cy every five seconds. Memory scan is possible either manually from the microphone up/down switches or automatically, where there is a choice of stopping on either clear or busy frequencies.

On the 290E only VFO 'A' can be used to write frequencies in the five memories but entry of them is fairly straightforward. Memory scanning is particularly versatile and can operate in many ways (stop on busy/clear, pause then continue, etc). However, many of the controls for these features are inside the rig and require the top to be removed to change the speed of scanning or the function. Such a versatile feature shouldn't be locked away.

All three rigs retain their memory frequencies when switched off but still connected to the power supply but the 9130 has space on board for a PP3-type Ni-cad (not supplied) to retain information when disconnected eg while transferring from base station to mobile use. Band scanning facilities are provided on all the rigs, the most versatile being the 290E, with its hidden switches for programming, and a full or

limited band scan available between the frequencies set in memory 1 and memory 2. The 480R has auto/ manual full band scan (stop on busy or clear) which is accessible from the microphone also. The 9130 howover, has its scan facility limited to 1MHz ie covering either 144-145MHz or 145-146MHz depending on the frequency from which the scan started. In the SSB mode. the 9130 scan can only be used manually, for auto-scan is useless as it stops where the squelch is open. (The squelch will always be open on SSB unless looking for a very local station).

One a final point concerning the digital side of things, I was rather concerned by the three slips of paper packed with the 290E warning about the possibility of 'lock up' if the power was momentarily interrupted. Of course, I had to try this out! Sure enough, both the 290E and 480R tended to lock up in a most obscure manner when supply interruptions occurred. The restart procedure I found most effective was to switch off, wait, switch on and then start again (annoying but not serious). The 9130 however, does not exhibit this little foible.

## Conclusions

In summary therefore, I found the three rigs very similar as far as performance was concerned, with the exception of the terrible audio quality of the 290E. The 480R and the 9130 were a pleasure to operate with the 9130 being possibly rather more straightforward but the 480R being a little more versatile. I did not enjoy operating the 290E but perhaps given a year or two I could come to love it. When assessing price against the ease of operation and performance, I feel that the 9130 comes out on top due to its 25W of RF, but if this doesn't concern you (ie linears are available) then the 480R is fine.

PRICES: Trio 9130, £395 Icom IC290E, £366 Yaesu FT-480R £379 Thanks to Thanet (Icom) and Ham International (Yaesu) for Ioan of review equipment.

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