

RADIO TODAY

RADIO AMATEUR SAVES LONE SAILOR

Radio amateurs in the USA, New Zealand and on board a yacht saved the life of a lone yachtsman after 100 mile-an-hour winds and 70 foot waves wrecked his boat, snapping the mast and filling her with water.

The yachtsman, Frenchman Jacques de Roux, was eventually picked up by fellow single-hander Richard Broadhead, who is licensed as OD5KW/MM. Both men were contestants in the single-handed *Round the World Challenge Race* sponsored by British Oxygen. De Roux, 43, was sailing his 43ft cutter *Skoirm III*. Richard Broadhead, 29, was sailing the 52ft yacht *Perseverance of Medina*.

All the yachts in the race were fitted with a gadget called *Argos*, a small device used to transmit meteorological information to the four weather satellites that orbit the Earth every two hours. The satellites relay the data to a computer near Paris, which helps compile NATO weather maps. However, the system can also give the location of each *Argos* transmitter—or, to be precise, the position of the *Argos* when the satellite was last in range.

Each *Argos* was also fitted with a 'panic button' to be used in case of dire emergency. De Roux pushed the button. The system told race officials in Newport, Rhode Island, that he was in trouble some 2,000 miles West of Cape Horn, at a latitude of 55 degrees South, drifting Eastwards at a speed of 1.8 knots.

The nearest ship was the Australian yacht *Pier One*, about 165 miles North-West of De Roux. However, the hurricane-force winds and huge waves had smashed the Australian ship's aerials, putting the radio out of action.

The second nearest ship was

Richard Broadhead's, 300 miles ahead in the race. When the race organisers realised this, they appealed to local amateur Robert Koziokowski KA1SR. He contacted ZL4-- in Owaka, New Zealand, on 14.347MHz. (We have been asked not to reveal the ZL4's identity because New Zealand law, like British law, bans amateurs from carrying third-party messages.) ZL4-- was able to reach the *Perseverance* on the same frequency. For 59 hours, race officials fed computer readouts of the two yachts' positions over the 14MHz amateur link to Broadhead, and 'talked him in' to within 17 miles of the drifting *Skoirm III*. Navigational experts in Newport calculated the likely drift of each vessel, and eventually brought OD5KW/MM alongside the stricken craft.

He was just in time. He found de Roux exhausted by his ordeal in the appalling conditions, and his boat sinking.

50MHz—THE FULL STORY

Forty UK amateurs have now received the coveted 50MHz research licences from the Home Office, valid from February 1st. They are allowed to operate between 50 and 52MHz outside BBC1 transmission hours, with the same power and mode restrictions as for 70MHz. Breakfast television is not transmitted on Band I (41-68 MHz), so operation is normally possible until 0830, when the 405-line transmitters are powered up.

If this first stage of 50MHz operation is considered satisfactory by the Home Office and the BBC then more people may be allowed to transmit. The forty stations and their locations shown on the map.

Consultation

The RSGB's General Manager, David Evans G3OUF, says the forty were

chosen by the Home Office in consultation with the Society. "We recommended people who should have these licences, and the final choice was up to the Home Office." He says they were chosen to be evenly distributed throughout the country, and that they gave preference to people with a past record of 50MHz activity and the capability to transmit at short notice. However the RSGB's former VHF Manager, Tom Douglas G3BA, says the forty people were chosen to "make the experiment worthwhile, because it's only a political thing." He sees the experiment as "a foot in the door" to getting a full 50MHz band. Tom is one of a number of 'prominent' amateurs who refrained from applying for tickets themselves because they realised it would expose the RSGB to allegations of nepotism. Some others say they didn't apply because they disapproved of the selection method.

About 500 amateurs expressed interest in transmitting on the band, and 126 returned an RSGB questionnaire detailing both past activities and future plans for work in this part of the spectrum.

Protests

Some amateurs complained that the RSGB had no business to ask some of the questions on the form—for instance the one about the applicant's Morse speed. The RSGB's VHF Manager, Keith Fisher G3WSN, says they put this question in because they wanted to pick people who would be capable of doing propagation research such as auroral and meteor-scatter work. (However, speed is not essential for auroral work, and SSB can be used with less Doppler distortion on 50MHz than on 144MHz. For meteor-scatter, it is usual to tape the incoming Morse signals and slow them down on playback.)

The questionnaire is not the only thing people are complaining about. Hardly surprisingly, there have been bitter protests from some of the 86 people who filled in the form but were turned down. One such is audio and radio consultant Angus McKenzie G3OSS. He's been active working crossband to 50MHz from the 28 and 70MHz bands. In 1979 he hit the (RSGB) headlines when he worked a Canadian station who reduced his power to 10mW, yet still being heard (and recorded) by G3OSS. He recalls "I called him on about 28.88MHz. He