Radio Yesterday

Ken Michaelson, G3RDG, goes 'mobile' — old style.

Way back in 1964 I felt that I wanted to extend my activities as a 'household ham' and go mobile. Now in those days this needed a great deal of scheming, shopping around and not least, physical strength. Not in those days the pocket size wizardry of today. No way. In 1964 it was the time of the 'heavy stuff'. Great bulky equipment that had to be coaxed and manoevered into any car before it rested comfortably.

The scheming consisted of coaxing the XYL that going mobile was a desirable adjunct to my already fairly unpopular hobby. This was achieved after a certain amount of justified blackmail, and the next step was to go shopping for the 'gear'. Almost all the equipment used for mobile operation at that time was ex-Armed Services, and consisted in the main of a series of transmitters and receivers called 'COMMAND' sets. These had been designed in 1938 and produced in prodigious quantities over a decade for the American Army, Navy and Air Force. There were nine separate models, all electrically and physically the same, apart from differences in the coil/capacitor values, and covering 500KHz to 9.1MHZ, and 100-156MHz. As a matter of interest, **Fig. 1** shows the basic circuit of the transmitter.

In addition to these two items, there was the modulator to consider, since at that time 90% of mobile operation took place in the 'AM' (amplitude modulation) mode.

20 years ago, one could go shopping for these goodies at electrical emporiums in Lisle Street, at the back of Leicester Square, and in Tottenham Court Road, both in London's West End. The R.S.G.B. used to hold their yearly exhibition at the Horticultural Hall off Seymour Place, not far away from Lisle Street, and on the days of the exhibition one could meet old friends of the air all looking for various pieces of hard to get gear.

The physical size of the receiver was about 6 inches by 6 inches for the front panel by about 12 inches deep, and the transmitter was slightly larger, so it will be appreciated that it was no easy matter to get both these items into the car under the dashboard and be able to drive the car at the same time, let alone accomodate the XYL in the front passenger seat. In my case I made a fearsome construction of 'Dexion' angle iron held together with nuts and bolts. This, of course, had to be inserted into the car, and having overcome that difficulty (by dismantling half of it!!!) the next thing was to arrange that the receiver and transmitter could be fitted in the racking.

Eventually, all was done, and the modulator unit and power supply had to be placed in the boot of the car, there being no more room in the front, although some enthusiastic 'mobileers' (if I can use the term) were not able to carry passengers when going mobile as they had all the gear in the car itself.

I operated on 160 metres (1.8 to 2.0MHz) and 80 metres (3.5MHz to 3.8MHz) and this necessitated two sets of transmitter/receiver assemblies. I arranged things so that it was possible to unplug one transmitter/receiver assembly and be able to plug in the other band assembly when I wanted to, but the cabling and plugs to do this had to be seen to believed. In addition to this, of course, there were the modulator and power supply in the boot, which also had to be wired into the system!

Mobile Whip

But I think the *'piece de resistance'* was the antenna. My antenna was what is called a 'centre loaded' whip. That is to say, the loading coil was roughly in the centre of the aerial, and for those of you who have never seen a centre loaded top band mobile whip, there is a treat in store for you. It did not resemble the VHF quarter wave or even the five eights wave mobile antenna of today in the slightest degree. The whole

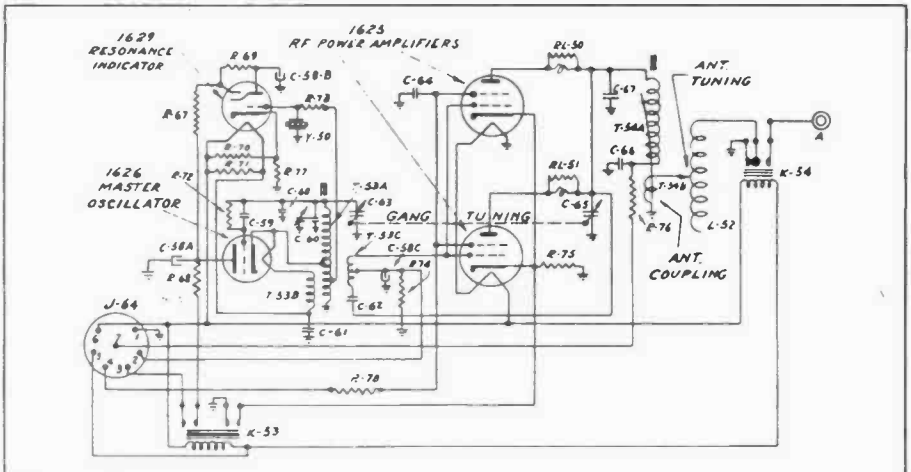

Fig. 1. The circuit of the transmitter.