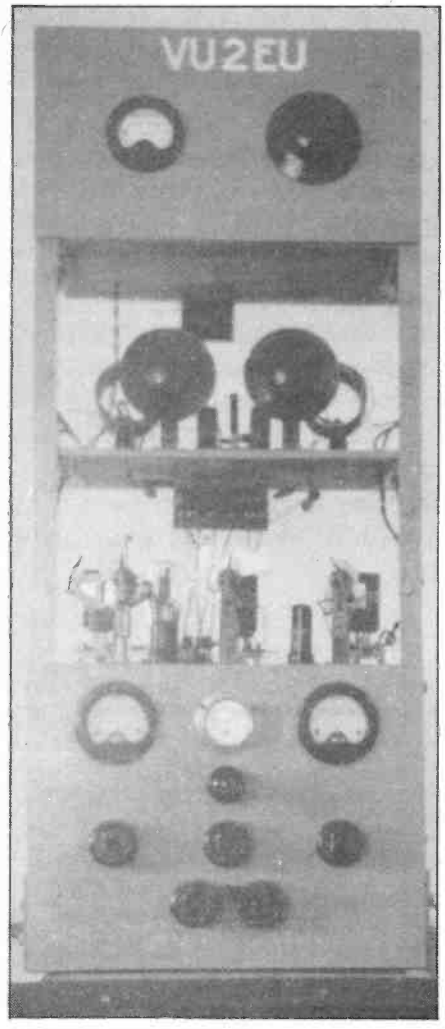
Operating Conditions

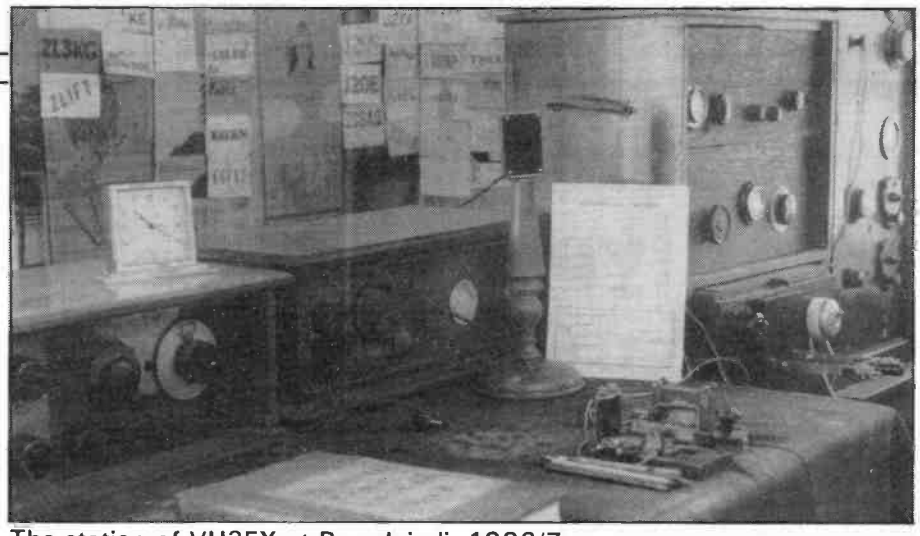
Thousands of hours were spent on the air in those days as we had plenty of spare time — official work commenced at 0630 and finished at 1000 hours as it was considered far too hot for Englishmen to work when the sun got up — mad dogs and Englishmen go out in the midday sun! Something like a dozen or so amateurs were regularly active in VU2 pre-war, mainly on CW; call signs which come to mind are VU2FX, Tommy Thomas in Rawalpindi (now a silent key), VU2ED, Judd Moysey, who joined VU2EU in Meerut in 1937 and the QRO (high power) phone station of the sub-continent VU2CQ in Bombay.



VU2EU TX at Meerut

Conditions for amateur radio operating were far from ideal, particularly during the monsoon season when the air around the electric light was thick with flying insects. The only way to catch them was to place an aluminium bowl of water directly under the light — the light was reflected by the aluminium and the insects were attracted into the water. About every quarter of an hour the water had to be replaced as it was *full* of dead insects.

Another hazzard was lizzards crawling into the PA 'tank' coil and getting burnt up when the transmitter was operating. This could cause mistuning of the PA! (*As well as a certain amount of discomfort to the lizzard and a rather unpleasant smell — Ed.*) This was all in addition to the (*continuous? — Ed.*) interference caused by hundreds of DC motors, which operated the fans of the 'punkkas' — and had to be heard to be believed.



The station of VU2FX at Rawalpindi, 1936/7

Real QRP DX

In 1938 VU2EU was posted to Cherat on the North West Frontier. At nearly ten thousand feet ASL, this was an ideal location for amateur radio and was free from mains interference, as the nearest mains supply was about 70 miles away. A miniature version of the 1-v-1 receiver was built, together with a small transmitter using a single-valve electron-coupled oscillator, which was followed, later, by a twin triode crystal oscillator/doubler. Both used two-volt filament valves with 150 volts on the anode and gave a maximum power of five watts. *The UK was worked many times using 250 milliwatts to a windom antenna!*

Pirates

Even in those days before the war, there were a few 'pirates' around. One of the most notable was a chap called Livingstone-Allen, who used the call sign VU2AA. He even had QSL cards printed with the skull and cross bones superimposed over the VU2AA and used to sign himself 'Unlicen Owner and Opirator'. Unfortunately his card, together with the logbook and all the other QSL cards I received whilst operational as VU2EU, were lost during the war.

The late Tommy Thomas, VU2FX