

the space separating two letters is equivalent to three 'dit's'; the separation between two words is understood to be about seven 'dit's'.

So now start going through the letters in group one, mentally adjusting to the sound and rhythm of each morse character, or, to put it another way, listening to the way each symbol flows into a pattern of movement. For instance a 'C' will sound as 'dah-dit-dah-dit', while the 'F' pattern comes over as 'dit-dit-dah-dit'. Notice how, even at this early stage of the listening game, these two letters click into a pattern ... The learning and memorising process must now continue — but with a difference. So pick up this magazine and, while reading through the words, every time you spot one of the letters in this first magic group, speak the morse equivalent aloud. Good fun if you are in a train/bus/car/shower or out shopping or wherever — the venue doesn't matter! and the thing always to remember is **KEEP IT UP!**

As soon as the morse characters for **A B C D E** and **F** are fully implanted in your memory cells, take the next step towards your class A licence by popping into your cassette player the *HRT Learning Cassette*. It's all there — examples of the group one characters arranged in well-proven practice sequences. Side A commences with a spoken introduction of the A-F group followed by several minutes of 'listen-and-learn' practice, with each character sent at a good speed which brings out the sound of each individual letter. If you have stereo equipment you can even turn off the voice track to check that you can really correctly recognise the sounds. **NEXT** pick up your ball-point pen and write down in groups of five in **SMALL LETTERS** not capitals, each letter as you hear it. If you miss a character then quickly pen in a stroke and wait for the next one. At the end of the group of five characters, go back to your starting point and down to the line below ready for the next five. You will have to go down a line sooner or later and if you work right across a page first you could miss several letters in the time it takes to get back to the start of the next line.

Second Stage

The next batch of seven Morse char-

acters **G H I J K L** and **M** will have to be memorised, firstly by letting your memory cells familiarise themselves with the individual feel to each character. As with the first group, keep the practice going as often as you can so that this second section of the alphabet becomes firmly implanted in your memory. Again pick out from the pages of this magazine all the letters to which you now know the Morse characters and speak them aloud as you do so. With practice you will soon find that you have mastered the first half of the alphabet. You can practice too with the second section of the *HRT Cassette*!

Third Stage

Now we have a group of the seven letters **N O P Q R S** and **T**, each with its own distinctive run of rhythm to be memorised. You may well find that this third group is one of the easiest to master, but never-the-less practice as before by spelling out the dit-dah sequences as each Morse character is recognised. Don't forget, too, that you can use the third section of your *HRT Cassette*.

Final Go

With the remaining six letters **U V W X Y** and **Z** we come to the group containing characters that receive little useage. Even so, work as before committing them to memory and 'speaking' them when you pick them out from printed matter. With the completion of the alphabet you can now enjoy a new pastime — reading out vehicle number plate letters in morse code. It is an occupation which will soon sharpen up your grasp of Morse! Now too you can sit down with your cassette machine, preferably using headphones, and start to really listen to the fifth section of the *HRT Cassette* which covers the whole alphabet from **A** to **Z**.

Useful Pointers

While learning it is best to practice taking down random Morse rather than straight text because this forces you to listen to each character, and the eventual aim is to react instinctively to a sound by writing down a letter. With the random Morse, always work in groups of five letters (entering a stroke if you do not instantly recognise the letter), and write subsequent groups below the

first in a column. This does save time and also, more importantly, saves you possibly missing out letters. You will note that we have the alphabet written out in strip form (in small letters to remind you not to use capitals) so that it can be cut out and carried around should you forget a letter.

When Should I Send?

Ah yes! The hardest of all questions with, may we add, a very wide range of answers. **HOWEVER**, as a guide only, if you possess a key and an oscillator (and even the Datong D70 can double up as a practice oscillator) then feel free to plug in the key and have a go when you want to. **BUT** if you are a little on the light side with the rhythmic feel to most of the Morse characters, then in all probability you will make a hash of it and feel rather disappointed. This is why nearly all other tutorial courses say something about waiting until you can copy morse at about 8-10 words per minute, assuming that, if you have reached such heights then you must have acquired some degree of feel for each character. Seriously, though, take to the key when you feel ready — and always carry it around with you!

The Assistance Department

There are several useful learning tools you could acquire. The aforementioned Datong D70 Morse Tutor; any one of the 'clip on your jeans' type cassette recorders cum radios complete with lightweight headphones; even one of the many versions of the micro-cassette recorder. Why the D70? Well, consider the advantages of a lightweight, physically small device capable of sending you random Morse Code. The unfavourable side of the D70 rests with the small internal battery. But ignoring this (?) and remembering that the more useful cassette/radio units use a 3.5mm jack socket, as does the D70, you have your answer!

In conclusion

You can expect to need at least a month of constant practice to master the basic alphabet — so go to it! **Next month** we will talk about the process of building up your speed to the required 12 words per minute — and about learning the numbers in Morse — which is a far easier proposition.