

NEWCOMERS FORUM

By Tony Bailey, G3WPO

For subject matter this month I have chosen to talk about "Grandads Band", or "the DC band", as it is sometimes quaintly known. More usually known as 'Top Band' (or should it be 'Bottom Band?') and covering 1.8 to 2.0MHz, it was once the starting ground for virtually all amateurs. However, with the advent of Class B licences, and the easy availability of commercial 2 metre equipment, its popularity has declined a lot over the last fifteen years or so.

to these must be avoided. If you are asked to move frequency by such a station then you should comply. I well remember that during one cw contest on the band, the operator of our club station, who had been using one particular frequency for some time, was asked to QSY by an unknown station. Feeling rather upset, he let his feelings be known, then asked who was calling. The reply emanated from one of the Coastal stations, so he didn't argue further. Nowadays,

Fortunately the complainant accepted my explanation and didn't pursue the matter further.

Local QSO's can take place at any time on the band, and 160 is ideal for local natter nets, a help in taking the pressure off 2 metres for class A licencees. QSO's usually lie around 1.9-1.95MHz in the upper half of the band, with the more distant and DX contacts taking place below 1.8MHz. On Top Band, one could define DX as being over about 4000km, but DX is relative, and a much shorter distance could well qualify depending on your aerial and equipment.

Tony Bailey, G3WPO, gives the low down on that sadly neglected band, 160m.

This is a great shame, as the band offers good operating experience in many areas using simple equipment and aeriels.

With winter upon us, now is the time to get on the band and enjoy the static-free conditions — in summer the latter can totally obliterate contacts, even at local ranges! Contacts can be had with the UK and Europe using relatively simple aeriels, and of course the power is limited to 10 watts input on CW (around 26W pep on SSB), so equipment is not too taxing if you want to build it yourself. 160m is one of the few bands where AM can still be heard, and is acceptable to most people. A lot of commercial gear has provision for the band, usually with a means of reducing the input power to the UK legal limit — if not, mods have been published for some of the more popular rigs in various journals.

Plenty of Room

There is more room on the band than at one time — when the writer was licenced one of the navigational beacon systems (Loran), effectively obliterated most of the upper 100kHz, but this was removed some years ago. You should note that we share 160m with a number of other services, primarily the Coastal stations (known to all as "fish-fone") and Interference

Coastal stations are more easy to recognise as they transmit upper sideband, whereas the amateur convention is to use lower sideband.

Top Band is also one of the few bands where you can expect little problem with TVI, due to the low frequency and low powers used. The only problem you *may* find is with interference to broadcast radios on the medium wave band (usually through image response), but there is little that can be done about this. I have only experienced the problem once, and that was with a portable tranny.

CW Working

It is important that you remember what frequencies to use when you are working CW in the lower half of the band. Most routine CW contacts take place between 1.825-1.84MHz. Below this is strictly DX-land, and woe betide anyone who ends up calling in the wrong place!

Never call CQ below 1.815MHz — this area down to 1.80MHz is used by DX stations to call us. G's and other Europeans transmit between 1.825 and 1.835MHz, working split-frequency and listening lower down.

An outstanding signal from the USA on 160m is W1HGT.

