

# RADIO YESTERDAY

**There was  
a time when  
they were all  
two-letter  
callsigns**

TWO-LETTER CALLSIGNS ON  
THE TARMAC



By Jack Hum G5UM

One of the famed two-letter callsigns of the Nineteen Twenties was 2FG, that of the late Leslie McMichael, founder of the firm bearing his name. This historic 53-year old picture (it sums up the sartorial elegance of the age) shows 2FG fourth from right. Fourth from left is the McMichael sales manager, the late Gus Allen, whose callsign G8IG was famed throughout the DX corners

of the world. The photograph was taken on Boat Race Day, 1930, on the concrete apron at Croydon Aerodrome (the new fangled term 'airport' was barely known this side of the Atlantic in those days). As an enterprising publicity man G8IG would hire an Imperial Airways 'Argosy' aircraft every Boat Race Day and fill it with radio trade notabilities and pressmen generally, plus a

selection of McMichael portable 'wireless sets' to enable all on board to hear the BBC Boat Race commentary while they were skyborne over the Thames, at the same time watching the progress of the University boats below them. The wood-and-canvas airliner chartered on such occasions can just be seen in the background.

"Is that yet another of them?". Wife Grace's voice came wafting up the stairway. In her kitchen below the radio room she hears through the floorboards much of what goes on during the G5UM operating sessions.

It was indeed "another one of them", probably the sixth that week, who was mystified by the two-letter callsign which was calling him.

"Go on, tell him you're not a foreign body!" came the voice up the stairway with a light chuckle. Upon which G5UM turned the

transmission back to the person waiting at the other end of the 2m link and patiently explained that, yes, there were only two letters after the numeral, and that, no, it wasn't a visitor's licence: the reciprocal had three letters after the numeral, not two. Did not the person at the other end have a Callbook in the house? No, he did not, clearly one of many hundreds of new licence holders who had still to learn that The Callbook is perhaps the second most important document in a metrewave man's kit after his logbook.

Polyely the distant communicator replied that he had thought about getting a callbook when his own callsign was likely to appear in it (inviting the riposte, hastily smothered, that it's not your callsign you want to look up: it's the other party's, all several thousand of them).

"Oh, well, when you do get yourself a callbook you will find that there are still a few G-Five-plus-twos listed in it (not to forget a few G-Six and G-Eights who are not Class B licensees) plus quite a few