

On The Air

'CQ from Five Zulu Four Alpha Charlie on the equator' (three times). '5Z4AC from A4XGJ you are 5 and 9 plus, this is the Oman net and the handle is Allen'. A five way QSO with the net of A4X's proved that all was working O.K. And then I found out, for the first time in my life, what it was like to be rare DX. 'The VU2 only please'. 'The JA0 only please'. 'The VK2 only please'. 'Please gentlemen, one at a time'. In no time at all we had worked ten countries around the globe.

Statistics

In the three weeks we travelled in Kenya, I was able to set up shop on sixteen days for a total 'on the air' time of 26 hours 47 minutes. 276 QSO's and 74 countries worked on 20 metres SSB. An average of 1hr 40m per day or 21.7 minutes per country. The rest of the time we were either eating, sleeping or travelling out on 'big game' drives plus the unforgettable experience of an ascent in a hot air balloon. Amateur radio was not the object of the safari but I found time to operate from eight different locations and my companions displayed a keen interest in 'ham radio'. Maybe it was the total lack of any other means of communication in many of the camps which helped to keep up their interest. The idea was to keep in touch with home, enjoy the hobby and hopefully learn something about operating techniques from a DX QTH. It became evident that 5Z4 would be in demand so it seemed only fair to allocate a proportion of the operating time giving the new country to DXCC chasers. Although first licenced in 1946 and on the air from the UK, France and the USA, I learned more about operating techniques in those sixteen days than in the previous 35 years.

DX Working

Despite my efforts to orientate the dipole to favour the U.K. we had difficulty in maintaining schedules. Generally speaking the UK stations were buried beneath the 'European QRM'. We worked into the UK with reasonable reports but were seldom able to give as good as we got. An active audio filter would be a useful addition next time round. I must single out Rae, the lady operator holding the call G4JMT. Although I worked 19 G's, she stood out as the best

operator. Her technique was ideal under extreme QRM. Rae's 'overs' were crisp, often just 'roger roger' and she used the correct phonetics, and answered my questions briefly and precisely, dropping very short comments in the momentary holes in the QRM. No waffle — would be Dx-ers take a lesson! Several other G's were most helpful but one or two don't seem to have learned the difference between communication and broadcasting. Never having worked 'lists' before, I let, G4HMP, Norman, take me in hand on the Round Table DX net for some 70 minutes whilst we were at Lake Naivasha. It was rather a pointless exercise although I picked up two new countries and gave a new country to some ten other stations. If one is 'into' lists then Norman handles the Round Table DX net very well. But '5Z4AC YB2BJM 5 and 7 QSL?' — '5 and 9 QSL?' — '73's' is not my idea of a QSO although I suppose it counts.

One G3 station I heard called CQ DX 20 nineteen times. I thought this one was worth checking out. He was on the air for about 16 minutes and listening for about 3 minutes. If he wants to work DX he's got it the wrong way round. To be fair the operating standards of G stations were above

'lost week-end' for the DXpeditioner, I thought. Not the true ham spirit however — I would have to give zone 37 to a few of the testers. I do feel there are arguments in favour of restricting contests to segments of the bands and I hope at least the RSGB Contests Committee will give serious consideration to such a recommendation one day. All we wanted to do was talk to the folks back home! After all, we were twenty miles from the nearest telephone. During that contest week-end I found it almost impossible to pass any traffic and it was only through the good and competent offices of a VE2, that I was able to relay some urgent messages. Even when I announced after calling CQ that I was only listening 2KHz high or low of my frequency I still received many calls co-channel.

Another Kind of QRM

There was an occasion when I was subjected to a rather unusual form of interference. We were tented in the Samburu Game Reserve north of Mount Kenya. I had spent ten minutes listening and getting the feeling of the band. Four spots were put into the DFC230 memory being reasonably



What! Knickers drying on the feeder!

average, in particular those with fairly ancient callsigns.

Contests

At first I tried to turn a blind eye to the CQ WW DX phone contest. The

clear of QRM-with WA6MWP Aeronautical Mobile in memory one. Patience. A break. 'WA6NWP Aeronautical Mobile Five Zulu Four Alpha Charlie Go'. He came back with a 5 and 9 plus in the clear. We chatted. Sid told me that they had just taken off