undoubtedly 40 metres. Using CW and SSB over 600 contacts were logged on this band. Best DX was ZL4AW on CW at 0730 hours local time. From Saturday afternoon the Scandinavian activity contest (SAC) meant CW was out but we were happy – if a little breathless – to continue piling up sideband contacts.

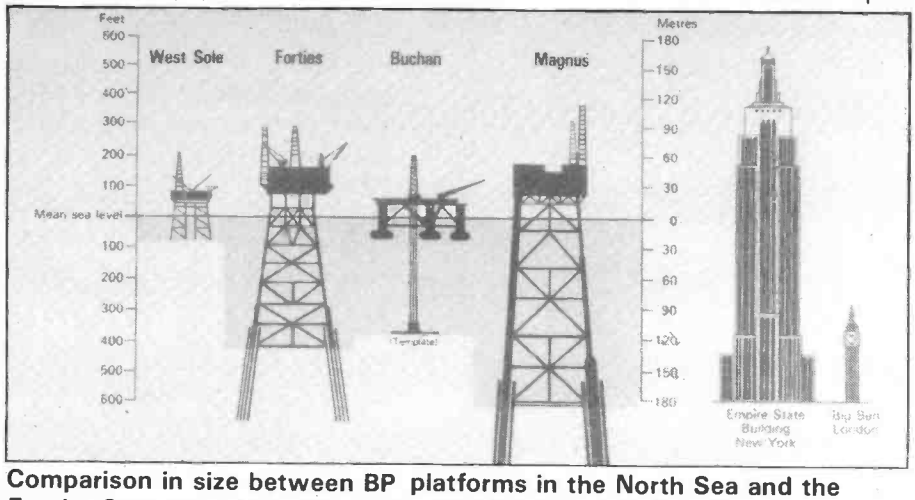
After the inauguration was shown on the TV news, stations worked appeared more readily to understand our location – on the most northerly of the fixed platforms, some 125 miles north east of the Shetland Isles. Congratulations and good wishes were offered to all on the platform and some sympathies for enduring bad weather conditions. Everyone seems to think that it is permanently blowing a gale at this latitude and yet I have known it as calm as the most sheltered, inland lake. One woman operator contacted thought we were lonely, but I had to tell her there were over 1000 men of various trades putting the finishing touches to the platform.

DJs (Germany) and LAs (Norway) were coming in with the same strength of signals as the Gs. The standard of operating was extremely courteous – almost too much so at times. I had expected 'tail-enders' but where more than one station called, the unsuccessful challengers seemed to quickly give up and disappear which meant more 'CQ FORTY METRES' calls from me. Contacts were necessarily short. After a name and location had been passed, it was on to the next one but, where good strong signals were available, we gave out details of the station and equipment.

Magnus production platform (right) with accommodation vessel Polycastle, 110 miles NE of Shetland. Photograph courtesy of BP.

About half way through the event more trouble came to light. We seemed to be breaking through onto the platform's 'Order Wire' communication system. An ATU was in circuit, providing an apparently perfect match to the aerial on all bands, and the FT101B seemed to be working correctly. What could be causing the iterference? GM4BDC, another platform technician, suggested removing the ATU from the circuit – a further length of coaxial cable had been added between the aerial and the ATU output in order for an easy connection between the two. Could something be amiss here? The ATU was removed from the circuit and the FT101B fed straight to the antenna via a low pass filter. Result? No more interference!

The SWR must have been quite high after this change but it seemed to have little effect on our signal – GM4BDC, Trevor, further distinguished himself by contacting an old friend VP2VD, in the British Virgin Islands, on 20 metres whilst was viewing the platform video!



Comparison in size between BP platforms in the North Sea and the Empire State Building, New York, and Big Ben, London. Drawing courtesy of BP.

Signing Off

The final contact was with GM4SID, Aberdeen, on 80 metres at 0700 hours, Monday 19th September. Just over two hours later, we were in a Chinook helicopter on the way home.

In all 850 contacts had been established with 58 countries. Over 400 QSOs were with United Kingdom stations; 282 in England and 97 in Scotland. Best DX was probably 4K1GDW, the russian base on South Shetland Islands in Antarctica. Upon arrival at the office on Tuesday morning, 41 QSL's were waiting and return cards were dispatched by mail the same day. Amongst the cards were some interesting short wave listener reports and these were also acknowledged. All stations will eventually receive a QSL but cards received will be acknowledged immediately.

It is said that the BP Magnus platform is the last of the large-scale platforms to be embedded in the depths of the North Sea – thus it could well be that GB2BP will not be heard again. However, over 850 people in various parts of the world will have a special souvenir card to commemorate this occasion.