

recommendations for repeater frequency allocations; it was quite another to ask "Who will implement these proposals?". The delegates to that international conference a dozen years ago probably harboured no doubts on this score. Being practising radio hams themselves they were aware of the pent-up demand for repeaters that already existed in Europe's amateur radio fraternity, a demand fostered by what enthusiasts had read of existing schemes like the German one and highly successful experiments like the GB3PI one.

This enthusiasm for the repeater concept caused the biggest collective effort in designing and building ever to occur in the amateur metre-wave communication field. Here at last, was the feeling of many hundreds, we have something that will free the VHF man from the 'line of sight' tyranny which had dogged him for so long — and at the same time had dissuaded many others from trying their hands in this part of the spectrum. ("Oh, you never get very far and you can't work any DX".)

At last you would be able to talk around corners on Two. At last, if a repeater station were to be established in your district, you would have the chance to talk to people a hundred miles away with only modest power levels at each end. Admittedly, through-repeater contacts would not be 'real QSOs' but proxy ones, yet still worth having.

No wonder the Holland IARU Conference decisions were followed

very soon by the formation of many repeater groups in districts throughout the United Kingdom, all of them bursting with enthusiasm to design, build and commission repeater transmitter-receivers locally, in a remarkable demonstration of the self-help ethic which has always been prominent in amateur radio history. Here was another slice — and a very sizeable slice — of history in the making.

Not everything was plain sailing. Although there was much pro-repeater feeling among the fraternity there was still a lot of *contra*. In the Autumn of 1972 for example, a vote of two to one against repeaters was registered by the Scottish VHF Convention of that year. And elsewhere the 'Why' of repeaters (see our title-line) was challenged by many others. For nobody in these islands at that time had had any experience of what repeaters could do. Hearsay gave rise to the belief, sincerely held by many, that through-repeater operation did not represent true amateur radio communication as it had been known until then.

Gradually the misgivings were allayed as the GB3PI experiment, planned to run for a year, continued on its remarkable way into 1973, monitored not only by its protagonists but by the VHF Committee of the national society (by early 1973 the subject of Repeaters was permanently on its agenda). This Committee reported back to the RSGB's Council in such enthusiastic terms about the success of the GB3PI experiment that

the decision was taken to persuade the Licensing Authority to allow its continuance.

As 1974 dawned three significant events in the repeater context were, first, the implementation of the new 'by modes' bandplan with repeater allocations printed plain for all to see, secondly the commissioning of GB3BC, the first unit to serve a heavily populated region (South Wales), and thirdly some evidence that not all repeaters need necessarily be 2m ones: a South Midlands group was formed to explore the potential of 70cm. (In a report of the National VHF Convention of that year the comment was made that "... the real need now is for repeater schemes on 70cm".)

Around this time, too, there was a temporary hiccup: the Licensing Authority felt compelled to complain about the large number of applications for repeaters which it was by now receiving. Thankfully it was persuaded that a repeater service, properly controlled, was a good thing.

### Control of the repeaters

This question of control of a proliferating repeater chain was a very real one. It was essential that repeater stations would be established in those places where they would provide the greatest good for the greatest number, and not solely because "... a repeater would be a rather nice thing to have ... let's see if we can build one and get it working".

The four firm repeater proposals

