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Club News and Views

Editorial

Martyn Phillips, G3RFX

You'll read elsewhere in this *Digest* (it can be difficult not to duplicate some of these things...) that the 2005 HF Convention was a huge success. Thanks again to John, G3WKL, and his team for organising it so well. I very much enjoyed the talks I went along to and learned a lot too. Which is what it's all about really. Also, as in previous years I was particularly impressed by the immense enthusiasm conveyed by the speakers for their respective subjects.

Mind you, those fancy new rigs on show costing megabucks did have me a trifle worried. I mean, surely you'd need to undergo an intensive 4-week training course before you could actually operate them with any degree of proficiency? There again, in the highly unlikely event that we were to win the jackpot on the National Lottery, this point probably wouldn't worry me at all.

As always, the HF Convention was excellent for networking. Code for 'propping up the bar'? Well, maybe that too of course. And it was somewhere or other in the general networking area, I seem to remember, that Bob, G3PJT, suggested a possible addition to the *Digest*: a regular Su Doku puzzle, in line with current trends. We agreed, though, that most likely it would only contain the numbers '7', '3' and '8'. I'm working on it, Bob, although I'm not very good with numbers.

Somebody who is a dab hand at this sort of thing: our Treasurer, Nigel, G3TXF (yes, that figures...). In between dashing off with Roger, G3SXW, to far-flung corners of the earth, he does a superb job of managing the CDXC finances. This month he features on

page 6 with a topical contribution entitled 'Treasury Notes'. In fact he was originally hoping to get Gordon Brown to write a preface, but unfortunately it didn't work out. Meanwhile do let me know about that regular Su Doku column, Nigel.

Talking of regular columns, there's no 'President's Patter' this month. Most unusual. Unfortunately our esteemed President was faced with an extremely difficult choice: either to stay at home in Herefordshire and write his 'President's Patter', or zoom off to sun-drenched 3B9 for a few weeks. Somewhat inexplicably, he chose the latter.

Just to say that recently I had a letter from a dog. You must think I'm barking. This was Buster, proudly announcing his 'Bare Bones Birthday Contest' over the last weekend of February 2006, when he will be four years old. The rules are very simple: "Contesters will call 'CQ Woof' and give a 'K9' signal report, followed by a slight 'paws' before saying 'fangs' for the QSO." In my reply to young Buster I couldn't help asking him whether everybody also has to speak in a husky voice?

Well, it is almost Christmas. Have a good one, enjoy the awful cracker jokes – and go easy on them there turkey leftovers and the Christmas pud!

73 Martyn, G3RFX

www.btinternet.com/~g3rfx

Chairman's Chat

John Butcher, G3LAS

Since the previous issue of the *Digest*, the two most significant events have probably been the long-awaited activity from KH7K, Kure Atoll, and the annual RSGB HF Convention, at the slightly less exotic Worth Hotel in Gatwick, Sussex.

My thoughts on K7C should appear elsewhere in this issue, provided that I get the article finished in time, and provided that the Editor doesn't censor it too savagely. Suffice it to say here that the operation was reasonably successful, albeit not without causing some controversy. Whatever your opinions, it is certain that the expedition gave many people, including me, their first contact with this remote entity.

The HF Convention was also a success, building on last year's event at the same venue. Attendance numbers were similar, meaning that we were able to take over virtually the whole of the hotel – always a plus point. The odd non-radio guests could be seen looking rather bemused as they passed rapidly from bedrooms to reception and then to the exit.

The programme of presentations proved popular, with most of them enjoying capacity audiences. It is always good to be surprised by enjoying a talk which did not seem initially to promise great excitement. In my case, this was the discourse on Near-Vertical Incidence Signals by Gordon Adams, G3LEQ. It is not a subject which has inspired me hitherto, but Gordon managed to illuminate it with a very welcome light touch. One day, I might even be persuaded to venture on to the 5 MHz band, whether or not my signals will stand a chance of penetrating the world outside my own back yard.

A feature of this year in the Convention 'shack' was the welcome appearance of the new Yaesu flagship transceiver, the FT DX 9000. Two real-live rigs were on show and working, attracting a steady stream of visitors, keen to put them through their paces. Sadly, this was about as near as most of us will get to these monsters, bearing in mind the £7000-ish price tag on the top-end model. It may be some time before one appears on eBay.

Fortunately it shouldn't be necessary to re-mortgage the house to work the next 'biggie', which, all being well, will be the expedition next February to the curiously named Peter 1 Island. The Southern Ocean islands usually seem quite workable from the UK, as witness the Kerguelen activity of a few months ago.

Hopefully we will not have too much of a problem. I hope so especially, because it is one more on my wanted list and I don't expect to be back from a long absence until about half way through the operation from Peter 1. So I would appreciate it if all you people out there would work them early and then keep well out of the way in order to give me a chance when I get back.

"Where is he going?", I hear you ask. The answer is, "Just about everywhere I haven't been before". I'm off on a long cruise to South America, the Pacific and various far-flung places in Oceania and Central America. I will be taking a rig with me, but don't hold your collective breaths in anticipation of working G3LAS/MM in a string of exotic locations. In fact if anyone does manage to hear my 5W signal crawling out of a whip antenna, I would be very interested in a report.

While I am away, please direct any Chairmanic matters and queries to our Secretary, Peter, G3SJX.

I should report that the Club made its usual appearance at the Leicester Show at Castle Donington. While not overwhelmed with visitors, it was nice to meet a fair number of members. We recruited one or two newcomers and even managed to extract subscriptions from a couple of defaulters.

While on the subject of new members, we will be mounting another recruitment drive this autumn, mainly by a mailout to about 400-500 potential members. Remember that we need upwards of 70 recruits each year to compensate for the inevitable 'natural wastage' and to keep our numbers rising as they have been ever since the Club was formed nearly 25 years ago.

We are indebted to Martin Lynch & Sons and to Kenwood, Yaesu and Icom for their sponsorship of a year's membership for those purchasing HF rigs from ML & S between June and November this year. This scheme has brought us about 70 recruits in the first three months, but of course the crunch will come when we see how many of these renew next year. We all hope that they will find

membership of CDXC to be a rewarding and worthwhile experience.

It always seems odd in the middle of October to wish people a Happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year, but I must do it now. May the season bring you your heart's desires, but not in the few days at the end of the Peter 1 expedition, when I'll be trying to make up for lost time.

By the way, if any of you are being asked for Christmas present suggestions and your nerve doesn't stretch to suggesting an FT DX 9000, don't forget the new CDXC mugs which are now available. Why not have a look at the 'Goods' page of our website and check out the personalised callsign mugs displayed therein? Wouldn't it be nice to insure against the phenomenon of the disappearing beverages on Field Day? A CDXC mug would be an ideal present to receive from a doting son, daughter or grandchild, not to mention a wife, husband, spouse, partner or concubine. Unbeatable value at £5.95, or only £4.50 for the standard model. Each purchase makes a small contribution to our DXpedition fund.

73 es gud DX John, G3LAS

For Sale

TenTec Orion with extra roofing filter and 705 desk mic. As new, boxed and manual £2,200 o/n/o + p & p. **Big Thunder** 2-element 40m beam in first-class condition: £350 o/n/o + p & p. Phone Ipswich (01473) 658999 or mobile (0786) 644 1806 or e-mail motix1@yahoo.co.uk. Rob, MØTIX

Change to the rules for CDXC Plaques

From 2005 the CDXC Plaques will be awarded to the leading CDXC member who obtains the highest scores in the Single Operator, Low Power, CW and Phone sections of the CQ World-Wide Contest. G3RTE

Treasury Notes

Nigel Cawthorne, G3TXF

Many thanks to the all UK CDXC Members who have set up new Standing Orders in response to the recent request. Standing Order payments really do lighten the Treasurer's load. The Standing Order payment just pops up on the screen (ie on the bank screen, not on the DX Cluster!) and with a few clicks of the mouse the sub payment is logged into the CDXC Membership Database.

Many members are also using Internet banking for paying their subscription. This is also highly efficient. The payment again just pops up on the screen. A couple of clicks of the Treasurer's mouse and the sub is renewed. Over half of the UK membership now pay their annual sub either by Standing Order or by an electronic bank transfer. Or, in other words, less than half still use a paper-technology cheque to pay their subscription.

In March next year there will be a further request by letter to all cheque-paying UK members to again consider setting up a Standing Order well in time for next year's renewal on 1 July 2006. If you haven't done so already, please consider setting up a Standing Order for next year's CDXC sub.

We are now coming to the end of the annual 'subscription renewal season', which runs from about May to November. It is during this period that the bulk of the subscriptions arrive and that the subscription renewal chasing is done. Any member who has not paid his sub for the current year does not receive the November issue of the Digest. November is the final cut-off month for non-payers. However they will have received both the July and September issues for the year for which

they have not renewed. This is a pretty generous arrangement when compared to other subscription publishing organisations!

Although Standing Orders, electronic transfers and cheques account for the bulk of the subscription payments, a few dozen subs are also paid by cash at the AGM & Summer Social or at other functions such as the recent HF Convention in Gatwick. The occasional Postal Order is also gratefully received.

Overseas members (only) are allowed to pay by credit card, and we are always grateful to Martin Lynch at ML & S for his assistance in processing these payments.

With nigh on 700 members and therefore 700 subscription records to track, a good database is essential. During the past couple of years a new CDXC Membership Database has been built using Access, which helps to keep track of members' details as well as of their subscription status.

In addition to the CDXC Membership Database a well-known 'small business' accounting package called Sage is used to keep track of CDXC's accounts. Sage was originally set up by my predecessor Nigel, G4KIU. The Treasurer is thus usually able to present the CDXC Committee with a complete set of up-to-date accounts at each of its quarterly meetings. Except, of course, when the Treasurer has just been away on another DX jaunt to some remote location, such as Nauru!

73 de Nigel G3TXF

CDXC offers a warm welcome to the following new members:

<i>Call</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Location</i>
2EØAXN	Simon Jenner	Chatham
2EØBBR	Alan Dyke	Basingstoke
2EØDFW	Don Wallis	Seaford
2EØGZS	Graeme Hendry	Birkdale
2EØNCG	Mark Dumpleton	Mablethorpe
2EØVAG	Simon Smith	Ealing
2E1HIG	David Cottrell	Droitwich
GØGJR	Arthur Beard	Gloucester
GØHZG	Peter Sturgess	Leicester
GØICT	J Morrison	Dover
GØKYA	Steve Nichols	Norwich
GØPKE	Chris Tremble	Birkenhead
GØTKT	Peter Hamblett	Bewdley
GØWLJ	J Lees	Stoke-on-Trent
GØWRZ	Sean Fry	Rochester
G1DRA	Patrick Keele	Wingrave
G1FMU	Keith Harris	Callington
G1HHO	Gordon Reeve	New Milton
G1OIO	Walter Benton	Seaford
G1ZBW	W Baker	Bolton
G2ADR	Eric Parvin	Upper Poppleton, York
G3MDL	Peter Cunningham	Mexborough
G3SPJ	Colin Wooff	Abbey Wood
G3SPU	Robert Moore	Melksham
G3TEB	Geoff Addis	Reading
G3USR	Gordon Rolland	Oakham
G3VOO	Michael Barnett-Bone	Blandford Forum
G4CQR	Dave Wood	Morden
G4CVF	Bryan Sheppard	Uxbridge
G4CXL	Ray Menday	Weybridge
G4FNL	Graham Bubloz	Brighton
G4IOT	Tony Hunt-Duke	Folkestone
G4KQH	Dave Howes	Daventry
G4KUJ	Trevor Groves	Watford
G4OYN	Alan Fuller	Kettering
G4SLW	Dominic Dudkowski	Brighton

G4TUG	Rod Girdwood	Wellingborough
G6FSP	Dave Helliwell	Torquay
G6GXH	Richard Stratton	Basingstoke
G6MYZ	Sid Doorey	Pettswood
G7JCF	Steve Beamish	Woodbridge
G7KHV	Richard Irvine	Hornsea
G7TYH	Steve Furminger	Henley-on-Thames
G7VBR	Roger Ferrand	Steyning
G7WAY	Stuart Foster	Chipping Campden
GI4NKB	Frank Hunter	Belfast
GI8ELZ	Oswald Cathcart	Lisburn
GJ7LJJ	Nigel Utting	St Saviour
GW3XCR	Colin Phillips	Llanelli
MØBAH	Andrew Tyler	Horsham
MØBCG	Ian Williams	Swindon
MØCLG	Graeme Gundry	Worcester Park
MØEHL	Martin Longbottom	Huddersfield
MØGHR	Roger Gill	Exeter
MØWCM	Bill Maddox	Preston
MØXJP	Don Bache	Hitchin
M1ANN	Alan Webb	Redditch
M1CGB	Martin Jones	Amblecote
M1DCW	Mike Wilson	Rugby
M3EIU	Rod Vincent	Littlehampton
M3HPR	Ian Moore	Hoddesdon
M3HVU	Kevin Jessop	Goole
M3KIZ	Peter Lewis	St Albans
M3NBD	Neal Draper	Harlow
M5AFD	Dave Edwards	Shrewsbury
MI3OLM	Colm Doole	Magherafelt
MMØBIM	Gordon Stewart	Kilmarnock
MM3AXA	Lesley Tombe	Fochabers
T77C	Tony Ceccoli	San Marino

Also Paul Vernon (Eccles) and Peter Ives (Haslemere)

The CDXC LF Challenge 2006

Aim: To work as many DXCC entities during the month of March 2006. Each DXCC entity is counted ONCE only.

When: 0001 UTC, 1 March 2006, to 2359 UTC, 31 March 2006.

Bands: Only the 1.8, 3.5 and 7 MHz bands maybe used.

Modes: No restrictions.

Logs: Send a list either by e-mail or post. The list must contain the headings in this order, please.

DXCC entity, Date, Time, Band, Mode

Entries which are NOT submitted in this format will be disqualified

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

Logs to be sent to either g3rte@tiscali.co.uk or jkellaway@btinternet.com or by post to Jim Kellaway, 55 Ladbrooke Drive, Potters Bar, Herts EN6 1QW. Logs to be received not later than 30 April 2006.

Please note: do NOT send to any other e-mail address I have had in the past as it will not arrive here

Awards – Multi-band:

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

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

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

Awards – Single band:

The leading station on each band (1.8, 3.5 and 7 MHz) will also receive a small engraved plaque which will be retained by the winner.

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

DX an' all that

Don Field, G3XTT don@g3xtt.com

It's been an interesting period on the bands, what with K7C, the start of some pretty good lowband propagation (West Coast and Alaska being worked on 160m, for example) and even some transatlantic openings on 10m. Now to see what the CQWW contests bring (although the Phone leg will be history by the time you read this – as I constantly remind folk, not the CQWW SSB as the contest predates the introduction of SSB by several decades).

Apropos K7C, I was in the fascinating position of being UK 'relay'. The initial plan had been that this would involve sending photos, audio clips etc. for publication on the K7C website, to add to the level of interest and participation. It was not envisaged that the older role of 'pilot' would be required, as the ubiquity of the Internet makes local pilots unnecessary. Anyway, that was the theory. In practice, it all worked out rather differently! It became clear very early on that the level of interest in the K7C website and DXA, the continually updated map page, was such that the server was grossly overloaded. Bob, KK6EK, on Kure, worked with the chief relay stations on the West Coast to cut down the amount of information presented, to prevent the server crashing, so there certainly wasn't the scope originally envisaged for having downloadable audio clips etc. But what did happen was that I started getting lots of e-mails from frustrated DXers in the UK, around Europe and from even further afield, wanting to know why K7C hadn't appeared during certain openings or was otherwise behaving in ways that appeared inexplicable.

It quickly became clear to me, as 'piggy in the middle' that facilities like DXA actually end up raising more questions than they answer. For example, DXA might show that K7C was on 30 and 15m CW at 0600. But the DX world 'knew' that (a) K7C should be able to run

three stations simultaneously, and (b) that K7C had promised to focus on European openings when they occurred. So why were only two stations on, and why was one of them on a band not open to Europe when Europe had propagation on both 40 and 20m? Yet I was, in parallel, getting feedback from the island about the problems they were having from heat and exhaustion, problems with actually hearing Europe, with signals often being below a readable level, and so on. I don't propose to take sides in this column (you'll have to buy me a pint at the next social event if you want the 'inside story'!), but it goes to show that there are always two sides to any coin, and that anything less than 100% transparency (if such a thing exists) can actually be more frustrating than the 'bad old days' of just tuning the bands and enjoying chasing whatever you ran across.

DXA appears to have one other inadvertent effect too. I heard rumours of a UK station whose RTTY 'QSO' took place only because he saw his callsign appear moments later on DXA. He never copied it back on RTTY due to the QRM on the K7C frequency! The fear that something of this sort would happen was expressed by Wayne, N7NG, of the DXCC desk in discussion with the K7C team before the operation and had, I thought, been resolved by various measures such as delaying the data which was uploaded to DXA. The flip side of the coin was that, when DXA was down, many stations were making multiple 'insurance' QSOs until the appropriate green box lit up on the DXA display. "It's amateur radio, Captain, but not as we know it ..."

When is a QSL not a QSL?

I was intrigued to see that SM7EQL has adopted a new QSL policy for his recent ZK1EQL operation. It's on his webpage but,

in case you haven't read it yet, he plans to upload his logs to eQSL and LoTW, but not to have any paper QSLs printed. For those who want a paper confirmation, he asks you to print a 'QSL card' from eQSL and mail it to him with SAE, whereupon he will sign it to authenticate it and return it to you. Am I the only one who considers this bizarre? There are many amateurs who don't care about DXCC and many who won't or can't (perhaps because they don't have a PC or Internet) join eQSL. But they do enjoy having a traditional QSL card to put on the shack wall. SM7EQL says he is not interested in QSLing, but goes to distant parts to 'study propagation'. Might I suggest that in that case he goes to ZL, VK, JA or somewhere else less rare to conduct his studies, rather than picking somewhere that is of particular interest to DX chasers, and then leaving them in the lurch? Your comments would be most welcome!

DXCC

For those of you who do care about DXCC, the program has come a long way in recent years. Many of us were licensed when there was only one DXCC award – work as many countries (not 'entities' back then) as you can, regardless of band or mode. Later the CW and Phone awards came along. I don't recall the exact chronology (no doubt there are quite a few members who do), but RTTY was added at some point and, more significantly, 5-Band DXCC (in the sixties or seventies?). This latter was not endorsable after 100 countries per band, although later on you could get a 160m (6-band) endorsement, but it did have a huge impact on LF DXing which, instead of being the preserve of a few headbangers, grew to be much more popular among the DX chasing population at large. Over the years, single-band awards were introduced for 160 and 10m, encouraging the use of these 'edge' bands. These awards were endorsable as your total increased. The 160m award was a tough one in the early days, principally for two

reasons. Firstly, because many countries had no 160m allocation, so were silent on the band - and, secondly, because many commercial transceivers did not cover 160m.

By popular demand, other bands were added including (after 1979) 17 and 12m, although 30m was included much later, on the basis that it was unavailable in many countries (some still do not allow it, of course). The VHF awards were late additions too. There were those who argued, for example, that a 6m DXCC was inappropriate as no-one would ever work the required 100 countries. Now look at how many 6m DXers are over the 200 mark! DXCC has even been achieved on 2m, albeit using moonbounce (but without 'active' assistance such as satellites).

The addition of new awards over the years kept the DXCC program vibrant, but had the effect of significantly increasing the workload at ARRL. This has been addressed in recent years by extensive computerisation and, latterly, the introduction of LoTW. The most recent innovation, aimed primarily at those who already have all, or most of, the individual awards, is the DXCC Challenge, a constantly-updated table of band-countries confirmed, for the 10 bands 160-6m. G4BWP is the leading UK contender, but G3KMA was seen at HFC this year with a pile of antique and rare QSL cards, busily updating his totals, so we wait with bated breath to see the impact.

In parallel with the introduction of new awards, there has been a constant battle over what is a 'country' and we now have the concept of 'entities' which covers both political and geographical separation. There are those who feel that we should be constantly adding to the potential achievement level, so that DXCC chasers don't drop out of the program through lack of anything new to chase. For example, by defining not only a 'minimum' size of entity as now, but also a 'maximum' size so that large entities such as

JA, VK and UA9 would be split up into a number of new entities. Personally I wouldn't want to see this happen, but who knows? In any case, the list is by no means set in stone, as the next item shows.

New Entities?

From the Daily DX, 21 September:

Late last week political tensions between the union of Montenegro (YU3, YU6) and Serbia (YU1, YU2, YU5, YU7) escalated. Montenegro's ruling party intends to end the union. An independence referendum is expected in February 2006, which is the earliest possible date as set by the European Union (EU). Montenegro is intent on holding the referendum. The EU is not in favour of another split in the Balkans as Kosovo (YU8) is also expected to gain independence next year and there are possible ethnic divides in Bosnia and Macedonia. The EU is also discouraging Montenegro's divide as it would slow down Montenegro's first steps into the EU. Montenegro, with a population of about 650,000, does not seem to be heeding the warnings. Montenegro would not be the least populated member of the EU as Malta already has that title with around 400,000 people. Serbia and Montenegro have independent customs, laws and currencies. In a poll taken last week Montenegrins were in favour of independence by a four to three margin.

Saturday, September 17th, leaders of the five Dutch Antilles met on Curaçao with the central government of the Netherlands. The subject of this gathering was the result of the recent island referendums. Curaçao (PJ2) and St Maarten (PJ7) voted for 'Status Aparte'. Bonaire (PJ4) and Saba (PJ6) chose to 'become part of the Netherlands', while St Eustatius (PJ5) decided to continue as part of the Dutch Antilles. The next meeting will be held in the Dutch Antilles on October 21st.

Plans are to have 'new constitutional relations' by July 1, 2007.

There was also mention at the HF Convention (I can't recall by whom) that the inhabitants of Pitcairn are seriously looking at aligning themselves with one of the Pacific entities, perhaps French Polynesia, because their tiny colony is becoming unsustainable without outside assistance, partly as a result of the recent imprisonment of several of the island elders. It will be interesting to see how the situation develops. These island communities really are anachronisms in the modern world and something usually has to give eventually. For example, it does now look as though St Helena will acquire an airport in the not too distant future, which will change the character of the island in many ways. When we were on Rodrigues it was interesting to see the tightrope the Mauritian government was trying to walk. On the one hand, Mauritius was spending quite a lot of money to improve the island infrastructure (roads, education, health) and on the other hand, and not unreasonably, it expected some return which would inevitably have to come from tourism. This was being carefully controlled, and brings income and employment, but there is always a downside. Right now I am enjoying reading 'The Teatime Islands' by Ben Fogle (best known for his part in the TV series 'Castaway') and which describes his travels to ZD9, VQ9, ZD7, VP8 (Falklands), VP6 and ZD8. Worth getting your hands on.

Desecheo and Navassa

This from the Daily DX (20 October):

Yesterday morning the House Resources Committee, by unanimous consent, sent to the House floor H.R. 1183, which will, if passed by the full Congress, require the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service to reopen Desecheo (KP5) and Navassa (KPI) islands to limited public access. It's not exactly clear when the bill will

go to the full House. A news release from KPI-5 Project is expected soon on

<http://www.kp1-5.com/>.

So who knows, we might see these two back on in the next year or two. Of course, for those of us who already have them on every band and mode, that wouldn't necessarily be considered a good thing!

The latest on IRCs from G3SWH

Further to my earlier correspondence with the Royal Mail concerning IRCs and the deadline previously indicated having expired, I have again contacted Royal Mail to obtain details of the current situation. The following is a paraphrased extract of their reply. I am not sure quite what they mean by the last paragraph, as it seems to contradict their earlier advice, but there is now plenty of time to clarify that particular point.

"Back in January 2002, the 'new style' International Reply Coupon (IRC) was issued by the Universal Postal Union (UPU) International Bureau. The idea was that every 4 or 5 years a new design would be issued and this would involve recalling all unsold/unused IRCs.

The original timetable from the UPU involved the current issue being sold until December 2005. However, the UPU International Bureau has recently advised Royal Mail that they have extended the selling deadline until 30th June 2006.

The deadline for the exchange of the current-style IRCs, however, remains unchanged at 31st December 2006. The International Bureau has therefore advised all postal administrations to inform customers of this fact when new IRCs are purchased. Royal Mail are now in discussion with Post Office Limited on how best to do this.

A new design of IRC will go on sale on 1st July 2006 but the design etc. is the prerogative of the UPU International Bureau and they have not yet published what the new designs will look like.

We have not yet determined what the policy will be for exchanging old for new IRCs, but I anticipate that once the new ones are available from the UPU we will introduce a new for old policy via Post Office Limited."

Propagation

Frank, W3LPL, reports that the sun had another bi-polar area, after 0600z on 24 August, "with the magnetic field alignment expected". The area brightened on the 23rd and later decayed. No sunspots were observed. This type of activity is apparently typical 12 to 24 months prior to the beginning of a new cycle. For many of the more recently licensed, or those who gained HF privileges in the past couple of years or so, the sunspots cannot return soon enough. Meanwhile the 80 and 160m enthusiasts have a ball. This said, though, the high bands don't seem to have been as bad as they were at this point in the last cycle, at least in the view of some of my correspondents. Do any of you disagree?

Check the calendar for what's coming up over the next month or two. There are rumours that FR/G may yet surface, but don't hold your breath. As always, there will be plenty of semi-rare activity focused on the two legs of the CQWW contests. I'm particularly looking forward to the forthcoming PZ effort by a Dutch team. This looks like being a competent operation from one that I still need on 160m and which I know is still relatively rare on several bands and modes (and has often been tough to get a card from, even when worked). Peter 1 looks as though it is still on for January and the team leaders were recently in South America negotiating the contract for the ship, to try and avoid the problems which

beset them over the past two years. Fingers crossed! I'm not clear whether the amateur radio event in the Andamans which was publicised earlier in the year is actually due to go ahead, but that would certainly be a nice follow-on from last December's activity from there. Anyway, certainly a number of reasons

to activate that nice new FT-DX9000D you bought at Gatwick (well, we can but dream!).

73 Don, G3XTT

CCF & OHDXF Cruise

Once again, the Contest Club Finland (CCF) and the OH DX Foundation (OHDXF) are proud to announce the 11th CCF & OHDXF Contest and DX Meeting on January 20-22nd, 2006. The meeting concept will be the same as last January - a cruise on the Baltic Sea from Helsinki(OH) via the Åland Islands (OHØ) to Stockholm (SM) and back to Helsinki.

More details of special cruise packages, agenda, registration etc. are coming soon. Information from the previous CCF & OHDXF meetings can be found on the CCF Web pages at <http://www.qsl.net/ccf>.

[See also Lee, GØMTN's 'Contest' column. Ed.]

Propagation Issues

(from NØAX's Contest Rate Sheet):

About a year ago Carl, K9LA, wrote a short article titled 'Propagation Planning for Dxpeditions'. It discussed six areas to help with propagation issues on your DXpedition. This document is available at <http://www.arrl.org/tis/info/pdf/propplan.pdf>. Now he has written a short article entitled 'Propagation Planning for Contests'. It goes one step further and outlines a short process using VOACAP to come up with a band plan for those contest categories requiring a decision as to what band to be on at any given time. It takes advantage of the inherent statistical nature of propagation predictions, and it is available at <http://www.arrl.org/tis/info/pdf/propcontest.pdf>.

[thanks to G3XTT]

Charlie Two-One, Nauru

Nigel Cawthorne, G3TXF / C21XF *nigel@G3TXF.com*
Roger Western, G3SXW / C21SX *g3sxw@compuserve.com*

We are starting to run out of easy options for DXpedition targets. We enjoy handling pile-ups in rare or semi-rare places, with easy licences and with an airport and hotels. These days there is another consideration: low sunspots. We had not been anywhere since P29 in October 2004 and were getting a little desperate to find a suitable target.

C21 is extremely high on the DX Magazine's Most Wanted Country lists: in Europe on CW it is Number 21. Wow! Roger had visited Nauru in 1999 with G3ZEM (now 5B4AGN), so he knew the set-up there. But would we hear any European signals at this stage of the sunspot cycle? Rather risky. And it is a very long journey. But we decided to go for it. This is the first time that we had ever gone back to a previous DXpedition country.

Nauru is the smallest republic in the world with a population of about 5,000 Polynesians. It lies almost right on the equator at 167° E. Its only source of revenue, phosphates, has recently been exhausted.

Logistics

This became a much harder trip to organise than our usual projects. Even the flights were not straightforward. Air New Zealand to Fiji was fine, but Air Nauru had to be booked separately through Qantas. We elected to fly London, Los Angeles, Fiji, Nauru.

Our first point of contact on the island was the licensing officer, Mr Appi, and he responded quickly to an e-mail enquiry – no problem. This gave us a false sense of security. The first hint of problems came when trying to fax a

hotel reservation. It would not go through. Eventually we telephoned and learned that they have no fax or e-mail these days. Unbeknown to us at this time, communications with the island have almost disintegrated as the island is completely bankrupt.

But the core issues were finally in place: flights, hotel and licences. Then someone happened to mention that it was difficult to get a visa. What visa? This was not needed when visiting in 1999.

Getting a Visa

So we phoned the Nauru Office in London. They said that a visa was not required for tourists. But the Foreign & Commonwealth Office website (British government), which is usually very reliable, said that a visa IS needed. Hmm. Nauru's only other High Commission is in Fiji, and they immediately replied to our e-mail enquiry saying that a visa is definitely needed. We would not be allowed to board the flight without it. The AUD \$100 fee is paid after arriving on the island.

And this was when the comms problems really got serious. E-mails worked only some of the time, Faxes would never go through, telephone calls were hit and miss. To call Nauru, twelve hours ahead of GMT, means late-night dialling. But we eventually battled through these problems and submitted our documents as .pdf files by e-mail. After several tries, when .pdf files would not open (at both ends) we finally received the visa, after 3-4 weeks of trying. But it only covered 'Mr Roger Western'. Back to square one to

get Nigel's visa. To cut a long story short, this second visa was finally sent to Fiji in the pilot's flight bag on the incoming aircraft on which we would fly back to Nauru. This was far more 'by the skin of our teeth' than we were comfortable with.

After meeting and getting to know Nauru's Immigration Director, we learned that there were a number of reasons why this whole process was so difficult. Mostly, because the island is bankrupt, they cannot make phone calls or send faxes. In addition, power cuts of about eight hours a day shut everything down. Many times when phoning we got a ringing tone with no reply because in fact it was not ringing anywhere, during a power cut. Finally, the young chap who was processing our applications was new and got it all wrong. And anyway, as we later learned, this is a rather unusual request. We were only the 65th and 66th tourist visitors to the island this year so far. That's an average of one per arriving flight. So our fears that they did not want to give us permission to visit the island were unfounded. It was simply comms problems. We subsequently learned that we were the first visitors to arrive from the UK during 2005.

When we arrived on the island our passports were taken away and we were told to visit the Immigration Office to pay the fee the next morning. We duly did so, but were told that Mr Stephen was out and he had our passports with him, but that he would drop them into our hotel and collect the fees that afternoon. This he did and we got to know him quite well.

Luggage

Of all the trips that we have done together we have almost never mislaid any luggage. This time only three of our six check-in bags made it to Nauru. We were missing our two ski bags (antennas) and one amplifier. The reason was that you are not allowed to transit through the USA these days. You are forced to disembark,

enter the USA, clear luggage through customs and security and then do the whole thing in reverse to leave again. Our 90 minutes transit in Los Angeles was barely enough and – you guessed it – half the luggage didn't make it. Those three bags went to New Zealand instead. We were put through an extremely exasperating and stressful time because the Americans do not trust British security checks AND then they mis-routed our bags. Another time we will avoid the USA like the plague. And every person we met at Los Angeles airport was so unpleasant, almost rude. Who is paying their wages, we wonder? 9/11 is an excuse for almost anything these days.

The next problem was that there are only two flights weekly between Fiji and Nauru, so we had to wait for three days for the luggage to catch up with us. On that day we were at the airport, where the local traffic is stopped so that the plane can cross the road to reach the one parking bay at the terminal. We watched the ski bags being off-loaded, then tried to get into the customs area to pick them up. That took a few minutes, during which time the baggage handlers decided that as no disembarking passengers had claimed them they would put them back on the plane and send them on to Brisbane. They were rescued only moments before the cargo hold on the airplane was closed up again.

So during those first three days we had been missing all three verticals, almost all our coax, tools and so forth, not to mention one amplifier. All we had for antennas was one 20m wire dipole and 50' of coax.

Shopping

We promptly went in search of some wire and coax. There is only one shop on the island. The first problem was getting there. It is only 2-3 miles from the hotel, but we could hardly walk there in 95°F - and the island has no taxis - so we hired a car for the week. (Therein lies yet another interesting tale.).

Lo and behold, at this one large shop we found wire and TV coax, even a ball of suitable string. Quickly we moved from disaster to at least being on the air on one band each: 20m and 17m, running barefoot.

Whilst in the shop we grabbed some snacks and bottled water. We later learned that there is no restaurant on the island (in which we were prepared to eat anyway) so we came to know this supermarket very well with daily visits. Actually this proved highly therapeutic, just to get out of the shack for a break from the intense operating. We expanded our menu to include bread and cheese, then tinned baked beans, eaten cold, and biscuits. Finally, we reached the ultimate in culinary luxury by buying an electric toaster. We washed it down with a box of white wine and I even went completely wild one day and splashed out on a packet of salami. In the heat the appetite definitely wanes, so we found it no big problem to exist for nine days on these snacks.

On the Air

We had booked three rooms and converted one of them into a shack. Again, things unfolded quickly in front of us – and we soon learned that the hotel has only three bedrooms where the air conditioner works properly. The one that we picked for the shack (near the feed lines from the roof and with a nice seaview) was not one of them. We started operating and immediately found that we were swimming in sweat. The rigs didn't like it much either.

But even with simple wire dipoles and running barefoot 100W we had big pile-ups into Europe and Japan. The hotel is located close to the sea, west-facing with a good take-off towards Europe, and this obviously helps.

For the first three days while awaiting the luggage we operated in this way. We gradually developed the wire dipoles. The 20m dipole got extended to cover 40m and this also worked on 15m and we added a 30m

dipole, so we were now up and running on five bands. Making dipoles kept us gainfully employed in the daytime.

Conditions seemed good, even to Europe. The second day we moved the shack to one of the air-conditioned rooms, which helped enormously. My 1999 visit had been in February. This time, in October, we were in the middle of the rainy season and the humidity was horrendous.

Band by Band – Traditional Bands (C21SX)

We knew from propagation predictions (W6EL) that the prime bands would be 30m, 20m and 17m, especially for European openings. This turned out to be a very accurate prediction.

80m – 584 QSOs (41 Europe). Almost all of these European QSOs were with UA and UR. The furthest west was one OH and two Italians. The bulk of the QSOs were with JA (284) and W (200). The path to USA is very long, but it has the advantage of being entirely over water, so all reflections are on salt water with correspondingly much less signal loss. We covered most of the USA sunrise opening (it takes three hours to cross the country) on two days and the European sunset opening on four days. QRN was not a big problem. The Butternut was working very well indeed, my output was about 600 watts, there was common darkness at European sunset – everything was OK and W6EL suggested that the band should open. But it was very marginal. And if you can't hear them you can't work them. Maybe it was just a little too early in the European winter season. But 80m was really tough (except to JA) so we are pleased that we did not attempt 160m.

40m – 827 QSOs (360 Europe). Again, the NW part of Europe was almost a black hole. For example, 21 OHs made it into the log on this band but not a single SM or LA. Not a

single PA nor F, only one EA and only one UK station (GM3POI). Yet there were 33 DLs, 26 SPs and SE Europe (9A, LZ, S5, YU etc.) was also well represented. This is because the path to Western Europe is through the polar regions, whereas Central and East Europe is well away from the auroral zone. There were plenty of JAs and Ws, but the expected (W6EL) openings to Europe did not include Western Europe. This is also the band which attracts most of the Deliberate QRM, whenever the band is open to Europe. NB: the loud QRMers could not have been in Western Europe as the band was not open to that area. This problem was by far the worst that I have ever experienced. These few killjoys reduced the QSO rates and the fun. We'd certainly like them to tell us why they do it.

20m – 2,500 QSOs (1,355 Europe). Here we did have lots of West Europeans including 41 UK, 30 F, 17 EA along with 214 DLs and lots of Central and Eastern Europeans. This band was much tougher to the USA, but 264 QSOs were made. European openings were prioritised (during our night-time, European daytime) and the main problem on this band was the Continuous Callers, people who keep sending their call signs non-stop. This happens whenever the band is open to Europe and is a common operating practice, especially in Italy. Preventing others from completing a QSO makes them very unpopular.

15m – 2,134 QSOs (681 Europe). Over 600 QSOs were made into both JA and the USA – this was a prime band in daylight hours. For Europe, again the Far West was disadvantaged – only 10 UK QSOs. But, bearing in mind the stage of the sunspot cycle, we were pleased to work any at all.

10m – 347 QSOs (15 Europe). Almost all of these QSOs were with JA. Only two Ws (both in California) and those few European QSOs were with the Eastern part – UA, UR and one LZ. We knew that conditions would not be favourable on this band, so little time was

spent here. Time was invested more fruitfully sleeping in the daylight hours.

The WARC Bands – C21XF - 6,488 QSOs (2,312 Europe)

Operating the WARC bands from Nauru produced a number of surprises. Two separate vertical antennas were mounted on the easily accessible hotel roof. A full-size quarter-wave vertical was used on 30m, with four elevated radials tied to various parts of the roof, and a 12m/17m trap vertical was used for the two higher WARC bands. Although a tri-band trapped WARC vertical had been used successfully on previous trips, given the likely importance of 30m, it seemed worth the effort to take two WARC vertical antennas rather than one.

The results on the three WARC bands can be best summarised by looking at the continental breakdown: 30m was 37% Europe, 37% Asia and 22% North America. There were good openings to Eastern Europe, but QSOs with Western Europe, and the UK in particular, were generally weak. As usual 30m was open for hours on end, but a weak DXpedition station can all too easily get 'lost' if he has to QSY above about 10.118 MHz and nobody spots him for a while. 30m is a great band which often produces surprises. On this occasion it was long path openings into Europe, in the early morning EU time.

Surprisingly, given where we are in the sunspot cycle, European QSOs accounted for 41% of the QSOs on 17m. This band provided the highest number of QSOs (3,493). [QSO data are as usual 'dupe-free']. The Asian QSO percentage (the bulk of which are JAs) on 17m was just below 30%, with some 27% North America. It came as no surprise, however, that the bulk (70%) of the QSOs on 12m were with Asia/Japan. Europeans could barely scrape 5% of the QSOs on 12m, and these few were all in Eastern Europe.

The total number of WARC QSOs (6,488) was just under half the combined QSO total for the operation. As the last major operation on CW on the WARC bands from Nauru was made by Bob (the then G3ZEM) some six years ago as C21ZM, there were plenty of new and useful band points to be handed out. Given the difficult location of Nauru in relation to the UK (the path to the UK is more difficult than to Eastern Europe because of auroral disturbances), and the lack of sunspots, it was only a relatively small number of UK stations that made it into the C21XF log on 30m (52) and 17m (49). Unfortunately no-one in Western Europe made it on 12m!

Hardware

Transceivers we each took a TS-570 and a back-up rig
 PSUs: four solid-state power supplies
 Amplifiers: two Acom 1010s (which worked flawlessly)
 Keyers: three Samson ETM keyers
 Computers: two laptops
 Cables: all the required connecting cables, mains distribution etc.
 Coax: 300' in five 259-259 varying lengths, 5mm and 6.5mm
 Antennas: Butternut HF6V-X; 30m full-size quarter-wave vertical; 17+12m vertical – all with elevated, resonant radials.

QSLs

As usual our cards will be printed and all replies sent within about four weeks of getting home. Please QSL:

C21XF via G3TXF
 C21SX via G3SXW

We are happy to accept e-mail requests for bureau replies. Just e-mail the QSO details: both callsigns, date, time and band. All details can be found at www.g3txf.com and at qrz.com.

Wrap-Up

In summary, we made 12,524 QSOs in nine days (nights). We fell well short of our normal rate of 1,000 per operator per day as a result of 6-8 hour power-cuts each day (at unpredictable times) and the lack of equipment in the first three days. But we are well pleased that the operation was a success. Many DXers got a new all-time country and many more got a new band-country. Under the circumstances of low sunspots our risk paid off. It is just a shame that the path to Western Europe is straight through the North Pole and is therefore so much more difficult.

E-mail: gsl@G3TXF.com
g3sxw@compuserve.com

C21SX - C21XF: QSOs by Band			
Band	Total QSOs	Europe QSOs	Europe %
80m	584	41	7.0
40m	827	360	43.5
30m	2,114	838	39.6
20m	2,500	1355	54.2
17m	3,298	1433	43.5
15m	2,134	681	31.9
12m	720	41	5.7
10m	347	15	4.3
Total	12,524	4,764	38.0

Open Letter to Deliberate QRMers

Roger Western, G3SXW

Deliberate QRM has become a lot worse in the last year or two - stations who send continuous dee-dahs or other transmissions for long periods on the transmitting frequency of DXpeditions. We know that they are mostly in Central and Eastern Europe - and 40 and 20m are the bands which suffer most because they are within our skip distance.

A team of DXers with directional antennas will DF these signals. When they have been triangulated, we will find DXers in that local district to precisely identify the guilty individual and then expose him.

If you want to join this team and to help build this database, please start to accurately log the date, time, frequency, bearing and signal strength; also describe details of the transmissions so we can match them with reports from other monitoring stations.

Please e-mail reports directly to me - I offer to coordinate the data collection. If you already know who the guilty person is in your area, please report this, but please be sure to also build the database evidence against them.

But while collecting data from this monitoring group, let's also try to appeal directly to the Deliberate QRMers. They should at least be given the opportunity to respond.

Letter as follows:

Dear Deliberate QRMer,

We cannot address this letter to you personally because you are anonymous. But we hope that this letter will reach you.

You cause QRM on the DX frequency. We cannot understand why you want to make thousands of your fellow radio amateurs unhappy. Would you please explain your reasons to us.

We believe that almost all 'Deliberate QRMers' are in Europe and that there are only a very few of you. You are clearly breaking your licence conditions by not identifying properly.

If you want to remain anonymous (which proves your guilt), please still answer us, addressed to this magazine or directly to me.

Thank you,

Roger Western, G3SXW
7 Field Close,
Chessington,
Surrey, KT9 2QD
England.

Digest and CDXC website ads

Please note that ads can be placed both on the CDXC website and in the *Digest*. Contact Jim, G3RTE, in the case of the former and *Digest* Editor G3RFX in the case of the latter.

CDXC
CHILTERN DX CLUB
The UK DX Foundation

Reflections on Kure

John Butcher, G3LAS

Very few members can be unaware that a month or so ago we enjoyed one of the most eagerly awaited DXpeditions of recent times. Kure Atoll (KH7K) is one of the DXCC entities most needed by operators in Europe and it is quite a while since a major expedition visited, although there have been a number of small, low-profile activations in the 1970s and 1990s, usually by lone Americans with other purposes for being there.

The K7C team (why does the FCC insist on allocating these three-letter calls to people going to rare Pacific island entities?) was, by any standards, a major expedition. The organisation took over a year and the expense was huge. Eventually, twelve operators arrived on the island on 22 September and, after early problems, became QRV on the 25th. Eventually they were able, at times, to run four stations simultaneously until they closed down on 5 October.

So, was the operation successful? Well, it depends on who you are and what your expectations may have been. Given the fact that we are in the trough of the solar cycle, it would have been foolish to expect world record QSO numbers. The team did get four stations on the air, they survived in blistering heat for 17 days on Kure and they made a reasonable number of QSOs (52,000 with about 15,500 'uniques') on the nine HF bands and on SSB, CW and RTTY.

If you are Japanese or live on the West Coast of the USA, you probably made several, perhaps as many as 14-15, QSOs with K7C on various bands and modes. In Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean countries a well-organised and equipped station could also have done well, working them on, say, four or

even five bands and a couple of modes without too much difficulty.

However, most CDXC members live in the UK. Here the story was a bit different. We knew that it wouldn't be easy. At the best of times, the Hawaii/Midway area is not easy to work. At solar minimum it is very difficult, given the fact that it is a polar path and we have to contend in the pile-ups with the dual QRM barriers from the Pacific Rim and the Eastern EU and Mediterranean.

I doubt if anyone in the UK expected to hear K7C on 10 or 160m, although I'm sure many tried. I doubt if anyone worked them on 12 or even 15m. 80m might have been more likely for the people with four-squares and the like, but I haven't heard of anyone who made it. I thought I heard them once, but unfortunately they didn't give a callsign in the few minutes they were audible.

Our real hope was to succeed on the 'midfield' bands: 40, 30, 20 and 17m. Our best chances would certainly come in the 'greyline' periods around dawn and dusk. As it happens, with a time difference of 10 hours, dawn in the UK is at this time of year roughly the same time as sunset on Kure, give or take an hour or so. I wasn't too excited by this so far as the lower frequency bands were concerned, given that greyline openings over such long paths on 160 or 80m are quite rare and often last only a few minutes. For much of the day, the path would be from broad daylight one end to total darkness the other – not promising, especially bearing in mind the more helpful conditions which our competitors might expect. I guess you can work Kure from Japan 24/7 with S9 signals on one band or another. All in all, I thought

beforehand that I would do well to make it on a couple of bands, probably on CW with a chance of an odd SSB contact. If pushed, I would have favoured 30, 20 and 40m in that order, bearing in mind factors like propagation, QRM and noise at both ends.

However, the K7C team had said very clearly that they appreciated the unevenness of the playing field and that they would make every effort to work as many Europeans as possible, giving us priority at the critical times. Therefore, I would have been very disappointed not to work them at all, especially as it was an all-time new one for my DXCC!

In the event, I think things turned out much as expected. The biggest surprise for me was the length of time for which they were sometimes audible at what would have been workable strength under ideal conditions, ie without pile-ups and loonies on their frequency. I well remember hearing them on 20m CW at about 2000z one evening, in darkness, literally vibrating in my headphones. No, I didn't work them that time: it didn't last long and the QRM was S9+ as well. Then there was one morning when I listened to them on 20m SSB for about three hours, workable in theory all the time, but apparently trying to satisfy the demands of the entire Japanese nation who were probably S9++ in Kure.

It was similar on 40m in the mornings, at least on the relatively few occasions when they were on the band at the CW end. Not strong, but workable, apart from the competition from 'the Wall'. Over the whole period, 30m was probably the most reliable band, with possibilities of QSOs almost every day. Sadly, I didn't hear them on 17m and I suspect few people in the UK did. Strange this, because they were obviously very strong in Eastern Europe on many occasions, though usually on SSB.

I have often been surprised by the relative success on these occasions by stations in ON and PA. Is it the flat terrain, equipment, skill, or is there a subtle RF barrier along the Channel, even when we are all beaming north? Maybe we should have adopted the Euro after all.

Anyway, it is clear that when an expedition thinks they have done well in working 'Europe', the success does not always extend to the British Isles and Ireland. This was clearly the case with Kure. We can't expect them to call CQ G only, but it would be nice if they would sometimes persist on the critical bands and modes for a few minutes after the bulk of Europe has faded a bit. I'm sure a lot more UK stations would have made it if they had given 40m CW a little more attention at around 0600z and tilted the balance on 20m a bit more towards CW.

I haven't yet seen a complete analysis of the results, but I know that several UK operators worked them on three bands (20, 30 and 40m) and two or three modes: CW, SSB and RTTY. At least one M3 station worked them on 20m – not bad for 10W! I'm sure there are also a few who did something else remarkable, but about whom I haven't heard. On the other hand I am equally sure there are very many, perhaps hundreds, who heard them and failed to get a QSO, together with a fair number who didn't even hear them at all.

Leaving aside factors such as poor locations, poor antennas, low power, 24-hour shifts etc., we can perhaps identify a few reasons for results being below expectations. I don't think we can blame propagation entirely. Anyone should have been able to hear the signals by being on the right frequency at the right, predictable, times. There were even times when the QRM was tolerable, either by virtue of the admittedly short periods when propagation favoured the UK end of Europe rather than the other. From there on, it was

largely a matter of luck in hitting a crack in the pile-up wall.

Much of the muttering from EU, on the cluster and round the bars, clubs and pubs of the country, centred on the suggestion that the Kure team had not done enough to focus on Europe, given their declared intention to do so. Indeed there was similar muttering also from Africa and South America. Undoubtedly, many of these comments were exaggerated and unfair. Nevertheless, I think the team could have been better organised to take advantage of the conditions to work more Europeans, especially in the West and North. One should exclude the Scandinavians who did well by virtue of their familiar private 'hotline' of trans-polar propagation in the northern latitudes.

A very interesting novelty introduced on this expedition was the DXA system, a quasi-real time web page which was regularly (every few minutes) updated with information from the team on Kure. This told us which bands and modes were in use, who they had worked in the preceding few minutes and gave messages from the team, such as, "Don't call while we are working someone else" - if only! It was also interactive to the extent that one could log on using any callsign, and see which band-mode slots had been worked by the logged-in call. This was not only comforting (or discouraging, as appropriate), but also must have prevented many dupes being worked and thus reduced QRM - well, perhaps a little. The system had a few teething troubles as might have been expected, considering the huge numbers of people using it, but it improved during the trip and may well be a precedent for future major operations. Of course, purists and old-timers may say that it is one more step towards Internet QSOs and that it is eroding the true spirit of ham radio, but, like clusters and mobile phones, you don't have to use it. At least it gave us something to look at while listening to K7C working those thousands of JAs. It will be interesting to see

if the system is made available to future expeditions.

I'm sure a lot of people are still complaining that the K7C ops didn't keep their promise to give priority to Europe. I doubt if this is a valid criticism in general. Many of the DXA messages emphasised that they were listening for EU at all possible times and they also issued a 'press statement' part way through, explaining why the propagation conditions, angle of take-off and polarisation effects might be preventing many EU stations from getting through. They did, in fact, work large numbers of EUs, especially in the east and round the Mediterranean. Of the 52,000 total QSOs, 9,000 were with Europe and 40,000 with Asia and North America. Nevertheless, I think they could have done a bit better in terms of their operating strategy, at least as far as Northern and Western EU were concerned. For the UK, 17m was a bit of a wash-out and 20m was very patchy, but we were always at a big disadvantage compared to our friends to the East. We would have benefited from more CW operation, particularly on 40m at the grey line (do I sound a bit obsessed with this?) and on 20m. The success which many had on 30m tends to support these points.

Perhaps a little more awareness would have helped. I wonder what went through the mind of the op who was working strings of JAs on 40m early in the expedition, when he suddenly heard and worked G4IRN. Certainly it didn't seem to occur to him that he might look for more Europeans - because it was a case of straight back to the JAs at 599. Perhaps he thought IRN was a local pirate. I was a little surprised, also early on, to hear an obviously inexperienced and very slow operator who was struggling with the pile-up on 20 SSB during one of the best EU openings and who then had to QRX for ten minutes to refuel the generator! Where was the rest of the team?

Then there was the morning when they suddenly appeared out of the noise on 20m

SSB, peaked to S7 and disappeared within 10 minutes. By a strange coincidence the DL operator only seemed to hear DL stations. I suppose we can't blame him. A G might have done the same. It was interesting in this case that about an hour later the signal came up again, this time to a good S7-8, and was workable for over an hour until as late as 0930z. This time it was F, ON, PA and G who scored, with the Italians for once complaining that they couldn't hear anything. I guess there was a change of propagation mode, number of hops or some such.

There is, of course, another memory, and that is the usual one of the loony fringe who, through ignorance or pure malice, do their best to ruin the fun for everybody. The best

advice I got from G3AAE, my mentor, many years ago was, "If the DX station is working split, NEVER EVER transmit on his frequency, no matter what the temptation.

Having aired the whinges, I must end by saying that, overall, the team did a good job in what were, propagationally speaking, very poor conditions. We should remember the time and effort that went into planning, the financial cost, the journey and the very unpleasant conditions on the island – although some of the photographs on the website tend to suggest otherwise. Of course they enjoyed the experience and I don't believe the claims that "They did it all for us", but I'm glad they went. It is another small step for mankind and for my DXCC score.

from G3RZP

When I first started DXing back in 1963, the basic rule was that when the DX came back to say SM5J??, only SM5J stations would reply. Not everyone followed that, but it did seem a sensible approach.

These days the rules have, it seems, changed, but when did this officially happen? If the DX gets a partial call with a full prefix, everyone ignores that fact. I heard K7C trying to pull out a DJ4: all Europe kept calling, including a number of G stations in CDXC - some of them with older calls than mine, so you would assume they would know better. But the phenomena is common, as I say, and includes a number of CDXC members. It's not often that the DX goes back to them either. I suppose the argument is the same as tail-ending: it gives exposure to their callsign, but it has the disadvantage of slowing the pile-up down because of the QRM.

I did hear some time back a pile-up where the guy was trying to work an SM and had only a partial call: an Italian kept calling and eventually the DX went back to him as 'SM stroke Italy...'. The Italian corrected him and was told, "But you must be in Sweden because I asked only for the SM station to transmit!".

It's about as clever as assuming that DX stations have special transceivers that allow them to listen at the same time as they transmit – and surely they must have, or what would be the point of consistently calling them while they're transmitting?

73 Peter

An Anniversary Operation

Laurie Margolis, G3UML

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I have a little tradition I try to keep going each year. On 12 August, the anniversary of my getting my licence, I set myself the very modest ambition of working all continents. I usually manage it, sometimes in an hour or so, although this year conditions were so awful I failed to find anyone in Oceania in a day's sporadic activity.

This year was a bit special: 12 August 2005 was my 40th anniversary as G3UML. I got my licence in 1965, when I was fifteen, although as I will point out to anyone who'll listen, I was only 14 when I sat the RAE – and in those days it was full essay and diagram answers, not easy-peasy multiple choice.

So I thought I'd be slightly more ambitious this year and try to devote an entire day to operating, with the vague intention of trying to work as many countries as possible, maybe even approaching 100. Given that the DX Cluster has only been registering in the low 200s for an entire week recently, that seemed a tough target, and so it proved.

My spare day had to wait till 14 September, when the Margolis QTH in the NW London suburbs was unusually quiet. My wife was on a business trip to the US, and my daughters were in Thailand.

I had the place to myself. It's not that the family mind me operating, but my station is in a living room corner, and the sound of me shouting away for hours on end, not to mention the reverse QRM from them, wouldn't do much for family harmony. So I kicked off at 0900z on the 14th, with the intention of ploughing on until boredom or tiredness took over.

Both those emotions hit me after a couple of hours. Have conditions ever been as bad as they were early this autumn? I thought by mid-September the bands would be looking up, but it certainly wasn't evident. In the first two hours I managed exactly 11 countries, none out of Europe, and nothing above 17m with the sole exception of an EA6 on 15. One G3RFX was contact number two from ZB2FX! At that point my gardener turned up, then I had a load of phone calls, so I took a 2-hour break.

Back on again at 1300z, and things improved very slightly. I finally got out of Europe with a K1 on 17m, then the first surprise of the afternoon: 9M6DXX – G4JVG in disguise – on 20m from his new QTH in Kota Kinabalu. This gave me my first real DX QSO, and rather surprisingly Oceania as continent number 3.

Gradually things cranked into life: CN8 and 3DAØ on 20m, YB and V51 on 15m, even an SV5 for an all-time new country on 20m – and there aren't many of those about when you've worked 340-odd on the band already.

As evening drew on it was still a struggle, but I got a ZS and an HS on 20m at around 1700, and then at last a stirring on the higher bands: Brazil on 15m for the 6th continent, then amazingly a good 10m opening which produced LU and CE with loud signals. Another hiatus, then some interesting stuff from the west on 17m: TI and CO, and a real surprise at 2100: FG on 12m. Then 20m cranked into life a bit, with NP2 and 6Y5, but with that band now pretty well dying at 2230. Onto 40m, and despite a surprise with SØ1MZ in Western Sahara and a ZP7, it was really

tough going. 80m was DX-free, but provided one new country, Latvia. y 2330z a dead horse was being well and truly flogged: I had 64 countries in a little over 10 hours operating - not bad, and leaving me fairly confident of getting towards the 100 the following day.

I got up at 0430z to find little other than the awful local noise I now have to contend with round here, especially early in the morning. I would pay large sums to anyone who could help me sort this out. A61R was loud on an otherwise dead 20m and I got him long before dawn at 0445z. The low bands were useless, with the extraordinary exception of PE5YRA/MM in the SE Pacific, 1000 miles from Pitcairn, who managed to be a genuine 59+ on 80m at 0540, in broad daylight, and gave me the same. It didn't add to the countries total, but was probably the best single contact of the whole session.

A brief excursion onto 30m and CW with my 20m antenna produced Bosnia. (Many of you will ask why I didn't do more CW - the simple answer is that I'm no good at it and don't much enjoy it, other than for the odd pile-up, usually with G3SXW or G3TXF at the other end, who obligingly slow down to about 5 wpm when they hear my shaky fist) ad then I'm afraid, it all rather ran into the sand. My sole VK contact was my old friend Ian, VK3MO, at 0650 on 20m, and when I say that Ian was 58- you will realise how poor conditions were. Ian runs a 4-over-4-over-4-over-4 quad with the top at well over 200', and is often the loudest single thing I hear.

On Day Two I stopped at 0900z, started again at 1430, but despite getting Hong Kong and India on 20m I ran out of road at country 71 at 1800. I then broke off for a nice dinner invitation, and late that night added HK on 40m for number 72, before losing the will to live.

Total operating time across the two days was about 18 hours, every country bar one on SSB,

and every band from 80 to 10m, including the WARC bands, contributing something. I reckon I heard about a dozen countries that I didn't work. I managed not to work such rarities as OH, OZ, OK, OM (what was it with the Os?), and also the likes of JA, VE and ZL. Most mornings in mid-September I would virtually guarantee to work ZL on 80m, if nowhere else. I re-established contact with a couple of mates I hadn't worked for years.

So what conclusions do I draw? It was the longest stretch of operating I'd done from home in a while, and there's great satisfaction in watching the bands open and close, and openings come and go, throughout the day. Unfortunately, for this exercise, it was far more close than open. 72 countries, in those conditions, with simple wire antennas and just an SB-200 amplifier, I consider fairly good. With bigger antennas I would probably have turned up a few things by CQing, but I didn't miss very much. The 10 and 12m openings were unexpected, considering that even 15m was utterly dead for most of the time. The /MM in the Pacific on 80m was a big surprise.

Although I retain grave reservations about the effect of the Cluster on DX standards, it was obviously of immense help in an exercise like this. I find a cluster spot often ruins any chance of the more modest station working rare DX; on the other hand, the large majority of stations on the air are now so cluster-driven that if you do find something under your own steam, you will have a pretty clear shot at it until someone cluster-spots it.

I may well try to do the same again, when I have a similar peaceful period at home and perhaps when the bands are a touch more productive. When I next came on, a week later, I worked 3 JAs, a KH9, an OHØ, a ZL and HV5PUL in less than an hour, and as I write this in mid-October, T88CQ is a massive signal, though completely overwhelmed by his pile-up, on 20m at 1700z. Things can only get better!

Will we DX ourselves out of existence?

Chris Carrington, GØIYZ

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In recent years there has been some concern expressed within these and other pages about the current state of the hobby and the apparent decline in interest in amateur radio. There has also been great concern expressed about the lack of newcomers entering the hobby.

So great is this concern that the regulatory bodies have seen fit to erode away the entry qualifications in an attempt to encourage new blood, yet still nothing seems to work. Even with additional classes of licence, the removal of the Morse test and a reduction in the technical acumen required to enter the hobby, newcomers are still few and far between. Now Ofcom is looking to deregulate the hobby altogether, making it a free-for-all.

So what's causing the problem? Why is there a lack of newcomers? Why is there an apparent lack of interest? Well, we can blame the Internet. We can blame mobile phones. We can blame computers. We can blame video games. We can blame just about anything we want to, but maybe - before we point any fingers - we should also take a step back and ask if *we* are not partially to blame. Let me explain.

A few weeks ago I was watching amateur radio being demonstrated to a potential newcomer.

The demonstrating amateur (callsign omitted for obvious reasons) was calling CQ on 40m CW using a club call:

CQ CQ CQ de GX2XYZ GX2XYZ GX2XYZ
CQ CQ CQ de GX2XYZ GX2XYZ GX2XYZ
CQ CQ CQ de GX2XYZ GX2XYZ GX2XYZ

So went the call. Over and over again for 5 minutes without any response: just the roar of band noise. Let's face it, we've all been there.

He tried again:

CQ CQ CQ de GX2XYZ GX2XYZ GX2XYZ
CQ CQ CQ de GX2XYZ GX2XYZ GX2XYZ
CQ CQ CQ de GX2XYZ GX2XYZ GX2XYZ

"I don't think anyone's there," commented the potential newcomer.

The demonstrating amateur, rather embarrassed, pointed at the world map on the wall of the shack and told the newcomer to pick a place. The newcomer pointed towards West Africa. Taking the paddle between his fingers the demonstrating amateur started to send again:

CQ CQ CQ de TU5DX TU5DX TU5DX
CQ CQ CQ de TU5DX TU5DX TU5DX
CQ CQ CQ de TU5DX TU5DX TU5DX

No initial response, so another series of CQs was sent. The band lit up. There was a cacophony of stations calling. The demonstrating amateur rocked back in the chair, looked at the bemused potential newcomer and said,

"You see, they're all out there, but they just don't want to talk to us. We're just not DX enough."

You could see by the look on the newcomer's face that he just couldn't get his head around why all those people, with all of this communication power, were out there - and yet none of them either wanted to talk to each other or us. For all intents and purposes it was

a dead band, and yet there were hundreds of stations sitting there, talking to no-one. He really couldn't see the sense of it all and to be honest, when demonstrated in that context, neither could I. The whole exercise made me take a long, hard look at the way I operate.

I, like a lot of other radio amateurs, started out in the hobby because I had a fascination for radio equipment and communication. The thought of talking to another person from another part of the world using my own radio equipment in my own shack thrilled me and filled me with excitement. But how many hours have I spent trawling the bands from one end to another hunting for that elusive DX, Rolling across someone calling CQ and not bothering to work them? Why? Not because I don't want to talk to them but because I don't NEED them. I've lost track of the amount of unanswered CQ calls I've heard and the amount of unanswered CQ calls I've sent. How many times have I switched on the rig and then, an hour or so later, switched it off without working a single station? Not because I haven't heard any stations, but because the ones I have heard I don't need. From time to time I have to wonder how many other folk are also tuning around and not working anyone.

I thoroughly enjoy the thrill of working the DX. I have a very modest station, so to hear my call come back amongst the pile-up is nothing short of a miracle and it gives me such an incredible kick to know that signals from my station have made it to wherever. But I also enjoy talking to people, chinwagging if you will, and it's that part of the hobby that I have somehow forgotten about.

I am not, in any way, advocating that we abandon DXing, but I am suggesting that from time to time, when there's no DX about, we all take a step back and work a station we don't *need* - simply for the fun of working them. If we all did this on an occasional basis then perhaps dead bands and no activity would be a thing of the past. Then potential newcomers might just see the excitement and magic that we can see in this wonderful hobby of ours. I appreciate that I'm painting this picture blacker than it really is, but I do fear for amateur radio - especially with the lack of new blood - and I feel that we, as the current incumbents, should do what we can to entice newcomers and the easiest way to this is to work other stations.

CDXC Annual Dinner 2006

It's getting around to the time of the Annual Dinner again. Taking your comments into account, we have decided to try a different venue next year and are currently looking for somewhere suitable. Our preferred area is to the west of London within the M3/M4/M40 window, perhaps somewhere in the area around Wokingham, Reading, Henley or Marlow. Our target date is Saturday, 18 March, so keep the date free and note it in your diaries.

If you know of somewhere that might be suitable please, drop a line to our Secretary, Peter G3SJX - contact details on page 2. We are looking for a place that will provide a reasonably priced 3-course dinner for 40 to 50 people in a room to ourselves where we can also hold an after-dinner talk, a licensed bar and a small amount of accommodation for those who wish to stop over for the night. Any help would be most appreciated.

GBØSH, Strumble Head Lighthouse, 20 August 2005

Tim Beaumont M3SDE

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WAB SP84, Locator IO721a. Sponsored by Nevada Radio, www.nevadaradio.co.uk, and Spiderbeam, www.spiderbeam.net.

Strumble Head lighthouse stands imposingly on St Michael's Island, an islet separated from the mainland of Pembrokeshire, Wales, by a narrow gap through which the sea boils and froths in stormy weather. The lighthouse tower is 17m high and the height of the light above mean high water is 45m.

The team of GBØSH consisted of Anthony, MWØJZE (Squadron Leader); Rob, MWØRLJ; Russell, G5XW (he's only 38); Tim, M3SDE; Oliver, MW3SDO, and Marti, M1DCV. About a year ago Anthony and Rob started making enquiries to Trinity House, owners of the lighthouse, to celebrate the Lighthouse on the Air weekend, 20-21 August 2005. We had good communication throughout and, as Rob owns a farm just on the headland close to the lighthouse, we found it easy to make all the arrangements necessary to gain access and install our equipment inside the lighthouse for the event.

Friday, 19 August: Marti, M1DCV, and myself, M3SDE, had a long way to travel from Coventry. We arranged to stay at Anthony, MWØJZE's house tonight and leave early in the morning. We were joined by Oli, MW3SDO, from North Wales and Russell, G5XW, from Dorchester. Time was marching on. It's already 1am and we have an early start.

Saturday, 20 August: 5.30am. We have three cars to load up with antennas, radios, masts and cables. At 6am we were ready to drive to Rob's farm, then on to Strumble Head. The drive approaching the lighthouse was several

miles of narrow twisting lanes, hemmed in by high banks, across farm tracks and finally out on to the headland. It is a wild and bleak setting with high rugged cliffs. I am sure Anthony thought he was driving in the Rally of Wales along those tight lanes.

We had arranged to meet the lighthouse caretaker at 8.30am. The lighthouse is not open to the public due to the dangerous rugged cliffs of St Michael's Island. A small footbridge spans the open gap to the island and then a long, very steep path with a lot of steps leads to the top of the 45m cliff where the lighthouse station sits proudly guarding Fishguard Bay and Harbour. Carrying the equipment to the station took two trips each and was quite a physical endurance exercise and we all felt exhausted as we reached the summit.

Jeff, the caretaker, took us on a tour round the lighthouse and we were given quite a history lesson around the Island. We were advised to set up our antennas on the helipad at the front of the building away from the instrument area of the lighthouse at the back. We had several antennas: a Comet H-422 V Dipole (sponsored by Nevada), a Spiderbeam (sponsored by Spiderbeam) and an inverted V wire and a 40/80m vertical. All antennas and stations were set up in one hour. We also had 2 x Yaesu FT-920s, a Yaesu FT-857 and an Alinco DX 70. Despite having four stations up and running, we were surprised that we had no cross-station breakthrough. We had Dunestar band pass filters with us, but didn't need them, so that was a bonus. Conditions were extremely dire. Russell called endlessly all day on 40m, but the band was silent for many hours. 15m was also quiet, with QSOs few and far between. 17m was holding up well,

with quite a number of calls logged. We attempted to call friends on our mobile phones to see if conditions were as bad elsewhere, but we had difficulty in getting a signal - unless we stood on one leg with our arms above our heads on the helipad. Then just as you get a signal, it goes.

We were very lucky with the weather. A chilly breeze early in the morning gave way to beautiful blue skies and warm sunshine that made some quite stunning photographs as the evening drew nearer. At last the bands began to open up, with big pile-ups on 20m and inter-G and Central Europe on 40m from about 6pm. Some of the stations logged were HC2/KG4CIJ in Ecuador, YI9DKE in Iraq and several stations from Asiatic Russia. We continued at quite a pace until we had to close with 450 QSOs at 2345z - as the lighthouse had to be alarmed and closed at midnight UTC. We climbed down the steps to the footbridge carrying some of the equipment and headed back to Rob's farmhouse for some well deserved beers! In fact it was 3am before we decided to call it a night. At 10am we drove back to the lighthouse once again to

meet Jeff and pack up all the antennas. In discussions with Jeff we agreed that next year we would like to be there from the Friday night until the Sunday evening. A tent would have to be set up next year as we are not able to be inside the lighthouse at night for insurance reasons. Plans continue!

We all thoroughly enjoyed the GBØSH activity - and were later active from Alderney Island from 12-19 October 2005.

Photos, QSL card and log book will be available at

<http://www.mw0jze.inkinkink.net/se.htm>

QSL via MWØJZE

Tim Beaumont, M3SDE / ZK1SDE

<http://www.zk1sde.co.uk>

PO Box 17, Kenilworth, Warwickshire CV8 1SF UK

Tel.: +44 7976 292980

New member Mark Dumpleton, 2EØNCG

"I am aged 15, have been licensed with the 2EØ call since 18 May 2005 - and achieved DXCC using my previous call M3NCG in less than a year. My details are on QRZ.com if you want more info."

And on QRZ.com for 2EØNCG it says:

"If I have had a QSO with you or received a QSL card from you, then many thanks. I have got my QSL cards back from the checker here in the UK and have got DXCC in under a year of being licensed using 10W to homemade dipoles! I am currently active on all the HF bands, 10m 6m, 2m and 70cms..."

Working DXCC as an M3 in less than a year is quite an achievement. Congratulations, Mark!

IOTA News

Roger Balister, G3KMA

Update of data in IOTA Directory – 40th Anniversary Edition

New IOTA reference numbers issued

AF-099 SU Matruh Region group (Egypt)
AF-100 9Q Bas-Congo Province group (Congo, Democratic Republic of)
AS-174 RØK Chukchi Sea Coast West group (Russian Federation - Asia)
NA-227 VYØ Nunavut (Kitikmeot Region) West group (Canada)
OC-269 YB7 Karimata Islands (Indonesia)

Operations which have provided acceptable validation material

AF-099 SU8IOTA White Rock (August 2005)
AF-100 9R2CV Ntampo Island (August 2005)
AF-100 9R2DX Ntampo Island (August 2005)
AS-038 RØK/P Bol'shoy Routan Island (August 2005)
AS-038 RV3MA/Ø Bol'shoy Routan Island (August 2005)
AS-038 RZ3EC/Ø Bol'shoy Routan Island (August 2005)
AS-062 RAØFU/P Shikotan Island (August 2005)
AS-062 RV1CC/Ø Shikotan Island (August 2005)
AS-062 RV3ACA/Ø Shikotan Island (August 2005)
AS-174 RØK Shalaurova Island (August 2005)
AS-174 RV3MA/Ø Shalaurova Island (August 2005)

AS-174 RZ3EC/Ø Shalaurova Island (August 2005)
NA-175 K9AJ/VYØ Blaze Island & Couper Islands (September 2005)
NA-175 KD6WW/VYØ Blaze Island & Couper Islands (September 2005)
NA-227 K9AJ/VYØ Chantry Island (September 2005)
NA-227 KD6WW/VYØ Chantry Island (September 2005)
OC-269 YE7P Karimata Island, Karimata Islands (September 2005)
SA-082 HK3JJH/2 Morro Grande Island (September 2005)

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 October 2005

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

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

G3ALI Ray Small
G3BFC (ex-ZD3BFC) 12/10/2005

The RTTY Column

Phil Cooper, GUØSUP *pcooper@guernsey.net*

I am writing this just after the JARTS RTTY Contest, and it seems to have been a busy few weeks with CQWW RTTY, the Makrothen, and then JARTS. It will soon be WAEDC RTTY too, and I hope you all managed to get the hang of QTCs in time? Please let me know how you got on with them.

These three contests included a host of calls new to RTTY, and judging by the claimed scores, it looks as though there will be record numbers of entrants. It is pleasing to see so many new calls trying RTTY, possibly for the first time, although I suspect a few are not only new to RTTY, but new to contesting too!

In CQWW, I had several callers who gave me name, QTH, name of the dog etc., and while I don't particularly mind, it isn't the best thing to have to deal with mid-pile-up. As the bands were crammed with RTTY signals, you would have thought they may realise a contest was in progress, and what did he make of me sending 599 14 14?

During the first 8 to 10 hours of CQWW it was interesting to see the absolutely huge pile-ups on the likes of HC8N on 80m and 40m. I know it can be very tempting to try and work the better DX, but waiting till much later in the contest makes your chances of success so much better. I found HC8N on 40m on Sunday evening calling CQ over and over, and they were worked first call. I did hear them on 80m again towards the end, but the pile-up was too big to bother about.

I guess if you are just working the contest to bump up your DXCC count, then you can afford to spend a little time chasing the rare DX. But, if you are trying to put in a decent effort, it really isn't worth wasting time trying

to work the DX in the opening hours of the contest. Leave them till later, and they will usually be begging for any contact! The GU prefix often helps here too, as I have been asked to QSY to another band for a mult for them, which usually suits me too.

The Makrothen contest is one where you exchange a 4-digit grid locator, and there are no multipliers, just points for distance. So why did I get several callers that asked me to QSY to another band for a mult? This tends to indicate that they didn't read the rules, which is always a wise thing to do! Reading the rules is vital, as it will help you to decide a strategy for the contest, and checking out what constitutes a mult is one of the key things.

During the first 24 hours of JARTS, there was a great opening to W6/7 and VE6/7, and I had a constant run of these during a period of CQing. All were very strong, with none of that polar flutter you often hear, and it was great fun.

On the Sunday morning, 10m opened as well, but it did require time to watch as calls came up, then went away again. I probably 'wasted' a couple of hours during the morning just watching 10m, but I was quite happy to do that, and wasn't really bothered too much. It did pay off, I think, in that I managed to work a good few mults. I must also thank Lee, GØMTN, for the contact on 20m, which seemed to be via back-scatter, as I was aiming at the Caribbean at the time, and turning the beam up north caused him to fade away.

I've managed to log quite a few new band-slots in these past few contests, which is always pleasing! Probably the best were KH6ND and HI3TEJ on 40m, and VP9/K9JY

on 40m and 80m. I also picked up some easier ones, such as HBØ and 7X on 80, and 3A2MW on 40m. The VP9 contacts have already been confirmed on LoTW, so I am now feeling quite pleased with myself. Despite that, it is now getting harder to find all-time new ones, so I do keep an eye out on the various DX bulletins, and also check the NG3K website for upcoming DX.

In CQWW, I heard a good number of signals that sounded really slow, and there were several comments about this on the reflectors afterwards. I had heard the phenomenon before, but only in the previous two contests, although I hadn't really thought about the possibility of a problem then.

When the time came for the Makrothen, I kept a note of each call that had the problem, and then e-mailed them to ask what they were running. The common thread was the microHam unit, but with the server software version 2.2.2. It seems there was a feature in this version that caused the bug, although it could have been a useful feature. Upgrading the server software does seem to have cured the fault, as I didn't hear any slow signals during JARTS. If you subscribe to the Writelog reflector, and also the microHam reflector, you will almost certainly have seen mention of the bug, and the cure. After CQWW, there were thoughts that it was simply folk who couldn't type, but there were several well-known testers amongst those with the problem, and they do not have trouble working a keyboard!

The WARC bands continue to prove viable for DX on RTTY. I had a nice little session on 30m after working ER3GS on 12m, followed by a couple on 17m. I worked OHØ, then got asked to QSY for another station, and after working that, I ended up with a nice run for about 90 minutes, which included calls from W, 4X and beyond. The interesting thing about the WARC bands is that I frequently

find calls on those bands that I have never heard on the regular bands or in contests. On top of that, direct QSL cards seem to come flooding in within the week.

Upcoming DX:

Cocos Keeling, VK9CG, from November 7 to 21 by WØYG. QSL to home call.

Micronesia, V6A, from November 14 to 19 by JA7HMZ. QSL via JA7AO.

Contests: (all times in UTC)

OK RTTY, December 17, 00:00 to 24:00. Exchange is RST and CQ Zone. Mults are DXCC countries and OK stations on each band.

SARTG HNY Contest, January 1, 08:00 to 11:00. 80m and 40m only. Exchange is RST + QSO Number (from 001) plus HAPPY NEW YEAR in your native language. Mults are each DXCC country, except Scandinavia, and each prefix of Scandinavian countries, eg SM1, SM2, LA1, LA2 etc. Scandinavian countries include JW, JX, LA, OH, OHØ, OJØ, OY, SM and TF.

ARRL RTTY Round-up January 7, 18:00 to January 8, 24:00, operating no more than 24 hours. Exchange is RST + serial number for UK stations. Mults are DXCC Countries, plus each US state, including DC, plus Canadian Provinces and Territories.

If you want the full rules for each contest, go to www.rttycontesting.com.

That's it for another issue, so 73 and good DX.

Phil GUØSUP

Contest

Lee Volante, GØMTN

Hello once again and welcome to this edition's Contest section. The traditional wintertime contest season is now well under way, although the 2005-2006 season is likely to see the lowest sunspot numbers for several years as we are reaching the very bottom of the solar cycle. Memories of running JAs and W6s from home do seem to be getting faint now. At least the upturn in sunspot numbers should be faster, but the NASA website tells me I might have to wait a little longer before this starts to happen. Putting a simple query of 'solar cycle 24' into the Google search engine brought me results from all over the world about predictions for the next minimum and maximum, and what sunspot numbers we're likely to see. I hadn't appreciated how predicting the solar weather is so much like the terrestrial weather – especially looking into the future. I've just read (although admittedly without understanding much of the mathematics involved) some papers that had completely contradictory predictions for the peak sunspot numbers, so I guess we'll just have to wait to find out if it will be a great cycle, or just an average one. Contests will continue regardless, of course, but we just don't know how difficult reaching those far away multipliers will be yet. The only thing I did realise for definite is that my plans for a 10m yagi probably don't have to be finished too quickly...

Digest Feedback – Contest Software

It was good to receive some feedback from Dick, G3URA, recently about the Digest. Dick made some good suggestions about what type of content would be interesting for the Contest section. It has sometimes been difficult to

work out the target audience for the Digest. Probably following some of the recent marketing initiatives, such as the membership offer collaboration with Martin Lynch welcoming newer licensees to CDXC, there are a number of readers who may benefit from a review of some of the more basic principles of contesting. Perhaps some experienced DXers who are new to contesting might also be interested. Phil, GUØSUP, has done a great job in a similar vein with RTTY contesting here in the Digest. Many people have only tried the data modes for the first time in the last few years.

One of the suggestions Dick made was a review of contest software. Everyone has their particular favourite contest loggers – there's certainly not one piece of software that will be perfect for everyone. Some contesters may need support for two radios, rotators, and antenna switching. Others will prefer the simpler no-frills approach and will be content with logging QSOs and dupe checking. Many contesters will use a variety of software, perhaps depending if a CW or SSB contest is being operated, or if it's single or multi-operator contest. The fundamentals of a good support base and reliability are also as important as a software feature. There have been enough horror stories of teams spending a lot of time and money travelling to a rare country or island for a contest, and not managing to get their computer network to remain stable during the contest itself.

There are certainly more options and functionality available today than there was ten years ago, but with this complexity comes the added risk. Guides on setting up computer networks have been published in RadCom, and there are many websites describing how to

set up software for particular configurations. One of the most common problems is when your particular hardware doesn't want to work in the same manner as everyone else's seems to.

It's probably very healthy that there is a variety of choices available to us. This caters for the newcomer, and the expert alike. When using software for perhaps 48 hours at a stretch, repeating the same actions perhaps 10,000 times, it's vital that usability is maximised. Annoying bugs, or the need to press multiple buttons when pressing one (or preferable none!) could have sufficed will cause fatigue and frustration over the course of a contest – which in real terms is equivalent to a complete working week.

Some people, albeit a small minority now, still log on paper. Now that I'm receiving RSGB 21/28 MHz CW Contest logs, I'm also reminded that several people write their own logging programs too. Not too many of these output Cabrillo in the right format, but I've already been on my soapbox recently about this subject, so I'd better stop there.

I'm going to ask if some fans of the most popular contest loggers in use today (Writelog, N1MM, SD, Win-Test, CT, TR etc.) would send me just a few words explaining why they use a particular piece of software. I'll collate the responses, add in a summary of what each package offers, and hopefully we'll see if we can work out what niches or unique qualities one package has over another for the January Digest and onwards.

RSGB HF Convention

It was great to see lots of CDXC members at this year's HF Convention at Gatwick. As ever, as much discussion and learning was to be done in the bar as it was during the presentations. There was the usual friendly

banter between the different contest groups, and some last minute recruiting of operators for the upcoming CQ WW DX SSB contest. Thanks to the HFC 2005 organisers for another good event.

Don, G3XTT, suggested that a 'Contest stream' might be an idea for the Convention at some point. We have had technical presentations on SO2R, and a couple of DXpedition contest presentations in the last few years. There is the annual Trophy presentation of course, and the contest forum. So, if the balance of presentations would allow it, with an extra contest-related feature or two, it could certainly become a reality, unofficially at least. Operating the EUSprint as a demonstration from the public MB2HFC station could be an option, if there was a brave soul willing to try it!

Would more 'beginners' presentations be well attended? What would have the most appeal – demonstrations of equipment and software perhaps? Are the adventures of expeditions to rare countries or islands for a contest of more interest than examples of real world 'postage stamp' garden contest stations? Answers on a postcard please to the usual address.

AFS 2006

Yes, it'll soon be that time of year again. If you are hoping to take part in AFS this year for either the CW or SSB legs, or preferably both, and you don't have a commitment to another team already, please get in touch. Let's hope we can have good support for 2006.

Contest Club Finland Meeting 2006

After a very successful meeting this last January cruising between Helsinki to Stockholm, and back again, the Contest Club Finland and OH DX Foundation will be repeating the format in January 2006.

The 11th Contest Club Finland and OH DX Foundation Contest & DX Meeting: 20-22 January 2006.

After the wonderful feedback from the previous meeting we have decided to arrange our 2006 Contest and DX meeting with the same formula, and go maritime mobile once again. A large group of contest and DX-minded hams around the world will again join the fun on board Viking Line's M/S 'Gabiella' en route OH-OHØ-SM-OHØ-OH.

Preliminary agenda, pricing information and on-line registration form are now available on the CCF's web page at

<http://www.qsl.net/ccf/meet11th.htm>

So don't hesitate, but be fast and book your cruise!

On behalf of CCF & OHDXF, 73 and CU/MM in January!

Toni, OH2UA, and Pasi, OH2IW/OH6UM

Most of the UK party who attended last year have booked up again. There are budget airlines flying to Scandinavia, and a lucky few managed to book for 1 UK Pound plus taxes. So get searching for some bargains.

D4B QRT

Anyone reading any of the popular Internet e-mail contest forums will have been forwarded the news that the D4B contest superstation on Cape Verde is now QRT. Built up by AI, 4L5A, over the last few years, D4B holds several world records and many world #1 results in the major international CQ WW SSB, CW, RTTY and 160m contests, plus the ARRL DX, and WAE contests. The views of the large quad antennas from the mountain top QTH are outstanding. AI is an extremely accomplished operator too – the QTH and station alone never 'guarantee' a win. See

<http://www.qsl.net/d44tt> for more details of this unique station. Not too many stations have a quad for 160m, with the alternative antenna being a dipole at 600m.

AI is also a generous supporter of the contesting community. Hence it was a real surprise to hear that D4B would be closing down. The reasons given were frustration with some of the major contest committees' policies, and also towards entrants who don't play by the rules. To keep a balance, I should say that there certainly are efforts made to catch cheaters. To prevent embarrassment this often takes the form of asking entrants to reclassify their own entry, but disqualifications are not unknown for many contests in the calendar. Here in the UK, the RSGB HF and VHF Contest Committees also take rule infringements seriously.

Also, needing to cross a few continents and have flights and boat trips to contend with before making your first QSO could rightfully be considering fatiguing. I have sometimes thought it was too far to travel to my local club station to operate.

So let's hope that the work done by the many contest organisers continues to progress, and also that AI returns to the premier league sometime soon.

Cluster Use Guidelines

Following on from the D4B announcement, the CQ-Contest reflector carried the reaction to AI's decision, and an interesting discussion on contesting ethics. One of the issues is the abuse of the DX Cluster network, for which a set of guidelines was published.

This is reproduced below, with permission from the author, David, K1TTT. It should just be common sense, but perhaps be a refresher for some, and useful to anyone discovering the DX Cluster for the first time.

1. Do not make bad comments about anybody else's use of the cluster using announce or DX commands. If you must comment, use talk or mail to contact the station directly.

2. Do not make bad comments about how someone is operating on the air using announce or DX commands. You do not know if the station you are commenting about is there to see it and it is considered rude by many. If you do know the station is on the network, contact them directly via talk or mail.

3. Do not respond to personal attacks or comments directed at you by using announce or DX commands. Reply only via direct talk or mail to the station if you must. But it is often best to just ignore personal attacks, since the attacker usually just wants to get you mad.

4. During contests do not spot yourself or the station you are operating from. While some contests do allow this, it is considered bad form by some. If you are not in a contest, then spotting yourself is OK, but you will likely be attacked by some users who think it is not allowed. (follow rule 3. in this case)

5. If you are going to spot a friend many times during a contest, also spot some other stations. Cheerleading for one station during a contest is considered to be bad form by some.

6. Spot things that you actually hear on the air. Do not make spots with comments that you can't hear a station. These spots can be confusing and give a wrong impression about propagation or who is really on the bands.

7. Do not worry about how far away or what country someone is in before you spot them. If you hear someone on the air, they can be spotted. Some users will complain about spots of 'common' stations, but during a

contest everyone needs to work a 'G' on 6 bands and all modes. And, with poor sunspots, it may be hard to work many countries on 10m. And it is often hard to work some of the common European countries on 160m. So lots of spots help.

8. Do not worry about spotting dupes. The cluster software has dupe filters and so do logging programs that use spots.

9. If you find a spot that has the wrong callsign, do not re-spot it with that callsign or 'bust' or anything like that. Just spot it again with the proper callsign. Logging software with bandmaps will show both spots on the same frequency and it is up to anyone else using the spots to figure out which one is bad. Using things like callsign/bust or other mangled callsigns can cause more work for other users who then have to delete the comments in addition to the original bad spot. (this follows from rules 1. and 6.: do not attack or comment about someone else's use of the cluster, and spot what you hear.)

10. Do not use announce or DX commands to chat with someone else. If you can't use talk or mail, then arrange some other way to talk to them on the air, or in conference, or via some other method off the cluster.

11. If you have a problem with spots or filters or how to do something, ask your local sysop or talk to another user on your node. Do not try to ask for help via announce or DX commands. Likewise do not offer help with commands via announce or DX commands. Not all nodes use the same commands and your question or suggestion may just cause more confusion. If someone on your node needs help, use talk or mail to give it to them.

A final point David and I discussed was that asking other stations to spot you is against 'the spirit of contest' and in some contests is

specifically mentioned in the rules as a disallowed activity.

TZ5A QRV

Don't forget to give TZ5A a call in the CQ WW DX CW contest (November 26/27). They will be a big signal on all six bands and should be easy to work, especially on Sunday when the pile-ups have eased off a little. Operators are AA7A, G3PJT, G3SXW, G4IRN, G4BWP, K5VT, K7WP, KC7V, KY7M, N7NG, and QSL is via G3SXW.

I know there will be several other multi-op and single-op entries more local to home operating too. Good Luck to everyone taking part. War stories after the event will be greatly appreciated!

That's about all for this time – so see you in 2006.

73,

Lee GØMTN

W9DXCC

Peter Chadwick, G3RZP

g3rzp@g3rzp.wanadoo.co.uk

So, you're going to ask, just what the heck is W9DXCC? It's the annual DX convention held in the Chicago suburbs in September, usually on the second weekend. It just so happened that business trip #18 for this year (it's no wonder that I'm never around for the DX!) was such that a break could be taken on the way to San Diego to attend W9DXCC. A few e-mail exchanges showed that old friends K9NW and K9PG would be around for at least part of the time, and it seemed an easy way to break the journey.

The event was held at the Holiday Inn in Elk Grove, which is very close to Chicago's O'Hare airport – somewhat too close for sleeping when the early morning arrivals began.

I had the usual good flight out on BA (unlike many of the US carriers, the booze is free on BA in economy!) and got to the hotel at about 1700 local time on the Friday, just as Mike, K9NW, arrived. I've known Mike for a

good few years, having first met at the 'Sultans of Schwing' parties at Dayton. Paul, K9PG, appeared somewhat later, and a party of about 10 went off to dinner. Registration by e-mail with payment by credit card hadn't been possible, but the tickets were waiting - \$50, including the Saturday night banquet. A big surprise was to see Mike, W7OT, who I know from Dayton – he lives in Massachusetts, but had been visiting relations in W9-land. His XYL, Lisa, K1UQT, hadn't come with him, though - she was home nursing a sick cat. I was surprised just how many of the W9-land people I've met before, mostly at Dayton, and how many I recognised – and who recognised me.

Hospitality suites after a transatlantic flight have certain problems, and I gave up at about 2330 local time. Saturday started early – the hotel offered a free breakfast, and the corned beef hash was very good.

The morning started with a presentation on the KH8SI expedition, an ARRL forum, and a

presentation on the efforts to get permission to land on Navassa and Desecheo. It did appear that there was more than a touch of 'bureaucracy for the sake of it' preventing landings. The programme was very varied, including presentations from the Northern California DX Foundation, WRTC and even one on IOTA! One I found particularly interesting was by Carl Leutzelschwab, K9LA (editor of NCJ), on Contest and DX propagation planning in cycle 23.

The intervals between presentations were taken up with drawing the door prizes, of which there were many. These included 200' reels of low-loss Belden coax, \$1500 dollar discount certificates from KØXG Systems, and a Bencher Butternut HF2V vertical, as well as smaller prizes such as an RSGB Countries List, a bag of silver-plated PL259s and free website hosting for a year. The Grand prizes were a Teledyne T8 Log Periodic, a Bird 43 Wattmeter and DX Engineering Control console and Remote Switch, while the raffle prize was an Icom 746PRO (whatever mark the latest is).

Total attendance was probably around 250. The dinner was fairly typical of such events, and the after-dinner speaker was the President of the ARRL, Jim Haynie, W5JBP. Again, there was a hospitality suite, hosted by the Greater Milwaukee DX Association, that ran into the wee small hours. The drawback was that there wasn't any beer – you could have Budweiser Lite, Miller, and so on, but not what we'd call beer! As a result, I had to drink bourbon...

The W9 crowd are all extremely friendly and, if you get the opportunity, I'd heartily recommend going to the event. It's not too big, but the number of door prizes is surprising, the people are friendly and the hotel is pretty cheap too – about \$75 including breakfast. You can not only get your DXCC cards checked, with something less of a queue than at Dayton, but also cards for CQ awards.

Hopefully, I'll be there again next year. Personally, I found it more interesting than the RSGB HF Convention, and I probably knew more people than I would have done at that event!

The New Weapon: N-C Headphones

Roger Western, G3SXW

Maybe I am the last person on the planet to experience this new piece of technology. If so, my apologies - please ignore what is to follow. But I get the impression that few DXers have tried noise-cancelling headphones on the air. Here is my story so far.

I was impressed when my mate Ian, G3WVG, let me listen to his £60 headphones a while ago, on an airplane. The effect was dramatic. It killed a large proportion of the in-flight noise. But, ahem, that seemed rather a large

sum to pay for this pleasure. However, I could see that this might help to reduce fatigue and to increase listening pleasure on long-haul flights. Then I saw an advertisement in RadCom for the Fujikon noise-cancelling stereo headphones at less than twenty quid. Now you're talking! So I bought them. See RadCom, October 2005, page 98, bottom left, Waters & Stanton. You can buy the Fujikon NC-2 for £18.95 or the folding design NC-4 for £19.95. I splashed out the extra one pound.

Physical

In practice these are good stereo audio headphones like any other. They work fine and are comfortable. They are 32Ω with maximum power output of 60mW PMPO (whatever that might mean). They have sensitivity of 116dB (off) and 122dB (on). It comes with a 1.6m-long cord and a 3.5mm stereo plug, twin-plug adaptor provided. The important bit is that they noise cancel at 15dB or greater, at 300 Hz. This means in practice that low-frequency ambient noises are cancelled. Normal audio received down the headphone line is not suppressed. This means that the masking of desired low-frequency audio is removed.

The type of ambient noises that are best suppressed are constant engine noises. This includes hum and burble from aircraft engines and from fans, eg amplifiers, computers, air-conditioners. These are the most noticeable, but even voices (live or TV/radio) are suppressed.

The foldable version has elbow joints, just above the two earpieces. This allows the headband to be folded back down between the earpieces and to fit nicely into the swanky draw-string carrying bag which is provided. That bag nicely carries the twin-plug adaptor and your spare AAA batteries.

In-Flight

The effect is quite dramatic. Suddenly you can hear the movie sound track clearly. It's like chalk and cheese. You know that feeling of frustration when you are trying to listen to a movie or your favourite jazz sound track and you have to struggle. Those days are gone.

I have suffered for some while with tinnitus (the hissing type), so I perhaps pay attention to hearing issues more than most people. I am convinced that the world is becoming a noisier place and that we are all conditioned to accept this as the norm. A result is degradation of

pleasure - but when flying, for example, I wonder the extent to which it also adds to fatigue. You get home from a long flight feeling exhausted, yet you have just been sat there doing nothing all day. I can honestly say that getting home recently from two back-to-back 11-hour flights while using these N-C headphones I actually felt human.

On-Air

Anyone who has operated the bands with the benefit of a Beverage receiving antenna will know the magic that they can perform. Suddenly you can copy a signal which was previously below the noise. This only works when the signal-to-noise ratio is marginal – you can just about hear the signal, but cannot copy it. Switch in the Beverage and the S-N ratio improves by just a few dB, enough to copy the signal. At 5U5Z last November our transmit signal was greatly enhanced by use of the tall Titanex vertical, but without the Beverage we would have made hardly any contacts because almost all signals were below the noise.

Forget installing Beverages – use N-C headphones. Ha! I am exaggerating, of course. It would be best to use both. But the effect is similar. Those marginal signals are so frustrating. You can hear them calling, but they're not quite loud enough to copy. Switch on the N-C headphones and suddenly those low-frequency ambient noises are killed and you can copy them. This occurs rather infrequently. Most signals can be copied or else cannot be heard at all. But for those few signals which are right on the margin it's like a piece of wonderful magic.

Beyond making signals copyable, there's also a perceived increase in audio quality. It actually feels more complete and enjoyable. Even your CW sidetone sounds more crisp (and louder) when it is not being masked by those low-frequency ambient noises.

Convinced

I am convinced. This is the new secret weapon for any DXer or Contester. Go buy them. (No, I am not on commission). It is the best new operating aid since they invented the iambic keyer or the computer logger.

Downside? Well, only one. These N-C headphones work with one AAA battery. They only last about 24 hours. So, firstly, just get into the habit when slipping them off the head of flicking the Off switch. For one-off long-haul flights (rather infrequent for most people) this is not a problem. Just load a new battery before travelling. For a contester, not a

problem. Maybe you need to put in one new battery to get you through a weekend. For regular use at home, maybe you leave them switched off until you hear that marginal signal which needs the N-C help. When the battery starts to fade you notice that the 'On' red LED fades. Then when the battery has died the LED does not light at all and the N-C effect stops, but normal audio continues as usual. Finally, at the complete death throes of the battery you hear popping-noises whenever they are switched to 'On'.

As you might begin to surmise, I am rather impressed. The cost/benefit ratio could seldom be better.

Earthy Matters

Peter Chadwick, G3RZP

I wrote in an earlier CDXC magazine about tower maintenance. There are other parts of the antenna system that need occasional or even regular inspection as part of a regular maintenance regime.

One of these is the earthing system. When did you last check the earthing system around your station?

At G3RZP, the remote tuner and antenna switch is in a shed at the base of the tower. The tuner is connected back to the tower by 6" wide, 22 SWG aluminium flashing, which was run outside the shed at ground level – some 12 years ago. In the meantime leaves have fallen, the aluminium got covered, and grass grew.

But aluminium is reasonably resistant to corrosion, isn't it? Well, not in alkaline environments - and the soil at the RZP QTH is clay.

The installation of a 4-element SteppIr has led to changes to the tuning of the mast (which is used as folded unipole vertical on 80 and 160m), and so while the antenna tuner was out of the rack, I just happened to check the continuity of the aluminium back to the tower.

Surprise, surprise, it was 95Ω. So I pulled on the aluminium where it went under the vegetation and "Cor, guv, it come off in me 'and!". At this point it seemed better to cut the losses and install a new sheet running inside the shed to the point where it could connect to the tower.

The problem with losses caused by corrosion is that they generally creep up, and it takes some time before the loss in performance gets noticed. One area of some argument is joints in wire antennas: some people claim that soft solder joints oxidise and become lossy. One DXer always used brass joiners with set screws to avoid this. I can't say that I've had

any identifiable problems over the years, but I have gone over to using hard solder (silver solder, melting at about 610° C) and a blow torch for connections to hard drawn copper. Not for coax connections to hard drawn copper, though! The silver solder is certainly much stronger.

While we're on the subject, have you checked the feeder loss recently? Some people have had problems with measuring the SWR with a short and an open circuit, although I never have. I have measured the loss by computing from the measured SWR, and compared it with the loss measured using the spectrum analyser, and got answers within 0.5dB. However, for those measurements I do use an HP (now Agilent) return loss bridge and a spectrum analyser, although the results compare well with those obtained using a Bird ThruLine for the SWR measurement. How well some of the SWR bridges meant for amateur

use would perform on such a test, I wouldn't know. I have in total a run of about 180' of coax from the transceiver to the beam: about 80' of that is LDF4-50 Heliax, so I can get a loss of around 1.5dB in total on 10m. At one time I had a run of buried UR67: that was a big mistake. Having changed things, I went to shorten the coax and having cut it, had water start dripping out. That was out of the end going up the tower... water had got in, and 'wicked' up the cable to some 15' above ground level.

The moral of this is that regular antenna system maintenance has to include a bit more than quick visual inspection. Being lazy, I always seem to find these things out the hard way...

Peter Chadwick, G3RZP

Letters and E-mails to the Editor

from G3URA

Hi Martyn,

In your Editorial in the July edition of the Digest, you asked (foolishly?) what we think about the magazine, and asked for constructive feedback.

Just a couple of thoughts (constructive, I hope):

It seems that John and Neville both mention the same things in their relevant pieces. Not so much in the last edition, but if you go back over the past couple of years, you will see the same topics mentioned in both articles. Me

thinks they should check what each other is going to say! I know it is not easy to come up with different stuff, but one might cover what CDXC is doing/planning while the other can comment on the contents of the edition.

For a good few years I was Chairman of BARTG and it was also difficult trying to comment on what was in the magazine when half the time the editor did not have copy yet! I think the phrase 'been there, done that and got the T-shirt' springs to mind!

Just a comment on the other content:

I know that a lot of the CDXC Members are top-notch operators or testers, but there

will be a fair proportion who do not count themselves as either. Myself, for instance. I just enjoy entering contests for fun and calling the odd DX station. If I work him, great, if not, then not to worry... In view of this, would it be possible to do a series of articles on logging or contest software? Not a comparison, but just a few pages on the pros and cons of, say, SD. Then in the next edition a piece on N1MM, and so on.

Each contest or logging software will have its followers so I thought it would not be difficult to get someone to do a couple of pages on their favourite. What do they use, and why? I mean, I use SD for CW contesting (although not to TX) and still find it hard to use sometimes due to my limited computer knowledge. I have looked at N1MM and it seems so complicated that I will stick to SD - unless someone can convince me otherwise! Similarly, WinTest is said to be very popular, but apart from the website there is very little

independent info on it - again, something the Digest could cover?

Anyway, just my two Euros worth.

73, and if you have been, thanks for listening!

Dick, G3URA

[With a magazine like the 'Digest', which relies solely on contributions from unpaid (!) and often very busy volunteers, it can indeed be difficult to avoid some degree of duplication. Ideally I would like to schedule regular editorial meetings to ensure, amongst many other things, that we have as little duplication as possible - but that's simply not do-able in practice, I'm afraid. Rest assured, though, that the Committee is aware of this point - and thanks for bringing it to our attention! As for your suggestion re possible reviews of contest and/or logging software: see this month's 'Contest' column. Ed.]

Whisky Galore

Roger Western, G3SXW

This sordid tale has nothing to do with James Bond and his paramours. Instead it has to do with the intricate web of intrigue that is woven around the fate of one particular bottle of Scotch whisky.

Justin, G4TSH (what a fine fellow) and I were discussing, as you do, the needs of multi-multi contest operations, in particular the computing requirements. New-fangled laptops demand Windoze programs and memory-stix and USB ports, when in fact the needs of logging, networking and sending CW are handled more

than adequately by old clunkers. And such machines are cheaper.

I said 'fine fellow' just now because at that point Justin said he had an old Tosh 486 laptop that was about to be consigned to the dustbin. The battery was stone-dead and it had no sniff of any of Gates' operating-systems, but otherwise was working just fine. He would be happy to donate it to the VooDoo Contest Group's stock-pile of equipment. I accepted gleefully. Justin lives dangerously close (about five miles) so we do occasionally meet in a wayside inn to quaff some ale together.

So it came to pass that I visited his Middlesex QTH to collect the old clunker laptop. It would have been parsimonious of me (that means 'cheap') not to at least demonstrate my appreciation in some way, so I turned up on his doorstep clutching a bottle of Scotland's finest. Unbeknown to me, Justin's lounge and kitchen (and bedroom and bathroom, for all I knew) were heaving with bottles of whisky.

So, while greatly appreciating my magnanimous gesture, it seems that he did not, as it happens... you know... sort of... have need of yet another bottle. It was a cheap brand, it must be admitted, but we will let that pass.

So, also unbeknown to me, the following Saturday Justin arrived at the FOC Dinner in Greenwich proffering this very same bottle of whisky as a raffle prize. It was won (a pre-selected prize) by Fred, G4BWP. Now as it happens (here the tale gets really intriguing) it seems that Fred was just as overly endowed at the time with bottles of whisky as was Justin. (We will continue our abstention on commenting about the fact that it was a cheap label!).

So Fred, also a very fine fellow, decided to take it along to Gatwick to present it as a raffle prize for the RSGB HF Convention. At this point I must admit that my readers are probably way ahead of me and have already worked out the somewhat predictable conclusion to the story. But I am going to recount it anyway.

At the HF Convention your scribe won a raffle prize. You have only ONE guess what it was. 'Was' is a carefully selected word. The remnants have been consumed during the penning of this article. The moral of the tale (let's not get too philosophical)?

Confucius he say: "Sending of CW suffer when imbibing brown liquid from velly cold countries - typing she suffer too".

from G4JVG

Steve Telenius-Lowe, G4JVG, is now living in Sabah, East Malaysia (IOTA OC-088), and has received a 5-year licence with the callsign 9M6DXX. Steve is not very active yet as he is staying in a rented apartment while having a house built. However, he may occasionally get on the air from club stations such as 9M6DXX or on IOTA mini-DXpeditions from Sabah's Coastal Islands group (OC-133???) as 9M6DXX/P.

The QSL information is:

9M6DXX, S. Telenius-Lowe, WDT 527, 88905 Kota Kinabalu, Sabah, Malaysia.

Best regards,

Steve Telenius-Lowe, 9M6DXX

Solution to Digest Prize Crossword 12

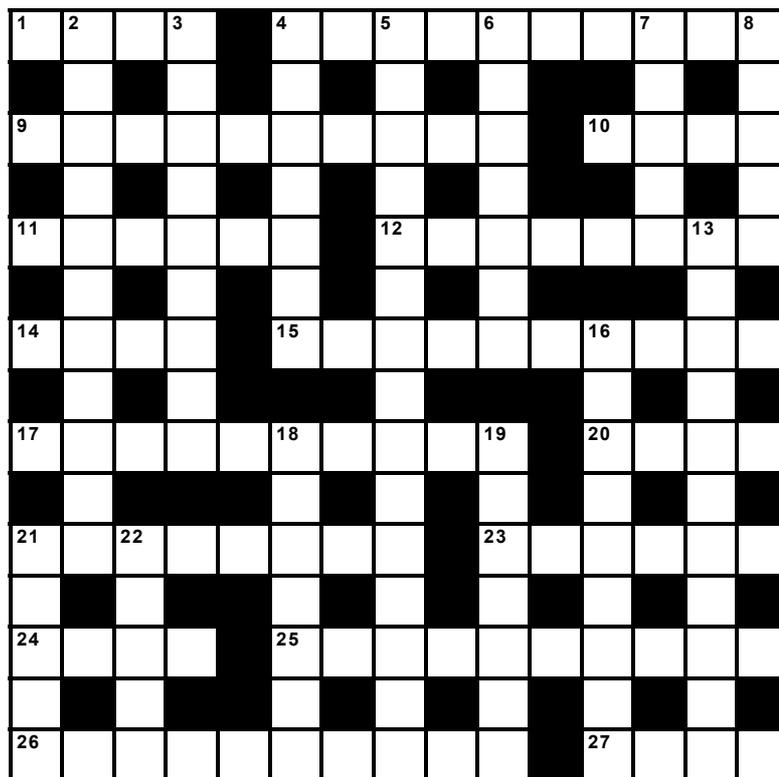
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Digest Prize Crossword 13 *by RFX*

There are normally up to four (maximum five) anagram clues in the average cryptic. Any more than that and you could be accused of running out of ideas. We all know that old favourite: 'toilets', an anagram of T.S.ELIOT. Far more original, the following, which popped up recently in the Times: 'vindaloo and rice', an anagram of LEONARDO DA VINCI. I bet the compiler spent the rest of the day celebrating after cooking up that one! I would have done.

The winner of Prize Crossword 12, September 2005: Phil Smith, G4LWB, Croxton Kerial, Grantham, Lincs (via e-mail).

Deadline for entries: 20 December



ACROSS

- 1 Type of pink paper that absorbs oxygen and nitrogen (4)
- 4 CW ordeal is awful for the writer (5,5)
- 9 One learns to dance this way, gradually (4,2,4)
- 10 Catch small badger (4)
- 11 Leave quietly on Christmas morning, say? (6)
- 12 Designates follower of Jesus to infiltrate the listeners (8)
- 14 Lives in Washington, say, for the record (4)
- 15 Helvetian settler (5,5)
- 17 Look back on deal with those to whom something is sent (10)
- 20 Look both ways (4)
- 21 Cars here involved in systematic investigation (8)
- 23 Pop round to take exam that's most appropriate (6)
- 24 Advert for a PL-259, perhaps (4)
- 25 *The Good Soldier Švejk*, say, and what one might use to pay for it? (6,4)
- 26 Establishments serving poor kippers? (10)
- 27 Worries, stuck in Longleat Safari Park (4)

DOWN

- 2 Engaged in fraudulent activities, like all violinists? (2,3,6)
- 3 One trips on hard floor in refurbished Cretan pad... (3-6)
- 4 ... a divine Greek high-rise? (7)
- 5 Revolvers at LHR? Wine and Cheese abandoned (9,5)
- 6 Deal, for example, accepted by army corps initially sanctions explosions (7)
- 7 Cosmetic vessel (5)
- 8 Cockney's rows of closely planted bushes creating borders (5)
- 13 More obliging sort of guide employed in Derbyshire high-rise (6,5)
- 16 Trustworthy salesman close to guru on board (9)
- 18 Wild crocodiles led away in the wind (7)
- 19 Firm figures for all to see in the US (7)
- 21 State Department initially harbours Pakistan fleet (5)
- 22 Troops around this country, going north for the birds (5)

DX and Events Calendar

Compiled by G3XTT

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

Period	Call
till 16/11	J37LR: Grenada by VE3EBN
till 19/11	V6A: Pohnpei (OC-010) by JA7HMZ (V63DX)
till 20/11	TM4ORA: special event station (France)
till 15/12	R1ANC: Vostok station (UA-10) by UA1PAC
till 31/12	4N35CW: special event station
till 31/12	9A1ØKC: special event station
till 31/12	EIØ5CCC: special event call
till 31/12	HA2ØØCVM: special event call
till 31/12	HA8ØIARU: special event station
till 31/12	HSØAR: special contest call
till 31/12	HSØT: special call
till 31/12	IR7LH/P: Italian lighthouses by IK7JWX
till 31/12	IU7SCT: special station
till 31/12	LZ8IARU: special event station
till 31/12	OE5Ø: special event prefix (Austria)
till 31/12	OL2ØØBA: special event station
till 31/12	OO: special prefix (Belgium)
till 31/12	YT31ØSKY, YZ61ØSKY, 4O31ØSKY: special stations
till 31/12	YU15ARDF and 4N15ARDF: special calls
till 31/12	ZS75PTA: special call
till December	FY/F5IRO and FY/F8xxx (FØCRS): French Guyana
till December	XQ3/IQ6CC: Chile by IZ6BRN
till February	ZS1ØØRI: special station
till March	R1ANT: Mirny base (UA-07), Antarctica by RW1AI
till April	R1ANN and RU3HD/ANT: Novolazarevskaya (UA-08, AN-016)
till March 2007	T68G: Afghanistan by LA5IIA
24/10-01/12	A35BO: Tonga by HB9FBO
24/10-13/12	World Tour by OH1VR and OH3SR
27/10-24/11	DU#/IV3IYH: Philippines
28/10-28/11	VC3O: special call by VE3AT
05/11-19/11	KH7U/KH5 and ???/KH5: Palmyra (OC-085)
06/11-20/11	TL: Central Africa by IV3OWC
07/11-21/11	VK9CG: Cocos Keeling (OC-003) by WØYG
08/11-21/11	VK9CG: Cocos-Keeling (OC-003) by WØYG

09/11-18/11	FS/F5AHO: St Martin (NA-105) and Tintamarre (NA-199)
11/11-02/12	S79WU Praslin Island (AF-024) by F6HWU
18/11-03/12	A5: Bhutan by F2VX, F9DK, GØLMX and F5LMJ
18/11-20/11	TP1CE: Council of Europe (France)
22/11-28/11	FP: St Pierre & Miq.* AC8W, K8AQM, K8DD, K8GL, K8MM, W8IQ
23/11-14/12	PZ5WP, PZ5PA, PZ5C: Suriname by PA3EWP and PA2R
23/11-28/11	V26K: Antigua (NA-100) by AA3B
24/11-28/11	HSØ: Ko Lanta Yai (AS-053)
25/11-28/11	KH2/JA3PPH and KH2/JA3EGZ: Guam (OC-026)
26/11-10/12	TM5OBA: special event station (France)
28/11-09/12	4S7PAG: Sri Lanka (AS-003) by F5PAC
November	H44HL: Honiara (OC-047), Solomon Islands by HLs
Nov-Dec 2006	VKØDX: 'Davis Station' (VK-03; AN-016)
09/12-11/12	4S7PAG: Barberyn Island (AS-171) by F5PAC
11/12-16/12	4S7PAG: Sri Lanka (AS-003) by F5PAC
11/12-22/12	V5/IK1RAE: Namibia
28/12-08/03	9M2/PAØRRS: Penang Island (AS-015)
28/12-31/12	V63O: Pohnpei (OC-010) by JK1FNL
Jan-Feb 2006	3YØX: Peter I Island
07/07-10/07/06	World Radiosport Team Championship (WRTC)

Chiltern DX Club - Aims and Objectives

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

Membership Full details are available from the Secretary.

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

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

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

Standing Order Request Form

To: Bank

Branch :

Please pay:

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

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

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

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

Please debit my/our account accordingly.

Name of account to be debited :

Account number :

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

Name(s) :

BLOCK CAPITALS PLEASE

Signature :

Signature :

(For accounts where two signatures are required)

Date :

Address :

.....

Postcode :

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

How to fill in the CDXC Standing Order Request Form

1. The form should be addressed to your own Bank and branch.
2. Write your CALLSIGN after 'reference'. This is very important as it is the way your subscription is identified in the CDXC bank statements.
3. Delete one of the amounts (£15.00 is the 2005-06 subscription for UK members; the subscription is £20.00 for those living abroad.)
4. The form has been pre-filled with "today and on 1st July annually thereafter".
5. Enter your account details after 'Name of account to be debited' and your account number.
6. Complete the lower part of the form with your name, address, date and don't forget to sign it.
7. THE COMPLETED FORM SHOULD BE SENT DIRECTLY TO THE BANK BRANCH WHICH LOOKS AFTER YOUR ACCOUNT.
8. It helps the CDXC Treasurer if you also tell him that you intend to pay by Standing Order in future.
9. Check your bank statements after the first payment should have been made to ensure that your bank is executing the order correctly.

Thank you for helping CDXC by paying your subscription by Standing Order!

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If you use **On-Line Banking** then you can make a transfer directly to:

Sort-Code : 60-60-02
Account : 44532385
Account Name : CDXC
Reference : [your callsign]
Bank : NatWest - Kingston-upon-Thames Branch

