost certainly be disappointed, whatever your choice. Maybe the simplest way to approach any possible piece of software is to be aware of what it is *not* and then to look at what it sets out to do in broad terms. These two aspects should enable you to narrow the choices down to a short list.

First, Logger32 is not a contest logger, although it can be used for casual contesting, ie it supports the use of serial numbers. Second, it does not have a print module, so this must be done 'externally'. (There is an independent and very good programme called LogPrint which works well with Logger) If these restrictions are unsupportable to you, then look elsewhere... but I suggest that you do persevere and read on for a bit longer.

What Logger32 *is*, is a very comprehensive, highly configurable logger for general operating. It has several interfaces for import and export which enable it to link with other software for peripheral functions like contesting, printing, etc. Apart from logging per se, the programme has a very versatile awards tracking capability, not

only for the 'standards' such as DXCC, WAZ, WAS, IOTA etc., but for most others of the user's choice. (I did say it was very comprehensive and highly configurable)

Many people, including me, fight shy of the all-singing, all-dancing programmes because they frequently become far too complicated to use. Logger32 is very easy to use because you see only what you choose to see, as you want to see it. The down side of this is that it is a tad tricky to configure to your needs, or rather the process of setting it up can be a bit long-winded. However, you don't have to do it all at once. You can decide what you want as you go along and build it up gradually. After a year there are still many features I haven't explored or even become aware of, but I use it very happily almost every day. The rest of the delights are hidden until I choose to explore them and decisions made now do not pre-empt what I might decide to do later.

The basis of Logger32 is a very powerful but simple database structure serviced by well-thought-out processes for the various functions. This simplicity is the key to the versatility and configurability. A logging programme needs essentially to enter QSOs into a file. Anything else is an add-on. If you want a fully relational database with an elaborate structured query language and extensive reporting features, one which does absolutely everything you want and nothing you don't want, you're unlikely to find such features in a simple, user-friendly logger. If it did exist, it probably wouldn't lend itself to continuous further development and good tolerance of miscellaneous operating system quirks, not to mention operator quirks.

"So much for the philosophy, but what about the features?", I hear you ask. Like most Windows loggers, the programme presents itself via a number of sub-

windows, from which you choose the ones you want to see at any time and arrange them on the screen in any way you prefer. Incidentally, when you've done this, they stay where you put them, which cannot be said of all the competition. What's more, they're still there the next time you start up. I suppose the basic windows for most people are the log page, the QSO entry form and perhaps the DX cluster display, if you're into that sort of thing. Datamode addicts will probably have the sound card data window up as a default – the programme offers a choice of the well-known MMTTY and MMVARI engines for RTTY, PSK etc. in many variants.

Logger32 can be integrated fully with most popular transceivers, providing readout of frequency and mode information and control of the radio from the software. It has a band map window which shows recent cluster spots plotted on a frequency scale of the band in use, together with an arrow indicating the current transceiver frequency. The cluster interface uses a Telnet protocol and displays spots which are colour-coded to show the award status of the stations spotted, ie worked, needed, not QSLd etc. The spots can be filtered by band, mode and continent of the DX or of the originator.

Apart from the normal cluster window, there are two links to other online DX information sources. You can bring up windows which list either the current DX activities as listed in 425 DX News, or those IOTA operations currently displayed on the IOTA website. These also are colour-coded according to your award status for each entity listed.

For the CW operator there is a fully-featured 'CW Machine' which is a very comprehensive memory (36 of them) keyer. This facility can be used on its own or in conjunction with WinKey. There is also a Digital Voice Keyer, which will play back pre-recorded files and messages. The precise capabilities of this will depend on your hardware configuration. A tracking

window offers cylindrical and azimuthal world maps with greyline, cluster spot displays and satellite tracking information. A separate map window shows the NCDXF beacons and the receiver can be automatically tuned to follow the keying sequence of the chain. This is a fascinating indicator of prevailing propagation conditions.

Like everything else in Logger32, the DX awards tracking is configurable to almost any need. The 'basic' awards of DXCC, DXCC Challenge, WAC, WAZ, WAS, US Counties and IOTA are built-in, with tracking by band and mode. Other awards can be tracked by customising the system, based on a concept of primary and secondary sub-divisions of the countries table. Although there are restrictions on what can be done in this way, the possibilities are much more comprehensive than those in any other logging software I have come across to date.

By now readers will surely have got the message that Logger32 is incredibly adaptable to what the user may require of a logging programme. The consequence of this is that setting it up to meet every aspect of your needs is not simple. However, there is help on hand. The built-in help file is, to say the least, comprehensive. It is also well-written and well illustrated. I have rarely failed to find what I need. Nevertheless, any large software system needs reliable and speedy back-up. The author of Logger32 is Bob Furzer, K4CY, and he tries to keep the user community at arm's length, not because he is uncooperative, but because otherwise he would be swamped with queries and be unable to concentrate on future developments. However, there is a thriving user forum (go to Yahoo! Groups and look for hamlogger) which is a mine of information and help. There is also a team of beta testers and 'experts' who are in touch with the author and who contribute to the forum. Foremost among these is Geoff Anderson, G3NPA, who spends a lot of time replying to queries posted on the

forum. No-one need stay problem-bound for long. In conclusion, Logger32 must be one of the most comprehensive logging programmes around. In this article I have

tried only to give a flavour of its capabilities. There is much more. It's huge, it works, it's reliable and it's free! What more could you want? Try it.

Visit to the Southeastern DX Club, Atlanta, GA and the International DX Convention, Visalia, CA – April 2008

Neville Cheadle, G3NUG

Wes, W3WL, heard that I was going to the Visalia Convention and asked if I could route through Atlanta and give a talk on 3B7C to the SEDXC. I was very pleased to do this as Wes is an old friend who was on the D68C DXpedition in 2001 and who also lead our sponsorship drives in the US for funds for our various DXpeditions.

I flew on Delta from Manchester on 22 April. Manchester is a great airport, by the way: it took just 12 minutes from arriving to relaxing in the Club Lounge. A good flight too, with happy flight attendants. I said the lamb chops were a bit tough – I thought that there were no serrations on the knife! The lady responded, “Ah, you probably got one of those lambs that had just climbed the mountain”. A replacement dish of pasta appeared very quickly.

We arrived in Atlanta an hour ahead of schedule and then the troubles started, a large number of international flights having arrived at the same time. They were even calling for Albanian and Italian speakers and it took just over an hour to get through passport control. Then another hold up: you have to pass through another security check when you leave the terminal, as apparently they cannot differentiate between passengers transferring to other flights and those exiting at Atlanta. You are asked to pack any duty-free bought on board in your main baggage which then disappears down a conveyer. There was another hour's wait because of a huge queue at security. Atlanta

is an airport to be avoided at all costs at rush hour. Wes had been patiently waiting for over two hours. We took the train to near his home in Rossmore. It was good to see Wes and Bev again after many years. They lived close to us in the UK when they were here in the late 90s. Wes has kept up his CDXC membership ever since.

The following day we had a look around Rossmore prior to the evening's SEDXC meeting. It's a lovely part of the world; the temperature was in the mid 70s and there was a pleasant breeze. But it gets very humid from late May onwards. The meeting went well, with 65 SEDXC members SEDXC attending. It was great to be able to present the 3B7C story personally as SEDXC was a major club sponsor. We sold 14 DVDs and a few copies of our DXpeditioning book. I was made an honorary member of SEDXC.

The next day Wes took me to the Georgia Aquarium, which has the mission 'To be the World's Most Engaging Aquarium Experience'. It really was fantastic, with every type of fish from red piranhas to whale sharks. There are huge walls of fish protected with one-foot thick glass sheet. This was a really worthwhile visit.

After lunch we visited Hal, N4GG, at his lovely home. Zoning restrictions prevent the installation of masts there, so Hal has a complete all-band wire antenna farm amongst the pine trees. There's a lazy-H for

20m, many verticals and dipoles and lots of open-wire feeder. Apparently this station works like a dream and is a very competitive SO2R station with two MPs, two ACOM 2000 linears and a huge amount of automatic band switching.

The really interesting part of my visit to Hal's QTH was to see the spark transmitter he was building to the original designs of the early 20th century. The wine bottle capacitors glowed and gave off a tremendous ozone and corona. There were some huge voltages around. I stood well back and keyed the spark transmitter - a new experience for me.

The next day I flew across the States to San Francisco and drove to Visalia, an uneventful trip. Arnie, N6HC, had organised a dinner for the 3B7C and Clipperton teams, which was great fun. My goodness, those guys on Clipperton had a really tough time, with appalling weather after a long boat trip. We took a picture of the seven CDXC members there: Arnie, N6HC; Bob, N6OX; Gordon, G3USR; Chris, G3SVL (and Jenny); Jim, KF7E; John, N7CQQ (who has just rejoined) and Yours Truly. Eric K3NA, another CDXC member, joined us in the hotel in the bar later and told us much more about the Ducie Is VP6DX trip.

Visalia is an excellent convention, with around 600 DXers staying mainly at the Holiday Inn and with a further 400 day visitors. There is a packed programme starting at 0800 on the Saturday and running

through to 1645. There are two main streams: one mainly about DXpeditioning and one technical. The convention is well supported by sponsors – there is a very large room for exhibitors – and the raffle prizes are just fantastic, including a tubular tower, Icom IC-756 Pro III and Yaesu FT-2000 transceivers.

This year's DX Convention Banquet presentation featured Ducie Island, VP6DX, by Eric, K3NA. Eric did a superb job with a very different type of presentation. After the talk I was delighted to present Eric with the CDXC Award of Merit given to the VP6DX DXpedition. This gave me personally great pleasure, as Eric is a good friend. Some of our D68C records had stood for seven years until they were shattered by the VP6DX operation. However, it was in my capacity as President of CDXC that I presented the Award of Merit. This was a real surprise to everyone there, as only three people knew about this in advance.

Sunday starts early with a breakfast buffet at 0730. I gave the 3B7C presentation. It was great to be able to thank the very large numbers of sponsors in person. We sold some more DVDs and took some more photographs with Don, G3BJ, and Hilary, G4JKS being present. So CDXC was well represented, with 10 members there. It's a great convention and well worth a visit. The trip home was uneventful but long, as I had to route through Atlanta again. This time there was no hassle with security checks!

CDXC Award of Merit to VP6DX

K3NA de G3NUG, 17 March 2008

Hi Eric,

I am delighted to let you know that the VP6DX DXpedition is to be awarded the very prestigious CDXC Award of Merit. This was agreed at the CDXC Committee meeting on Saturday and announced at the CDXC Annual Dinner.

Previous winners are: 3B9C Rodrigues Island, D68C Comoro Islands, ZL9CI Campbell Island, 9MØC Spratly Islands, VKØIR Heard Island.

The citation will read, 'For outstanding and unselfish contributions to the field of HF amateur radio and DXing'. Congratulations and all the best.

Neville, President CDXC

G3NUG de K3NA, 25 March 2008

Hello Neville,

I have been out of town and just catching up on accumulated e-mail and postal mail. And I have to say that I am now feeling a little stunned and very humbled. Please thank the CDXC Committee for considering the VP6DX project for such an award. Through their early support the CDXC as an organisation and many of its members individually were essential in making this project feasible. Furthermore, any successes of the VP6DX project trace directly back to the trail illuminated by CDXC members involved in the Five Star projects. On behalf of all the members of the VP6DX project team, thank you for this honor.

With warmest regards, Eric, K3NA

IOTA News

Roger Balister, G3KMA

Update of data in IOTA Directory (2007 Edition)

New IOTA reference numbers issued

AS-185 XV Gulf of Tongking South group (Vietnam)

Operations which have provided acceptable validation material

AS-128	XV3M	Phu Quoc Island (March 2008)
AS-130	XV3M	Con Son Island (March/April 2008)
AS-185	XV3M	Con Co island (March 2008)
OC-178	H4ØMY	Tikopia Island, Temotu Islands (October 2007)
SA-043	XR7A	Ascension Island (January/February 2008)
SA-053	XR7W	Wager Island (February 2008)
SA-071	PW2M	Moela Island (February 2008)
SA-080	PY6KW/P	Boipeba Island (March 2008)

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

Roger Balister, G3KMA

RSGB IOTA Manager, 20 April 2008

The RTTY Column

Phil Cooper, GUØSUP *pcooper@guernsey.net*

What an amazing few months it has been for RTTY! VP6DX, 9XØR and 5T5DC all did a fair bit of RTTY. I did manage VP6DX on 30m, and got 5T5DC on 20, 17 and 15m. Sadly, TX5C only made a few RTTY contacts, and I wasn't one of them! And I missed out on 9XØR completely. The 9X team were quite loud at times, but they just weren't hearing me at all. At one point, they were on 15m calling CQ over and over again, and I tried calling from about 500 Hz up, right up to 3 kHz up, and still no joy. I guess they may well have had QRN at their end, but such is life, and you can't work 'em all!

The BARTG RTTY Contest was fairly good, with some good DX around to work. I logged VU2PTT, VU2NKS (both confirmed on LoTW), 9V1UV and YI9MI all on 20m, and all within an hour.

The EA RTTY Contest suffered under very poor conditions and it was hard work to find any Stateside stations. I did work a few, but only the real big guns on the Eastern side.

The other bands have been quite lively on occasions, with VP2ENK and HH4/K4QD worked on 17m, and an evening session on 30m produced PT7AZ, PZ5RA and MM5DWW. Oddly, MM5DWW was a new one for me on that band, and is already confirmed on LoTW. I also worked K3TRM/6Y5 on 20m for a new band-slot, and this was my 165th country confirmed on LoTW. Another band-slot that I managed to fill was 7Z1SJ on 15m.

Some while ago I downloaded a piece of software called MMD. It is written by Oba, JA7UDE, and is a bridge between MMTTY and DXKeeper. The idea is that you start MMD before running MMTTY and DXKeeper, and when you use the logging facility in MMTTY it then logs directly into

DXKeeper. Until now, I had never tried it, but I decided to give it a go, just to see how well it works. It comes as a zip file and you only need to unzip it into a folder. The EXE file runs directly and doesn't write anything to the Registry, which is neat. The only thing you must do is to run MMTTY, then go to the Logging set-up, click on the CONVERSION tab, and check the radio button marked TURBOHAMLOG/WIN. Now you are ready to run!

I recently tried it on a CQ session on 20m, and if you click on the callsign in the window, and then click on QSO, DXKeeper shows you any previous QSOs with that call. I found that you can also have DXView running, and the call is entered there as well, giving you beam heading, time difference and so on. It really did work very neatly and I was most impressed. I just wonder why I didn't try it out before. The advantage is the fact that I don't now need to export the log as an ADIF from MMTTY and then import it into DXKeeper.

MMD also works with MMSSTV and MMVARI, as a bridge between MMTTY and also the DXBase logging program. It is available from the DXLabsuite website at www.dxlabsuite.com or from Oba's own home page at <http://aobajoke.no-ip.org/~ja7ude/english/index.html>. There is also a similar bridge for MMTTY to HRD, which may interest some of you.

Since the last column CQ Magazine has announced that its WPX award will now cover RTTY and the digital modes. WPX is not an award I have had any serious interest in, as until now it hasn't catered for RTTY. On seeing this announcement, I started to wonder just how many prefixes I have confirmed. Out came the QSL boxes, and the sight of all those cards was a slightly daunting experience. However, the only

way for me to check them was to start going through them and listing them all. I used Excel to do this, so that I could then sort them. Entering them took quite a few hours, over several days. Sorting them was quick, but I then spent another few hours going through the list to remove any dupes. After that was done, I had over 1,000 unique prefixes! I submitted the spreadsheet to Steve Bolia, N8BJQ, and was told that I have 1,004 prefixes credited (I somehow missed a few dupes), and should get RTTY WPX award number 5 when it is printed.

Rather surprisingly, CQ do not appear to have updated their awards page to cover this new version as yet. However, it was printed in the May edition of the magazine.

Just a thought, but does anyone ever submit their scores for the CQ Marathon? I have done so for the past couple of years, simply out of curiosity, and for 2007 I was told I was the only 'all RTTY' entrant. For 2007 my tally was 135 countries and 35 zones, for a total of 170 points. Full details are available from the CQ website.

What DX can we expect over the next few months? Glorioso Island FR/G is to be activated during May, but whether they will do RTTY is unclear as yet. The dates for the operation are tentative, but should run until the end of May. Otherwise:

Tunisia, 3V8SS, from 15-26 May, by Z33F and Z31MM. QSL via IZ8FWN.

Fiji, 3D2A, from 17-31 May, by VK4AN and VK4FRAJ. QSL is via VK4AN and LoTW.

Market Reef, OJØ, from 01-07 June by an SM team. QSL route to be decided.

Timor Leste, 4W6, by an EA team for about two weeks during the period 01-30 June. QSL is via EA4URE.

Forthcoming RTTY contests:

ANARTS (VK)	14-15 June
Ukrainian DX Digi	21-23 June (RTTY and PSK)
DL-DX RTTY	5-6 July
SARTG DX	16-17 August
SCC RTTY (S5)	30-31 August
Russian WW	6 September

And that's it for another issue, so good DX, and I hope to see you on the bands.

73 Phil GUØSUP

The West of England Radio Rally

organised by the Severnside TV Group

Frome, Somerset

(close to Longleat)

Sunday, 29 June 2008

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

www.westrally.org.uk

Contest

Lee Volante, GØMTN

Welcome to this month's 'Contest' column. The usual diverse collection of contesting related trivia awaits fellow riders on the (geomagnetic) storm.

Contester demographics again

I've previously mentioned that we can measure the changing age of the contesting population from contests like the All Asian DX contest, which have your age as the exchange (and multiplier), and similarly in the Slovenian Contest Club EUHFC / SCC RTTY contests, where the year in which you were first licensed is used. We've seen that contesters, like the amateur population as a whole, are on average getting older.

One of the unexpected benefits of the latest DXpedition on-line log systems, such as the one developed by Marios, 5B4WN, and introduced with the 3B7C expedition and already being utilised by other groups (VP6, YK9 etc.), is revealing more information about the QSOs made during an expedition. A comment made on the CDXC Yahoo! reflector by Neil, GØJHC, about the top 100 band/mode Gs in the VP6DX log was that only a very small percentage had been licensed less than 20 years.

The succinct reply from Andy, G3SVD, hypothesised that the older generation had been working hard all of their lives so they could finally own enough real estate to put up some competitive antennas. Then, when retired or semi-retired, they have time to spend on the air chasing DX stations. The same could certainly be said of contesters – although even the 'easily accessible' and 'family friendly' 80m Club Championships would be very different without the G3 contingent. Looking at my April CW log for the 80m CC, excluding the handful of

overseas calls, G+2 letter calls and a single G8, the relative breakdown of the 'common' UK callsign prefixes is follows, for my log of over 120 QSOs, obtained by both calling CQ and answering other CQ calls.

2*	1%
G*3	46%
G*4	27%
G*Ø	14%
M*Ø	12%
M*3	0%

I should make it clear that there are a greater number of M* and 2* stations entering the SSB and Data events, but this example of a UK CW contest is, I think, representative of typical activity. Some recent analysis of a greater range of RSGB HF contest entries by Mike, G3GMS, revealed very similar results overall.

Why do G3's and G4's make up 70% of the total in my example? If this ratio is similar for the most active DXers, or attendees to the HF Convention or any rally, then there's nothing specific within 'contestng' giving concern. If the PSK sub-bands or Echolink nodes are teeming with M3 and MØ activity, with little sign of a change of direction from them towards contesting (and DXing) over time, then we'd need to ask ourselves why. Even us 'G-nothings' are getting a little old in the tooth now, and the first MØ callsigns will be 13 years old this year.

By the way, whilst I mention that I read those particular comments on the CDXC Yahoo! reflector, I must admit the numerous back and forth 'chat' and pseudo-DX Cluster reports mean that I can't promise I won't miss some specific news from all of the submissions posted. I can only promise to try my best!

QSL Practices

I was recently sent a large parcel of cards from my QSL Bureau sub-manager. I'm not a huge fan of QSL cards, but happily accept that for some people they are a significant part of their hobby and so will *generally** reply to all received. (*see later!) If someone can spend a few seconds to work me on air (even if they're not particularly interested in the contest), then it would seem only fair that I return the favour from the perspective of QSLing.

As a contester making an above average number of contacts each year, replying to QSLs can be a time-consuming process. But the effort seems worthwhile when on those rare occasions I receive a card which claims 'thanks for new country' or band/mode country. Yes, somewhere 'G' is in demand. I was pleased to receive an e-mail just after the WPX SSB contest from a DO station who wanted to exchange QSL cards for a QSO on 80m SSB. I couldn't really understand the logic of being excited about such a QSO – but as long as *he* was excited, then that's great for him and the future of the hobby.

There have been many articles written in the *Digest* over the years explaining QSLing practices and ethics. Most of these have been written by home-based DX chasers or from the perspective of the DXpeditioner, and all have been useful to emphasise best practice. There are, however, a couple of contest-specific QSL quirks which I've noticed whilst trying to process this latest batch.

Contesters are more likely than most amateurs to have use of multiple callsigns. They may be club callsigns, short contest callsigns, or (for stations outside the UK) other special prefixes or suffixes. It's understandable to just print one design of QSL card, with both regular and alternative callsigns printed on them.

But it's not much fun for me when receiving such a card and finding that the 'checkboxes' against the callsigns are not filled in. Similarly it's easy to get caught out when a printed label with the QSO details on it does not match any callsign printed on the card at all. Worse still is when the QSL card is missing a /P or other suffix. I use Logger32 as my main station log, and it does not return QSO matches in the 'Previous QSO' window unless the callsign matches completely. (Depending on your point of view, this could be a good or bad feature of the software!) The ultimate poor examples of contest QSLing I've found are when the callsign I have logged does not match any record on the QSL card or label at all. For example: AO1 instead of EA1, OG1 instead of OH1 and so on. It may be a novelty, and give a small advantage to testers if you have a variety of short and/or unusual callsigns to use. But please remember which callsign was used when it comes to QSLing.

The second area of concern is to do with mass-QSLing. For contest stations that make a lot of QSOs it may seem easier to QSL everyone than to reply to specific QSL requests that are received. Whilst a DX station may have great demands for their QSL cards, the same can't be true for a common European station, can it? Whilst QSL cards can sometimes go astray during their magical transit through the bureau system, I've stopped replying to 'blindly' sent cards when I can see I've already responded for the same band / mode combination at least twice before.

WPX Challenge

Whilst the contesting heavyweights were debating the pros and cons of having a maximum of 36 hours operating allowed for single operators in the SSB and CW CQ WPX contests (with the RTTY event being different again with a 30-hour limit) on the CQ-Contest reflector, I went to the other extreme and wondered what could be done in one single hour.

SSB contests are tough. SSB contests with the stereotypical '100W and a dipole / vertical' are tough. SSB contests at the bottom of the solar cycle are tough. I'm sure I don't need to elaborate further. So whilst 36 hours may be too little for the guys chasing after WRTC points and those that may have flown to the Caribbean for the weekend, for my local club members 36 hours was too long to keep them motivated. So I set a 'WPX Challenge' – operate as long as you like, work as many people as you can, and the winner will be the person with the highest rate in any 60-minute period. I added a weighting factor for QRP / QRO / gain antennas etc.

One club member not only took part, but noted it was his first HF contest for 10 years. He'd also downloaded SD and done his first ever computer logging, and even sent the log in. A superb result in the experiment! For the majority of folks who ostensibly 'can't win', finding ways that they can be competitive, and setting appropriate goals, is vital to maintain interest and morale. With some of the international contests there are certificates to chase for single-band entries, maybe even low power and QRP single-band entries too.

As an aside, owing to the surprise snow and ice that greeted us in April, my LF antenna support was frozen on one of the 80m CC evenings. I was left with a rather low forlorn windom to play with. Rather than attempting to run stations, I was left feeling very underpowered as I searched for stations. It seemed every QSO I made needed two or three calls – every QSO was a bit of a struggle. There was always someone else who was louder who made the QSO first. This was frustrating and I was not having much fun. I'm sure it's the cumulative club points element that so maintains the interest for anyone who is similarly antenna- or power-challenged for the whole year.

Back to the WPX story, I was initially surprised to hear that one other club

member had borrowed a high-power station with a large yagi at 100 ft to enter the competition. I was left scratching my head wondering how I didn't manage to hear them all weekend? Following a website link to examine their log revealed I was falling for an April Fool's Day prank.

Thanks to data from Ofcom we know that there are almost 1300 club licences issued in the UK. Many clubs may have multiple call signs, and several clubs are not very active. But there still remains a pool of several hundred clubs of various sizes who could run a WPX Challenge, or something similar for other DX events in the annual calendar. Or should these sorts of 'contests within contests', for example just for the UK, have their results calculated from the official international results by national societies?

Snippets from the World Wide Web

Browsing the Internet I found that the Tennessee Contest Group collect statistics for their group's activities and tabulate the winners in different categories like 'most number of contest QSOs', 'most contests entered', 'most improved since last year' and 'most active new member'. Winners claim the Radio Active Award – and past recipients have needed to be active in all modes and take part in lots of lesser-known events. It's not just about winning CQ WW or ARRL DX, but a real marathon through the year.

Another table listed which operators had hosted others at their station for guest operators – a great thing to record the generosity of other amateurs opening up their homes for others.

Also, it's pleasing to see a new website for the G6PZ 'Icom UK' contest group up and running. Contest scores and stories, lots of pictures, and even some videos from CQ WPX (and other events) are available from www.g6pz.com.

Seanet Contest 2008

From Steve, 9M6DXX: This year's SEANET Contest takes place on 7-8 June 2008. It takes place on the usual 10m to 80m bands, using CW, SSB and/or RTTY. The rules have been rewritten and simplified in an attempt to encourage greater participation. In particular any computer contest logging program can now be used to log the SEANET contest.

Please see the new rules at www.seanet.cc (go to 'SEANET 2008', then at the bottom of the page 'Contest Rules').

The incredible shrinking world

Following Michael/G7VJR's review of the ASUS EEE PC in the last *Digest*, I'm pleased to report I'm also now the proud owner of the device, and have written most of this issue's article from several places I wouldn't normally have bothered taking a full-size laptop to. Sitting next to diminutive rigs like the FT-817, FT-857 or K2, your mind really starts to wander about how much easier DXpeditioning or contest expeditioning could ever get for the average radio amateur. That first expedition might only be to the local park, or even the garden patio, but it still counts. At Friedrichshafen last year I did a double-take at the size of the new Expert 1K-FA solid state kilowatt amplifier. It was actually much smaller than I was expecting from photographs I'd seen. I guess all those fans on the back of the unit have to work hard to keep the unit relatively cool, but it's still another 'engineering wonder'. The laws of physics keep antenna sizes relatively stable – if we exclude some of the new and not-so-new designs of antennas that are many times shorter than a wavelength.

After purchasing the EEE PC, I've since found that there is an enthusiastic online community of EEE owners who have modified their PCs with extra memory, touch screens and the like. Despite having been purchased with mainly contest and

radio purposes in mind, it's been to work and abroad with me and proved very useful. If anyone does similarly take the plunge and invest in one, you may be interested to know that there is some freeware software called 'nlite' available which can be used to strip the installation size of Windows XP down considerably, very important given the relatively small size of the storage space available. I was caught out by this and the initial XP build I created didn't support older 16-bit programs – which included some radio-related programs and utilities I wanted to use. I've also installed an SD card permanently in the machine, to use as an additional 'hard disk.'

Endpiece

I didn't receive any reports directly this time round, but I presume there will be full-blown tales of exotic travels for the Commonwealth Contest elsewhere in the *Digest*. Due to my annual commitments of carrying tables and car park marshalling for my local radio rally, my own entry was curtailed as usual. However, even a quick dabble in the evening enabled me to get into the BERU spirit by working some very familiar folk in some unusual places around the globe. The world really is our playground.

73 Lee, GØMTN

CDXC
CHILTERN DX CLUB
The UK DX Foundation

Not the GB2RS News

- CDXC prepares for AGM and Summer Social
- Complaints about online ‘erection-eering’
- Some exciting new award programmes

After all the excitement of the RSGB AGM and Dinner in Bristol last month, the Chiltern DX Club (CDXC) are now limbering up for their AGM and Summer Social. Last year this had to be cancelled due to the atrocious ‘summer’ weather, including widespread flooding. However, this year contingency plans are in place, should the Herefordshire hilltop home of President Neville, G3NUG, once again prove to be inaccessible. In which case the event will take place aboard the luxury yacht of Secretary Chris, G3SVL, currently moored on the River Thames near Maidenhead aka Virgin’s Bonce.

Numerous complaints have been received recently about a company mass e-mailing radio amateurs and promising to help them increase the size of their erections. “It’s all a big misunderstanding,” the company said. “All we’re doing is suggesting to radio amateurs that if they’d like to send us £800, then we’ll upgrade them from a half-size G5RV to the very latest HF beam. Mind you, if they wish to further demonstrate their heightened virility to the neighbours by ordering a 100 ft mast to put it on – that will cost a little bit more.”

Courtesy of Roger, G3SXW, we have learned of some exciting new award programmes designed to further enrich our experience of amateur radio. These include Sewage Treatment Works on the Air (STWA), Defunct Post Offices on the Air (DPOA) and Moving Cranes on/in the Air (MCOA). A minimum height of 100 ft above ground is required for this last one.

Special event station news:

Listen out for GT3MP, on the air from the Isle of Man right the way through until the end of the year to celebrate the 150th anniversary of the birth of Manx Planck, father of the quantum theory and winner of the Nobel Prize for physics. It’s a little known fact that Manx Planck, known as ‘Woody’ to his friends, was born in Douglas and only later moved to Germany, where he changed his Christian name to Max.

Finally, the contest news:

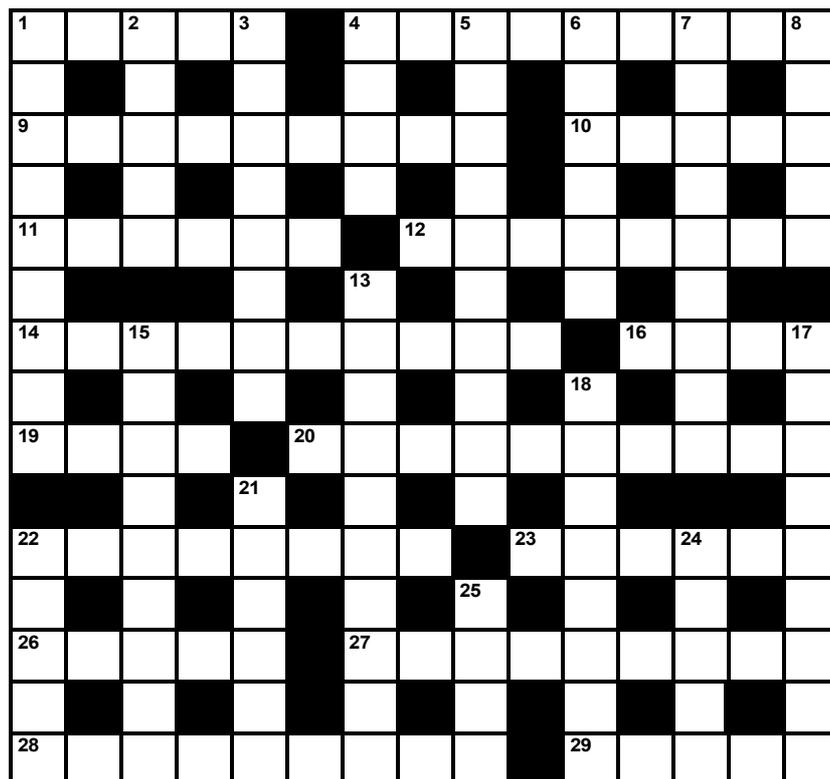
Coming up next weekend on SSB: the wonderful world of the Russian Krimskaya Contest, sponsored by Krimskaya Vodka and scheduled to last for the full 48 hours which next weekend should have to offer. The exchange consists of the usual 59 report plus the name of your favourite brand of vodka. However, if you say anything other than ‘Krimskaya’, then you will automatically be disqualified and a bunch of thugs will be sent round to your place to duff you up. [*Sounds vaguely reminiscent of the Zimbabwe elections. Ed.*]

Solution to Prize Crossword 27

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

Digest Prize Crossword 28 *by RFX*

The winner of Prize Crossword 27, March 2008, and that legendary £10 note: John Hughes, G4KGT, Prestwood, Bucks.



ACROSS

- 1 Music provided partly by errand boy (1,3,1)
- 4 Nice chap? (9)
- 9 A Mr Green's out for a duck (9)
- 10 Sort of button you'd be frightened to press (5)
- 11 Antelopes found in American city unfortunately (6)
- 12 Mother is shot revealing this hot line (8)
- 14 Catholic feast that's taken for granted (10)
- 16 Crazy engine (4)
- 19 Girl unknown in African port (4)
- 20 Cetacean who, one hears, must surely be a member of the National Union of Seamen! (5,5)
- 22 Attractive, like a retriever? (8)
- 23 One pestering a nocturnal creature (6)
- 26 Rejected story about graduate's message (1-4)
- 27 Where face cream may be applied then and there (2,3,4)
- 28 Disagree with kidnap? (4,5)
- 29 Was partial to two chaps, one after the other (5)

DOWN

- 1 Europeans deployed in San Marino (9)
- 2 Operatic heroine who'd be common in Bristol, we hear? (5)
- 3 Serve in the forces as man in T-shirt may have, by the sound of it (4,4)
- 4 How to lose weight quickly? (4)
- 5 Nobleman's arrested, we hear, in exhibition hall (5,5)
- 6 Top ace struggling to become writer (6)
- 7 State audibly providing us with a small version of Summits on the Air? (9)
- 8 Digital TV system contributing to chronic amnesia (5)
- 13 Academic I left without something to write with? That's astounding! (10)
- 15 Discussion about course becoming flatter (5-4)
- 17 Paying too much local tax is not what it's cracked up to be (9)
- 18 Garments and those who perspire in them? (8)
- 21 What's hot or cold on the radio (6)
- 22 Fast-moving naval force (5)
- 24 Seemed amazed to see primate in the Isle of Man (5)
- 25 Filthy dwelling, we hear, that's an eyesore (4)

Deadline for entries: 20 June

DX and Events Calendar

Compiled by G3XTT

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

till 30/06	VR1Ø: special prefix (Hong Kong)
till June	ZD7X: St. Helena (AF-022)
till 31/08	EY8/F4EOH: Tajikistan
till 31/08	II3PIAV: special station
till August	C91R: Mozambique
till 30/09	9A73AA: special callsign
till 08/10	JX9JKA: Jan Mayen (EU-022)
till November	YE2IPY: special callsign
till 31/12	9A6ØA: special callsign
till 31/12	AYØDX: special callsign (Argentina)
till 31/12	C4EURO: special callsign (Cyprus)
till 31/12	DR8M: special event station
till 31/12	HG1848I: special call (Hungary)
till 31/12	HG55ØREX: special call (Hungary)
till 31/12	ON1ØØØNOTGER: special call (Belgium)
till 31/12	ON4ØBAF: special event call
till 31/12	ON7ØREDSTAR: special event station
till 31/12	SB1658OZ and SC1658OZ: special callsigns (Sweden)
till 31/12	SH1658DK and SH1658OZ: special callsigns (Sweden)
till 31/12	SK1658DK and SK1658OZ: special callsigns (Sweden)
till December	HFØPOL: Henryk Arctowski Station (South Shetlands)
26/04-30/06	HB2ØØ8AA-ZZ: special calls (Switzerland)
26/04-30/06	OE2ØØ8AAA-ZZZ: special calls (Austria)
15/05-26/05	3V8SS: Tunisia
16/05-18/05	IF9LI: Levanzo Island (EU-054)
17/05-31/05	R9ØLPU: special callsign
19/05-28/05	BY1PK/IØSNY: China
21/05-01/06	8P9TS and 8P2T: Barbados (NA-021)
21/05-28/05	VP5/KØOK and VP5E: Caicos Islands (NA-002)
24/05-07/06	TM7S: special event call (France)
24/05-25/05	GB6GEO: special station (England)
24/05-06/06	OHØ/PAØVHA, OHØ/PA3BAG, OHØ/PA2A: Åland Is (EU-002)
24/05-06/06	OHØ/PA2AM, OHØ/PA3ALK, OHØ/PB5A: Åland Is (EU-002)
27/05-03/06	T32XG: East Kiribati
31/05-07/06	SV5/OZ6B: Dodecanese Islands (EU-001)
31/05-01/06	YE1ØØK: special event station
from May	ZS8T: Marion Island (AF-021)

10/06-16/06	CQ4IPY: special callsign (Portugal)
11/06-23/06	FH/DK7LX: Mayotte (AF-027)
12/06-17/06	GBØTI: Treshnish Islands (EU-108)
17/06-20/06	MM/K6EIL: Bressay Island (EU-012)
21/06-27/06	9A/I6GFX: Croatian islands (EU-170)
27/06-29/06	Friedrichshafen Hamfest
27/06-04/07	JX/G7VJR: Jan Mayen (EU-022)
28/06-05/07	HBØ/ON4IPA: Liechtenstein
June	4W: East Timor by EAs
June	OJØ: Market Reef (EU-053) by SMs
08/07-20/07	VK9s XWW, XHZ, XOR, XME: Christmas Is (OC-002)
16/07-31/07	C91CF, C91TK, C91... Mozambique
21/07-27/07	KL7DX: Chuginadak Island (NA-234)
30/07-04/08	VE3LYC/VO2 and VO2/G3OCA: Finger Hill Island (NA-194)
30/07-04/08	VE3LYC/VO2 and VO2/G3OCA: Paul Island (NA-205)
from July	ZD9X: Tristan da Cunha (AF-029)
late Sept/early Oct?	TO4G Glorioso

SEANET Contest 2008

This year's SEANET Contest takes place on 7 - 8 June 2008. The rules have been rewritten and simplified in an attempt to encourage greater participation. In particular any computer contest logging program can now be used to log the SEANET contest.

Please see the new rules at www.seanet.cc (go to 'SEANET 2008', then at the bottom of the page, 'Contest Rules').

We realise that this is short notice, but would be most grateful if you would publish this information as widely as possible in magazines, newsletters and on websites, and pass on the details to all of your friends. In particular we would welcome participation and entry by you and your friends in the contest, even if it is only a few QSOs.

The results will be announced and prizes given out at the SEANET Convention, to be held in Sabah, East Malaysia, in November. Full details of the Convention can also be found on the SEANET website at www.seanet.cc.

If you have any queries, please feel free to contact me by e-mail.

73

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