

The Fourth Most Important Document

Another year had receded into the millenium. Another amateur radio callbook, the 1982 version, had been consigned to the shelf in the radio room where sat 31 previous

it discloses, demonstrating the huge increase in the issue of amateur transmitting licences which has recently taken place in the UK.

A suggestion for the Christmas stocking by Hack Hum, G5UM.

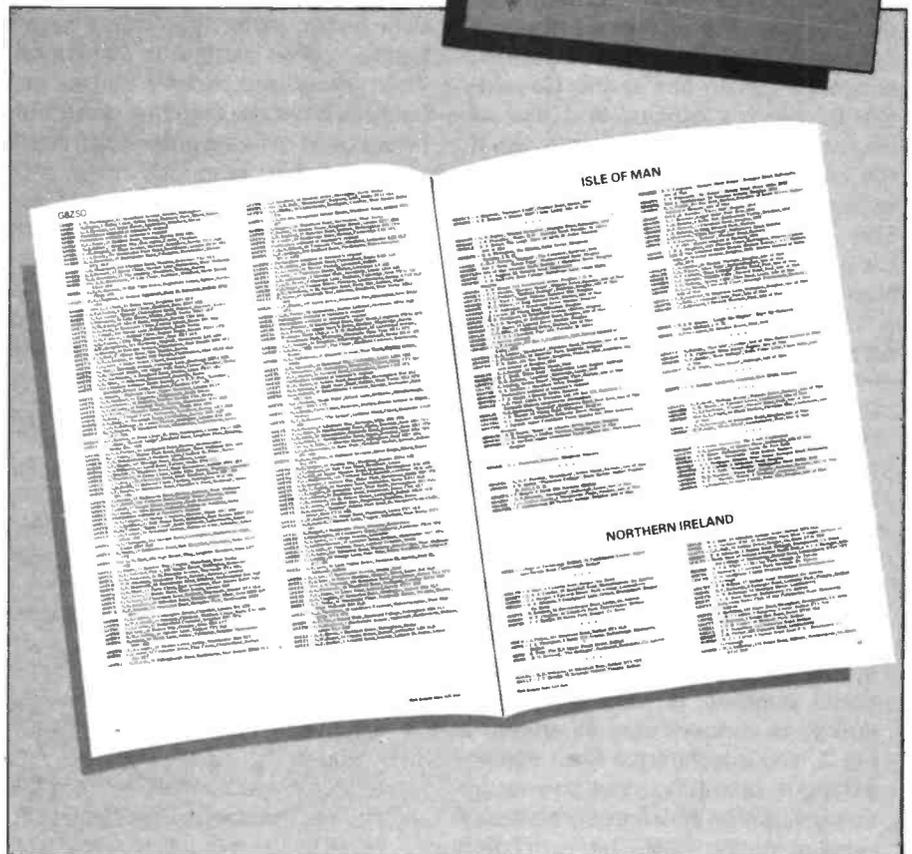
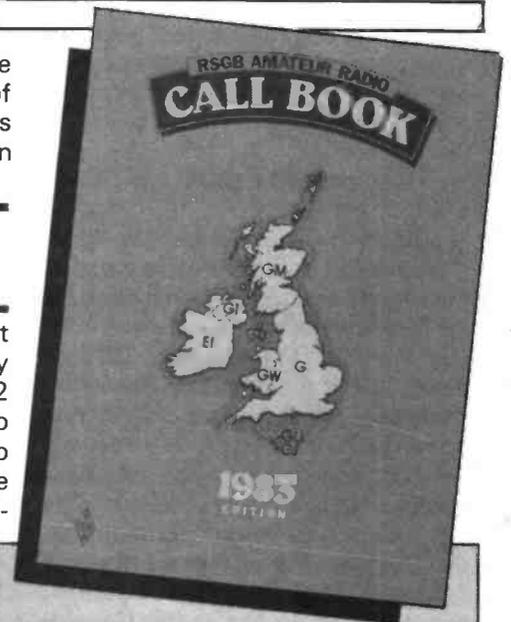
editions, silent sentinels to a small slice of communications history. Then came that day, at the end of 1982, when a shiny new 'Callbook', the 1983 version, was pressed into service as the indispensable adjunct to a metre-wave radioperson's operations. Soon it, too, will be filed but not forgotten in that bookshelf as the brand new 1984 edition supplants it.

To anybody who still happens to hold a prized copy of that tiny blue-covered First Edition of the *RSGB Callbook* of 1951 the contrast between then and now is so marked as to be almost incredible. With only 56 pages plus covers in a small format, plus a few pages of trade ads from firms mainly no longer in existence, the First Edition took in callsigns no farther than the G3I — (yes, I for item) block. The Class B licence was still more than a dozen years away into the future, and VHF was so different then from the way it is now that every contact was an event; valves reigned on two metres, and as for 70cm, it was regarded as almost a miracle if a flashlamp bulb could be persuaded to glow when touched across the output socket of the home built valve transmitters of those days.

Proliferation

In the sense that each edition of the *RSGB Callbook* is 'a slice of communications history' it is worth savouring a few of the facts which

The 1983 edition revealed that Class B licencees had increased by ten callsign blocks since the 1982 edition was published (ie. G6A-- to G6J--), compared with only two Class A blocks. This statistic alone tells the story of the great populari-



ty of the VHF-only 'ticket'.

This condition was maintained during 1983. Calculations which the writer made before the 1984

Callbook was due to appear, suggested that another 12,000-plus Class B licences were issued in the preceding twelve months and are