

which was then compulsory, before it was integrated into the main licence.

Five thousand licensed mobiles, then, were watching the progress of the proposed repeater chain with intense interest. This progress would not go unnoticed, either, by the 15,000 Class A and 4,000 Class B home-based operators. That it how it is today, except that the number of licensees has virtually doubled in the succeeding eight years, bringing a resulting vast increase in the potential 'audience'.

Attending to the hardware

As the Seventies progressed the amount of repeater organisational work which was being generated compelled the RSGB's VHF Committee to hive off a separate Repeater Working Group to handle it. Out in the field a huge programme got under way among local groups to build the equipment that would be needed when their applications for local repeaters were granted. The transmitter-receiver, though, was but one unit of the many likely to be required. Others included complex filters to separate outputs from inputs, and the logic circuitry to identify each particular unit in morse.

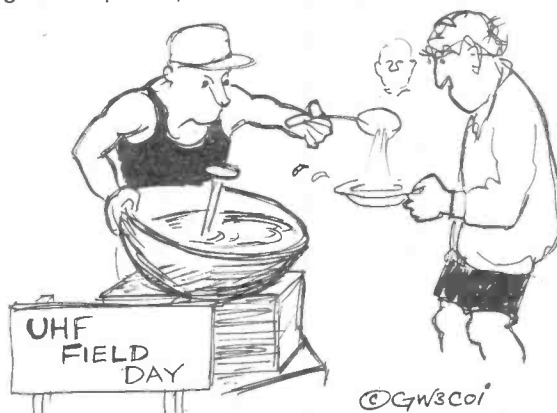
Another essential was an indestructible power supply unit, the whole of the machinery so designed and constructed that it would meet the licensing authority's requirement for a reliable service 24 hours a day for 365 days a year.

A tall order? Not for groups with that self-help ethic already touched upon above. And its financing? No problem for groups with three-figure memberships — and there were plenty of these, brought to birth by the enthusiasm which the repeater concept had engendered among metre-wave people.

As the Seventies drew to a close and the Eighties opened, Britain's

repeater chain totalled something like 150 units, the majority of them by now in the 70cm band. Coming forward were even more sophisticated projects for 1.3GHz transponders, and others for television and for data, all demonstrating their sponsors' ability to handle contemporary communications techniques — and often to be ahead of them.

But what of the bread-and-butter, day-to-day use of this highly developed, almost nation-wide repeater network which today few marvel at but thousands accept as simply being there when wanted? That is something to be mulled over in the next instalment.



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