

get your callsign? In the first instance you will have to telephone or write to the RSGB's Membership Services Dept. and ask for an application form for *each* callsign you require. I stress this point because GB4HHC this year was also supposed to have GB8HHC to be supervised by my husband at times during Festival Week when GB4HHC was inoperative ie, when there was no Class A licensee to supervise it. When telephoning for an application form, GB4HHC was already on the computer from the previous year but GB8HHC managed to get overlooked. Only one application form was sent to us by the RSGB and, although the Class B callsign was written in, the error was not spotted until there was too little time to re-apply. We received profuse apologies from the RSGB and the slip didn't spoil things too much as GB4HHC operated for just 24 hours as it had done the previous year.

Doing the paperwork

The form sent to you requires the name of the event and details of its nature to check that you have a valid reason for wanting the callsign. You will have to state your choices of callsign with their proposed phonetics, the location of the station, the starting and finishing times of operation, whether or not you require the RSGB's QSL service (you do not need to be a member) and the licensed amateur responsible for the station. The location will either be a postal address or, for those of you going on a DXpedition, the location in terms of its distance and bearing from the nearest town and its National Grid Reference. (Please note that permission from the owner of the land/site must be obtained before setting up a field station.) Unfortunately, the need for details of the fixed location rules out the possibility of mobile operation, which is a great shame as members of our holiday on a narrowboat rather fancied the idea of operating a special event call sign while cruising along! However, it does not rule out the possibility of having the station at one location for a while and then changing the site providing each station has its own application form with clearly defined start/finish times with no

overlapping. As the note at the foot of the application form states:

"Special event callsigns are issued for a maximum of 28 days to cover 1 event at one particular specified location." However, the RSGB still requires definite start/finish times.

As the covering letter received with the application form states:

"Your co-operation . . . in forwarding it (the application form) to HQ at least four weeks prior to your event is essential to ensure the smooth running of this service." The form is sent back to the RSGB's Membership Services Dept. who vet the event as being a suitable one. The form is forwarded by them to the Home Office 28 days before the commencing date, hence the need to apply in plenty of time. The Home Office checks the validity of the licensee responsible for the station and issues a 'Letter of Authority' which acts as the special licence. This letter is sent to the name and address requested on the application form and need not be that of the supervising licensee or the address of the station. The Letter of Authority must be available at the special event station.

Preparing for the day

When applying for the special event callsign, you can ask the RSGB to send you a 'publicity package'. They will then send you a tube containing posters, information leaflets and RSGB application forms which can all be displayed at the station. Other useful display items which you may wish to provide include locator maps of Great Britain and Europe and a world map. If you are trying to recruit new amateurs it may also be useful to have a copy of the RAE manual to show the knowledge required to pass the exam and possibly past copies of *Ham Radio Today* containing sample RAE questions. (You could even use the questions as a quiz or make up some extra ones yourself.) Sponsorship based on eg, the number of contacts or the furthest contact, or a competition to guess what these will be can all help to raise money for your event (subject to the Lottery and Gaming rules governing the event of which your station is a part). After all, such diversions do help to keep

people interested in what the radio station is doing.

Displaying information about the contacts made in such a form that it can be updated throughout the event is another important part of a successful station. Visual displays are especially important to non-amateurs eg, children who can see updating taking place and can be encouraged to call back later and see how the contacts are progressing. For this I suggest that you enlist the help of some computer freaks and get them to program eg, a map of Great Britain or the world placing dots at locations/countries where contacts have been made. If you are going to have microcomputers in the station room, please remember that they can be horrible sources of RFI so keep them to the far end of the room well away from the rigs.

Equipping your station

To help your operators, I would suggest that at each rig there is a card stating useful information such as the QRA, height above sea level, power of that rig and the aerial being used.

As with any amateur station, contacts need to be logged in a non-looseleaf book ie, standard logbooks (if you can afford them) or ruled out exercise books. The most sensible arrangement seems to be that each rig being used has a logbook with plenty of space for comments and a space for the operator to sign the log at the end of his/her stint. (As well as being a legal requirement, the signature can be useful in sorting out any queries when you can't decipher the scrawl!). Under the terms of a special callsign, the station may operate on all bands simultaneously, so the more different bands/modes you have available eg, RTTY and ATV, the better the impact (and the fun!).

Unless you are operating from a permanently equipped club station, you will need to do some scrounging of equipment. Start asking local amateurs (to save on petrol) well in advance and earmark a couple of possible rigs on each band. (It's amazing how equipment doesn't always materialise or blows up in your face during the event.) Where possible it is a good idea for operators to lend their rigs (and