

Today

We are now in the situation where 65% of the available 2 metre band is exclusively allocated to FM, AM having been nearly totally abandoned, and CW little used by comparison. The operation of the repeater network is a shambles in many parts of the country, and their original intended prime use for mobile working is often dropped in favour of 'DX' contacts during lifts (the actual QSO distance being that between your station and the repeater), and use by fixed stations who can perfectly well hear each other on the input.

Even the newer licensees can probably now see why criticisms are levelled at today's users along the lines of "where is the experimentation and self-training?". Whether it is justified or not I will leave up to you to decide. On the credit side, I have a serious doubt that if (a) the Class B's had been denied access, (b) the repeater experiment had been abandoned, and (c) the Japanese had stuck to making cars, we would not have 2 metres today, it long ago having been forfeited to the PMR

service. There are those who would say that was the better option.

As I said earlier, if you don't like it, there are many alternatives. However, I would urge those newer licensees who use the band purely for nattering, to try to get a better antenna system up (if possible) and see how far it is possible to work under even flat conditions — you may get a surprise.

Phone patch?

Someone asked me what on earth the above was all about — was it something to do with computer programming? Well, not quite, it is the American term for linking the telephone system to your transceiver for relay purposes. I should hasten to add that it is *not* legal over here (needless to say) but is so in the USA and a number of other countries with which they have agreements.

You can very often hear it in action up the top end of the 20 metre band (14MHz) normally with one end located on board a ship (Maritime Mobile) carrying an amateur operator, linking passengers back to the States (you can hear similar

traffic being conducted over here on the maritime bands using ship-to-shore links). Unfortunately for us anything along these lines, unless it is an emergency, is verboten because it takes revenue away from Buzby's coffers.

Careless talk...

And, just in case you don't think that the bands are monitored for this sort of thing, some months after I was licensed, two City looking gentlemen turned up on my doorstep, asking to have a word with me. They produced a complete transcript of a CW QSO I had had on 160M some weeks earlier, complete with all the mistakes. During this QSO, I had agreed to ring the parents of one of the other station's operators (he was at university) to say that he would be home at the weekend. All this was faithfully recorded, and shoved under my nose with appropriate warnings.

The annoying thing was that I never actually passed the message — one of the other stations in the net had already done it and popped up to say so — they didn't hear that!

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