

GD6UW, ISLE of MAN

ANOTHER VACATION SAGA

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IN several previous years the Cambridge University Wireless Society has run an expedition to the Isle of Man with the main idea of giving a new prefix to as many stations as possible. A group of this year's freshmen decided that this was a tradition worth reviving, and began to make plans accordingly. Some manufacturers were approached about the loan of equipment, and by the start of the Lent Term several favourable replies had been received. We planned to stay at the same boarding-house as the previous expeditions, and to set up the HF-band station there. VHF operation was to be from the Ministry of Aviation radio station on top of the island's highest peak, Snaefell.

Despite a last minute hitch which resulted in many 'phone calls and transatlantic cables, most of the equipment was on hand by the end of the term. A 264-foot long wire had been cut, and an 80 metre/40 metre parallel dipole arrangement made up and tested. These antennae were wound, complete with feeder on to old cable drums. A liberal supply of coax was taken along, and it found many uses other than those for which it was intended!

It was decided that the expedition would travel in two parties. The first group, of five, was to go over to the Island on March 10, in time to operate in the 'phone section of the ARRL DX Contest the following weekend. The remaining four people would bring the VHF gear over during the next week.

On the Air

The boarding-house turned out to live up to its name of "Grand View" in all directions but the West. A rapid survey of the area around the house revealed an almost disused allotment field at the back, well-provided with climable trees. Within an hour of leaving the boat the dipole was up, and the 264-foot aerial followed after a much-needed meal.

Quick tests showed that nothing was greatly amiss, and before long G3UJH's Top Band rig was busy with a string of G's. G6UW's ancient Eddystone S.640 performed remarkably well on this band. The NCX-3, on 80-metre SSB was proving rather troublesome on change-over from transmit to receive, but it was soon realised that this was being caused by low mains voltage, and the trouble cleared on changing the tap on the auto-transformer. We were pleasantly surprised by the lack of interference between the two stations, except, of course on close harmonic frequencies. By 0200 the next morning the call of our beds had, for most of us, become stronger than that of the DL's on Eighty, but G3VBL, who did stay, up, was rewarded by working across to the U.S.

The following morning no time was lost in putting up the Mosley trap vertical. This was lashed

to a gutter, some thirty feet above ground. The aerial loaded very well, but before long it was realised that we were having great difficulty in working the States. Plenty of other stations were coming in at good strength, however, and we were never short of calls. Several positions were tried, but we soon came to the conclusion that the two-hundred foot rise at the back of the house was cutting off the vital low-angle radiation. We had also been lent a TA-33Jr. beam, but unfortunately we had no means of getting it up high enough to be of any use.

Portable

Ever since our first night in the Isle of Man we had received a great deal of help and advice from the local amateurs and with their help a 20m. portable station was set up one afternoon near Kirk Michael, on the western side of the island. Some twenty stations were worked on the key, using GD3PRO's KW-2000. This certainly confirmed our suspicions about the hill at the Douglas QTH.

We had also learned the importance of first-class earthing if more than one station was to be used at the same time. After the installation of a switching system for the various aeriels severe interference was experienced, and this could only be cured by running a length of the ubiquitous coax to the landlady's kitchen tap.

ZB2/GD "First"

The total number of contacts from GD6UW was 863, of which 359 were on 80 metres; 282 on Top Band; 159 on Twenty; and a mere 63 on 40m. Operation on Top Band was mainly CW; on the other bands the majority of contacts were on SB. States-side contacts were rare on Twenty, and we worked almost as many W's on Eighty!

The main achievement on 160m. was the ZB2/GD "First" on this band. ZB2AM was RST-349 with us, and gave RST-559. (19/3/66; 0155).

On Snaefell

The second party arrived on time, and within 24 hours had the VHF station fully operational. Most of the gear was borrowed from the Pye Amateur Radio Society in Cambridge. An EC-10 on loan from Eddystone Radio was used as the tunable IF for both the two and four-metre stations. On four metres we ran 40 watts to a QV06-40A, feeding into a J-Beam, three-element array. The two-metre rig ran 30 watts to a QV03-20A, feeding a six-over-six slot beam from the same manufacturers.

The call-sign used was GD3SKT/A, in order to permit operation at the same time as the Douglas station, about ten miles away.

The limiting factor on the VHF receiving side was external hash. Undoubtedly we missed many QSO's because the signals were masked by the QRN. A fair number of skeds had been set up for both bands, and most of them were successful. One of the notable exceptions was that with ON4FG—nothing heard at either end, so we shall have to wait until next year for another try for the ON4/GD "First." Another such that was missed—although

by a very narrow margin—was GC/GD on four metres. We in fact heard GC3OBM on sked peaking RST-439, but unfortunately we missed our report, although GC3OBM was hearing us RST-559.

VHF Summary

In all, 66 stations in 21 counties were worked on four metres, and 77 stations in 24 counties on two metres. The best DX on Four was G3OUF and G3SKR at 260 miles, and on Two was G5MR at 310 miles.

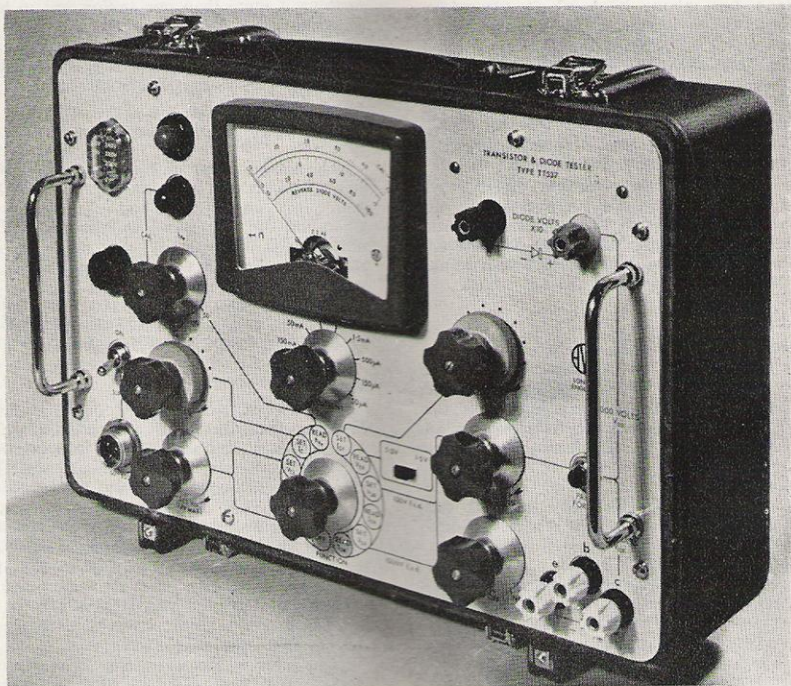
Since about one-in-three of the two-metre stations worked asked for a 70 cm. QSO, an effort will be made next time to take along some equipment for this band.

All contacts are being QSL'ed and all the cards should be well on their way by the time this is in print.

As it happened, all the members of this year's expedition were licensed—one since just a week before the start of the expedition. The operators were G13FCB, G3RUZ, G3SKT, G3STQ, G3SUC, G3TGY, G3UDI, G3VBL and G5AAE/K9ALP; Lou, the last mentioned was truly glad to have a chance of operating CW without the cumbersome call-sign.

Acknowledgements

We should like to express our gratitude to the manufacturers who made the trip possible—Eddy-stone Radio, K.W. Electronics, Mosley Electronics; and to the Pye A.R.S. for the loan of the VHF gear, and to G3UJI for his 80/160m. Tx. Last, but by no means least, our sincere thanks to the BBC and Ministry of Aviation staff on Snaefell, to all the GD's and to Mrs. Jordan, our long-suffering landlady.



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