

G-Twos, G-Threes and G-Fours, all with two letters after their respective numerals".

The story in more detail would have taken the better part of an hour to explain to Polite Communicator on Two. If there had been time and fewer operators clamouring to use the frequency on which all this was going on (or if Polite Communicator had had 433MHz where more time and space exist) the story would have gone something like this:

At the very dawn of amateur radio in Britain the few hundred enthusiasts playing dangerously with spark-gap transmitters and less dangerously with crystal receivers used three-letter callsigns which were often self-assigned. After World War 1 when amateur radio enjoyed a second dawn the allocation of callsigns was put on to a more systematic basis. From the Twenties onwards British callsigns consisted of a numeral plus two letters, eg, 2LO, 5XX or 6BM (the 'Twos', the 'Fives' and the 'Sixes' were issued completely at random). This process was expected to yield almost two thousand callsigns, which in the view of the Licensing Authority would last into the indeterminate future.

How wrong they were became evident from the fact that within 16 years nearly all of the G2-plus-two, 5-plus-2 and 6-plus-2 assignments had been exhausted. The next call-sign block to be issued — and this was in 1936 — was the G8-plus-2 — not a Class B licence: that particular concept was still 28 years into the future and World War 2 was yet to intervene.

Back then in the mid Thirties even the G8-plus-two series was to become rapidly completed for the good reason that radio communication technology was by then truly forging ahead, inter-Continental contacts were common — and there were even people using the esoteric metre-wavelengths with the aid of self-excited oscillators and super-regen receivers! It was even rumoured that television was coming along. And so as the G8-plus-twos ran out the G3-plus-two series was initiated followed soon by the G4-plus-two, a callsign block never completed: the start of World War 2 cut it short.

Holders of the earlier 2, 5 and 6 permits (yes, it was a Permit in those days, not a Licence) were not allowed to use the national prefix of 'G' except by express authority from on

high, and then only if they stated that they proposed to use wavelengths capable of reaching outside the home country. Gradually, this restriction was eased. Stations in England were allowed to use their national prefix of 'G' and in Northern Ireland 'GI'. For some obscure reason Scotland initially used 'GC', possibly for 'Caledonia'. All other components of the United Kingdom were expected to use 'G'; it was not until much later that today's variants of GW, GD et al were to be heard.

Readers with long memories will have detected some significance in the callsigns of 2LO, 5XX and 6BM quoted above: they belonged to the BBC, who until the British Broadcasting Company became the 'Corporation' in 1927 were assigned amateur-style 'idents'. Very few of these have been reallocated to private radio amateurs. An illustrious exception is 5XX, the callsign of the mid-Twenties radiated by 'Daventry long wave' and today finding new expression as G5XX, the callsign of the Daventry Ariel Radio Club.

## Echoes from the past

Many other callsigns of yesteryear are tending to find new leases of life, often in a collective identity with radio clubs: G2XV, the callsign of a famous Cambridge pioneer of the Twenties, Gerald Jeapes, now belongs to the Cambridge club, and G6CW, once owned by the late John Curnow, has been taken up by his local club in Nottingham.

Another NottinghamHAM who has revived an old callsign is Mike Mansfield, who upon passing his Morse test relinquished his identity of G8RXU and took up his grandfather's callsign, G2SP. Down in Hertfordshire much the same thing happened when G2PA reappeared two generations after the noted pioneer components firm of G.Z. Auckland & Co originally 'aired' it from their City of London premises back in the Twenties — and G2PA is still an Auckland.

There is a sprinkling of others. Their numbers will increase as old-timers quit the callbooks and their descendants pick up their two-letter callsigns to breathe new life into them once more.



No national prefix of 'G' on this early QSL card used by G5UM (strictly 5UM) from his original location in north London, where gas mains were the rule, electric power came much later, and

your HT power source was a string of dry batteries. You went off the air while your LT power source, a 2V accumulator, was away at the local garage to be charged.