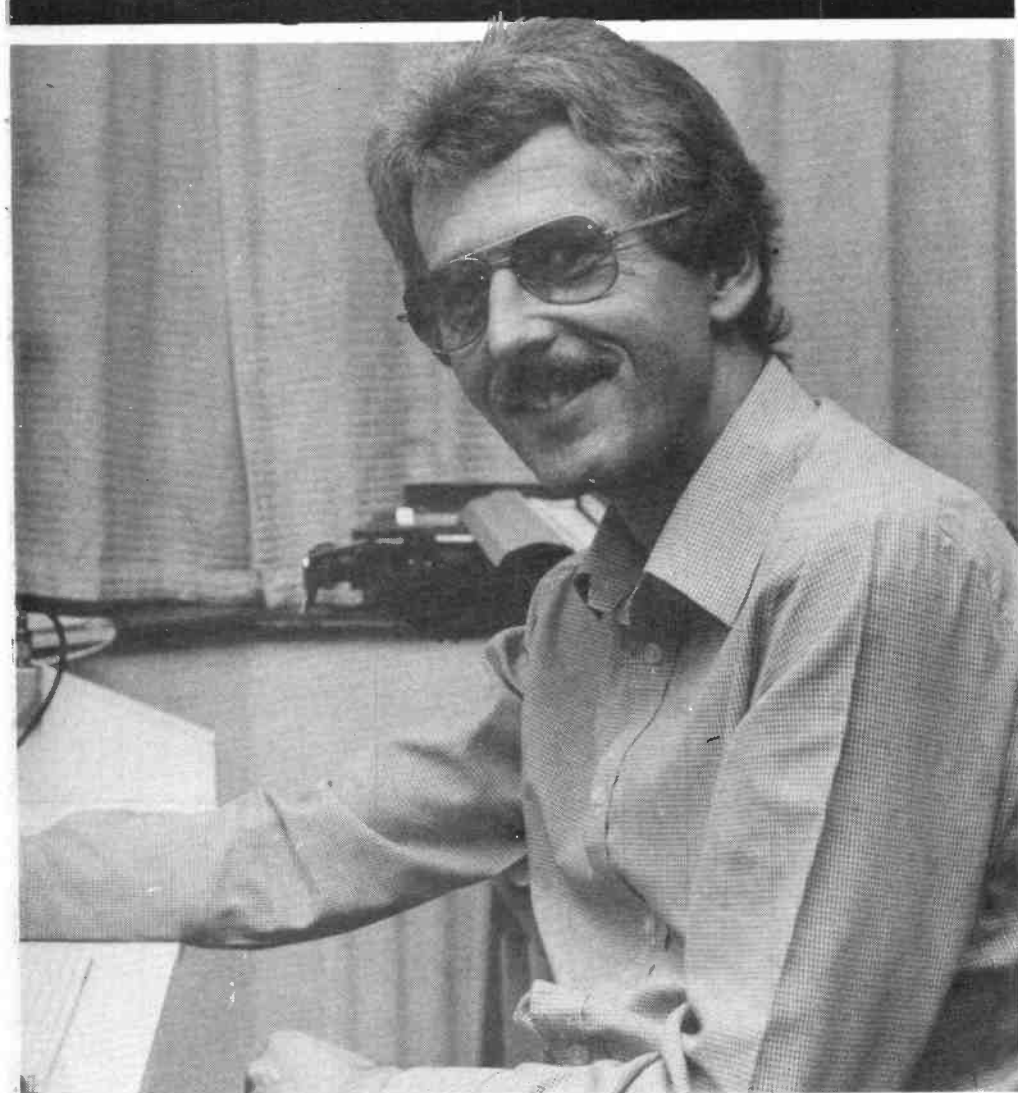


FORUM



are there is a QSO already on that channel if it is one of the popular ones — if it happens to be you then you will know the ensuing comments which take place. Even if nothing is heard, a local may be in QSO with a distant station you cannot hear, so a quick 'Is this channel in use?' before occupying it (or QRL on CW).

This idea is of even more importance on HF with the vagaries of propagation. Mind you, a fair proportion of Eastern (and nearer) European stations do not seem to have any clue as to correct operating practice anyway. How many times have you heard a DX

station calling for W's alone, only to find that all the W's have suddenly acquired European prefixes!

Getting Contacts

If you are newly licensed, there are a number of ways in which you can increase your chances of contacts. On HF, the world is available to you and would most likely delight in working you given the chance. The way you operate can greatly influence the results, with one of the most off-putting methods to other stations being the extended CQ call. The old standard of a 'three-by-three call is worth sticking to i.e.

"CQ CQ CQ from G3WPO G3WPO G3WPO", repeating this sequence three times, with phonetical emphasis of the call signs. There is nothing worse than 25 CQ's followed by a garbled call sign a couple of times. If there is no result, either no-one has heard you or they didn't want to talk to you. Try again, and if still no result, try another clear frequency rather than burn a hole in the bit of ionosphere you were using.

And do use the recognised phonetics, which even the dimmest of pidgen English users can comprehend. Home brew alternatives generally have at least one other interpretation and that will be the one used by the VK station trying to read you through a wall of JA's. However, use some commonsense in the number of times your call sign is repeated — it isn't needed every transmission (at least once every 15 minutes minimum), especially during rapid exchange. Nothing sounds worse than G6ZZZ from G3WPO. Yes. G3WPO from G6ZZZ."

For your first few contacts, don't be afraid to call other stations just because you are not sure what to say. You will probably get better results than calling CQ and you have the choice of who to contact. The other point against an initial CQ is that you may well suffer from an overload if a rare DX station (hopefully) comes back to you, at least when you have called a station you have a short time to prepare yourself. Another point is that by calling CQ you are implying that you will answer any calls resulting, which may not be the case.

If you feel your brain won't cope with the strain for the first few times, then make a crib sheet of what information needs passing. I did this for my initial CW contacts on HF, after abandoning the first QSO when after five minutes I hadn't sent my call sign correctly once!

Another worthwhile occupation is to spend a period of time listening around the band you intend using. You will then have an idea of propagation conditions, levels of activity, and whether there are any stations on, you would particularly like to contact. This applies especially to VHF where a look in various compass directions, if you have a beam, could pay dividends prior to transmitting. Some of the