

above the top of the long-wave broadcast band in the Chelmsford area a couple of years ago, so the series may have been used for general test and development purposes too.

Balloon Mobile

The most recent use of the G7 series was for rather more exotic purposes and did involve amateurs, though not for amateur communication. Two events figure in our story and both concerned expeditions, though not of the DX kind. The first, in 1958, was described as 'the Kon Tiki of the Air'. Codenamed 'Small World', the intention was to fly a helium balloon across the south Atlantic from Tenerife to somewhere in South America.

A request was made to the RSGB for short-wave (14 MHz) communication between the balloon and volunteer operators in 'the old country'. However, since there were no amateurs on board the balloon, this looked problematic until the GPO Radio Branch generously allowed nominated

amateurs to receive messages 'of a scientific and personal nature'. Accordingly, the balloon was assigned the call G7AA and the nominated base stations were G7AB (G6UT), G7AC (G3AAE), G7AD (G2FUX) and G7AE (G8KS). Although the balloon did fly, no radio contact was ever made; a thermal brought the balloon down and the transmitter was jetisoned in to the sea. The balloon was cast off and the gondola eventually drifted across the Atlantic to Barbados¹.

The call G7AE was issued again ten years later, in connection with the British Transarctic Expedition. The explorers operated outside amateur bands from a drifting ice floe and a number of amateurs in the UK were licensed to communicate with the relay station: these were G2BVN, G2FLB, G8FC, G8KW and G8PB. Full details can be found in the June 1968 issue of Radio Communication.

And The Others?

So far, the story has concerned only regular 'G' type stations. One or two more unusual calls have

been used in connection with special event stations on the Kennedy Memorial Site at Runnymede. This is now American soil, and the callsigns used reflected this. WG1-JFK was organised in 1976 by G8AUU to commemorate the US bicentennial and in 1984 GK1JFK was arranged by G3KMA for the Los Angeles Olympics.

Other 'unusual' calls heard on the bands are generally not amateurs: there are, for instance, the army and sea cadet nets. Operation from home QTH is allowed on occasion and QSL cards are issued; amateurs should not attempt to join these nets without authorisation, however. Additionally, in the late '40s and 50s boy scout stations operated with G3R or S plus two letter calls, and suffixes hyphen 1, 2 or 3 to indicate the patrol.

In describing these 'unusual' callsigns I am sure I have only scratched the surface and if any readers can add information I shall be pleased to hear from them.

Reference

1. RSGB Bulletin, December 1958.

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