



minute or two, when I was transmitting. I was totally flumoxed, and so along came the Post Office to help me investigate. We tried absolutely everything, and I had a totally clean bill of health, the tests all being carried out in the evening. The following weekend, trouble again, but nothing had changed, so I thought. Along came the Post Office again, and finding no fault, stated that I would have to cut power down until the complaints ceased and then find out what the trouble was and cure it, a suggestion being made that it might have something to do with the antenna.

Just imagine the picture in my garden on a fine Saturday morning a few days later, in the middle of summer. A friend and I were pacing up and down the garden wondering what was wrong. The standing wave ratio was well nigh perfect on both V beams but my friend thought that he could detect just occasionally a minute flicker of the needle on the SWR meter. So it came about that he was staring at the top of the mast which had been lowered down to eleven feet above the grass with the tilt over facility, and he thought he saw something strange. We found a ladder, and up he went; a few seconds later a guffaw of laughter nearly made him fall off. One of the two coaxial cables rather resembled a traffic jam on the M4 with the road up, for there was a line of ants on top of the coax slowly working their way upwards and another line of them,

underneath the coax, on the way down. On the side of the gamma matching box, was one tiny hole, about 2mm in diameter which had not been waterproofed, and just outside this hole, was the ant sentry with his little flag antler beckoning the traffic in and out. But how about the TVI? We opened up the box and there inside was the most unbelievable sight, a ball of ants forming a nest with the material that they had been bringing up the coax for weeks, and the odd ant walking across the vanes of the capacitor. A little pile of bits of dead ant was at the bottom of the box in a burnt cone shape, and it was quite obvious what had been happening. The odd ant investigating the variable capacitor, at the moment that my transmitter peaked high power, was burnt to pure carbon which then rectified the speech transient, and in the process of course, generated a pulse which was then transmitted in the neighbourhood, causing a flash on all the TV screens. Thus every flash was yet another ant hitting the dust. Needless to say after removing the nest, I was able to go back to high power and for a while there were no more TVI complaints, but just for a while!

#### Last straw

My next story concerns an amateur, who I cannot identify unfortunately, some 25 years ago who had saved up for months to buy a new Minimitter high power AM HF

rig and proudly staggered home with it. His fingers were shaking as he rapidly put on mains plug, connected a microphone, an aerial lead, turned on and joined his regular 80m net just in time to catch most of his friends. Everybody thought his modulation was superb, and his transmission was so much stronger than it had been from his previous 10W rig! But after ten minutes or so, while he was transmitting, he was heard to shout "Oh God, it's caught fire" QRT... One of his friends immediately telephoned him and heard a rather sheepish amateur say "Well actually, I forgot to remove the straw packing around the PA valve..."

#### Irate vicar

Another incident occurred at around the same time, when an amateur took his AM rig with him to the seaside, having asked the landlady of a boarding house whether he could put up a crude aerial down the garden. She said it was OK. He tuned up his rig on the first Sunday morning, on 80m, and joined in his normal net and was really enjoying himself in his room, dressed just in his pyjamas with tea and toast at hand. He had not noticed that there was a large church next door and was just a little surprised when the landlady knocked on the door and told him the Vicar wanted to see him. In marched the Vicar, who was obviously very irate, but wanting to be tactful. "Now, young man, are you transmitting?" "Yes" said the amateur and asked what the problem was. The vicar told him that unfortunately they had a Compton electronic organ and that some minutes earlier, they had been attempting the final hymn before the sermon when out came a booming voice from heaven throughout the church saying "CQ, CQ, 80m G---" The Vicar explained that this had been followed by lots more letters and mumbo jumbo from heaven, together with a puzzled congregation, with some very scared, very elderly ladies. The vicar had heard of amateur radio and realised it must have been someone very close by. And so after a delay of 25 minutes the church service resumed and everybody was happy, except the amateur, who had to go to QRT and agreed to keep the peace by not transmitting during services while he was on holiday.