

waffle is another person's lost route.

What to do if the repeater of your choice is engaged? If the people talking through it are reasonably experienced they will leave a five second pause between their overs "for any other takers". This is the moment at which the waiting operator jumps in quickly with call-sign only. It identifies you at once. To say "Break from G8LM stroke mobile" is quite acceptable but takes longer than "G8LM mobile".

If you are diffident about using "break" remember that the technique of break-in is as old as amateur radio itself. It derives from the earliest days of telegraphy technique when one cw operator wishing to attract the attention of another cw operator in contact with somebody else would simply diddle on his morse key "Bk de G6AY". The other party would be alerted straight away to the fact that someone was waiting for him.

To sum up the practicalities of through-repeater working the experienced user would tell you: Listen first to hear how it's done locally, muscle in when you feel ready — and keep it short. Above all, check the input to ascertain if a direct contact is possible and thus to initiate a real QSO instead of a by-proxy one.

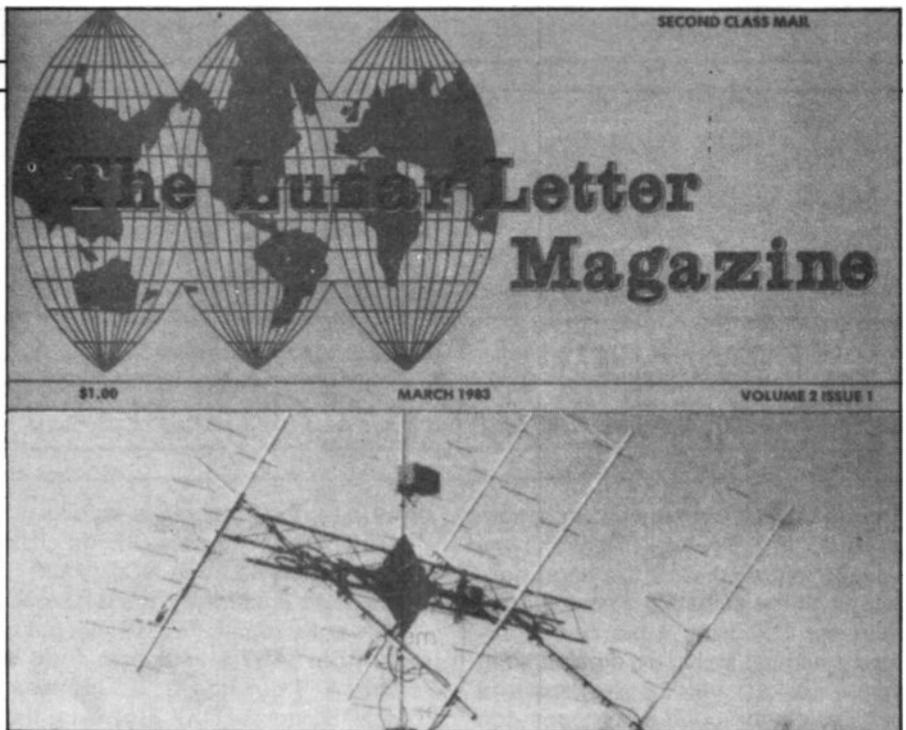
Now, having distinguished real QSOs from through-repeater contacts, is the moment for a discussion on the effect of anomalous propagation on repeater communication.

Anaprop and all that

From time to time the metre-wave bands enjoy what is popularly known as a 'lift'. Repeaters never before heard will come to life at high signal levels from many hundreds of miles away both on 70cm and on 2m. Much excitement will be generated among metre-wave operators who quite literally may have never heard anything like it in their lives.

The excitement is understandable: if you have been stuck for most of your VHF existence on a handful of S-channels (which to many is the limit of their ambitions), to hear a station from Baden-Baden or Oosterbeeke or wherever actually uttering your callsign (even if via a repeater) gives a lift to the spirit occasioned by the 'lift' in the radio propagation.

Anomalous propagation at VHF/UHF ('anaprop' is the acronym) produces an anomaly of another kind:



Lunar Letter is a monthly American magazine devoted to the VHF/UHF enthusiast and covers all forms of weak signal propagation from 50MHz up with a special interest in EME. Available in the UK from D. Parker, G4DZU, at 14 Moorside Crescent, BRADFORD, West Yorks BD11 1HS — all enquiries should be accompanied by an SAE. HRT will shortly be running a major article on EME working with simple equipment.

you hear British repeater users begging Hans or Pieter to send a QSL card". . .to confirm this QSO". A few moments' thought should bring the realization that it wasn't a genuine QSO at all: the repeater was doing the work. If any QSL were to be sent it should truly be in logic be addressed to the repeater(!) and not to the owner of the voice at the other end.

"What I do with my QSL cards is my own business" is the answer that comes whenever the above argument is deployed, and quite rightly so. But the QSL card from Germany or Denmark or wherever that eventually trickles through the QSL bureaux many months later represents no more than a pleasant memento of an anomalous metre-wave event — and a reminder how effective a repeater-transponder can be. Such QSL cards are not valid for any claim that may be made for a metre-wave operating award, for they do not refer to real QSOs.

One direction in which a through-repeater contact under anomalous propagation conditions is valuable is this: It can serve as the prelude to a real one. A Cornish repeater at both ends that a direct contact would be worth trying — on an FM or SSB frequency to be agreed before the "QSY simplex" is made. Rare counties, countries and squares are thus added to the log only because the

repeater helped in the first instance.

A Final 'Why?'

To close I'd like to take a look at that sad topic of our third paragraph, the 'clobbering' of repeaters:

Is it possible to penetrate the minds of a few misguided people who go out of their way to spoil the pleasure of the many by wantonly jamming their repeater contacts? Would they approve of others, say, invading their gardens and pulling up their vegetables? The analogy is not entirely inappropriate. I can see no genuine reason as to why such things are done. Logic suggests that if a ham is sincerely 'anti-repeater', as some admit to be, then there is no need for him to use the things. There are megahertz to spare elsewhere in the metre-wave spectrum where he can go away and do his own thing. These persons are in a minority: it is the others that represent the problem, those who derive some peculiar satisfaction in sabotaging the signals from one of the cleverest devices to be built by the ham radio fraternity, built to be used by all when in need and essentially free. (*Repeaters unfortunately cost money to install and maintain. If you use a repeater regularly please join the appropriate repeater support group — details are often given in our Radio Tomorrow contact panel — Ed.*)