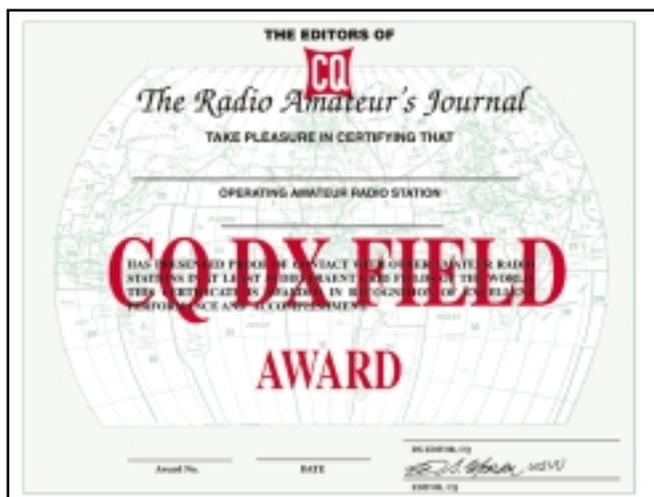

Sunspots got you down? Are you in the DX doldrums?

Well, as we've been promising you over the past few months, we're *Waking Up DXing*—starting right now—with the first of three brand-new programs aimed at bringing back the excitement of chasing after DX in rare (and not-so-rare) locations.

Announcing:

The CQ DX Field Award

BY RICH MOSESON,* W2VU, AND BILLY WILLIAMS,† N4UF



There's something strange happening on the HF ham bands . . . we have record numbers of logs being turned in for our contests, but outside of contests and big-time DXpeditions, the general "sport" of DXing, or chasing after contacts with faraway places, seems to be in a slump.

Well, in our view here at CQ, DXing is the icing on the cake we call ham radio—the excitement of talking to someone on the other side of the world, of making new friends in other countries—and if DXing is in a slump, then we need to do something about it . . . which is why we're introducing three new programs over the next three months with the goal of **Waking Up DXing!**

Why the Slump?

We've given this a lot of thought and come up with a couple of likely culprits. One of the likely reasons is that so many long-time hams have "worked 'em all," whether "'em" is countries (sorry, entities) or zones, the traditional "gold standard"

for achieving "top DXer" status. Another is that mixed blessing called the DX Cluster®. While it's great for alerting us to DX stations we need, too many of us have gotten just plain lazy, keeping the radio off until a place we "need" comes up on the computer screen. Then we power up the rig, work the station, and shut down again until the next good spot comes along. What we've lost is people tuning the bands in anticipation of an opening, listening for that weak signal from some remote location, working the station, then listening some more . . . or even calling CQ and having DX stations come back to them. Now far too many of us sit and wait for someone else to make the first move, and to post the "spot." Of course, deteriorating propagation conditions aren't helping much either, but the active operator who's actually on the air will generally find some band that's open to someplace, even in the depths of the sunspot cycle.

So we've decided to pose a new challenge to get you back on the air and to give you a new DXing goal to chase.

Grid Fields

Back in 1980, a group of VHF enthusiasts in Europe met in Maidenhead, England to adopt a standardized plan for designating "grid locators" around the world. This came about as a result of long-standing practice in the International Amateur Radio Union's Region I (Europe and Africa) of determining scoring in VHF contests on a distance-worked basis. Rather than separately calculating the distance between every two stations that made contact, a system was devised—as far back as the 1950s—to divide Europe into a series of "grid locators" based on latitude and longitude which would make distance calculation easier . . . particularly so with the advent of the personal computer.

Interest in the system began to grow in the rest of the world, but the original QTH Locator system (first called the QRA Locator system) wouldn't work worldwide because the grids would start repeating. According to the IARU Region I *VHF Managers Handbook* and a paper written by SM5AGM, one of the developers of the current grid system, more than 20 different proposals for a worldwide standard were submitted. The group that met in Maidenhead, England in 1980 came away with the basics of today's "grid square" or "grid locator" system—in which the world is divided up into 324 blocks, each

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measuring 10 degrees latitude by 20 degrees longitude, and given a two-capital-letter designator between AA and RR. These blocks are known as "fields." Each field is then broken up into 100 "squares," each measuring 1 degree latitude by 2 degrees longitude and identified by two digits between 00 and 99. Each square is then broken up into subsquares measuring 2.5 minutes of latitude by 5 minutes of longitude. Each subsquare is given a designator of two lower case letters between aa and xx. CQ's offices, for example, are located in FN30fs. Today there are many computer programs, including some contest logging programs, that can automatically calculate the distance between any two subsquares, thus solving the distance-scoring dilemma.

Within a few years of the 1980 conference, the so-called Maidenhead Grid Locator system was adopted worldwide by the IARU, for use primarily by VHF operators. It is the basis of the ARRL's VHF-UHF Century Club (VUCC) award, for confirmed contacts with at least 100 1-degree by 2-degree grid squares.

The interest in using grid locators has continued to spread, not so much geographically (how far beyond worldwide can you go at the moment?) as spectrum-wise, with many HF active hams using them as well, particularly in Europe. The same calculators that can determine distances for contest scoring on VHF can also be used to help QRP operators determine their "miles per watt" accomplishments.

A Grid-Based HF Award

Now there's not much challenge in working one hundred 1-degree by 2-degree grid squares on HF. You can probably do it with about 300 contacts. On the other hand, there is quite a challenge in working large numbers of 10-degree by 20-degree *fields*, particularly since many of the 324 are either completely water or located in the polar regions. SM5AGM, who's also the author of the *ARRL World Grid Locator Atlas*, estimates that 262 fields contain some sort of land, while 54 are entirely water and eight consist of ice with no land underneath. CQ DX Awards Manager N4UF has calculated that there are 177 fields with which the active ham stands a pretty good chance of making a contact. Both agree that the only way to work all 324 is with the help of shipboard stations and polar expeditions, so it won't be easy.

Here's the challenge: The new CQ DX Field Award will recognize the ac-

complishments of any amateur who has confirmed contacts with stations in at least 50 10x20-degree Maidenhead "fields," made on or after January 1, 1980 (the year in which the current system was developed). If you've worked DXCC or the traditional CQ DX Award, chances are pretty good that you already qualify for the basic CQ DX Field Award, or are very close.

As with any other DX award, the real challenge begins *after* you've reached the initial level. Our endorsements will be for each 50 additional fields worked, up to 150, and then in increments of 25 up to 300, with a final endorsement for working all 324. We'll also have an Honor Roll for anyone with 175 or more fields confirmed—remember, they get *really* challenging beyond 177. So you can dig through your QSL collection for the first 50 or even 100 fields, but to reach the top in this award, you're going to have to put in a good deal of on-air time, and that, of course, is the whole idea.

Determining Fields

Each verification from the same station and location may be counted for only one field. Information on the card must be specific enough to make a determination of the proper field. If information is ambiguous or lacks sufficient detail, that card may not be used for the CQ DX Field Award.

There are several ways of determining a station's grid field if the information is not printed on the card. If latitude and longitude coordinates are known, software programs are readily available for converting your verification to the proper field. A hard copy publication, *The ARRL World Grid Locator Atlas*, also may be of some assistance.

Around 180 current CQ DX countries and territories lie totally within a single field. Any contact from Switzerland, for example, translates to field JN. Such cards may be submitted without additional research. Single field countries may also be credited without submitting cards if these are shown on an applicant's itemized ARRL DXCC listing or paperwork from other similar awards (check with the Award Manager to see if the award listing you have is acceptable). A photocopy of the document, itemized by country/territory, must be submitted in hard copy form to the Award Manager with the CQ DX Field Award application form filled out.

Those active in the traditional CQ DX Awards program may also claim credit for single field countries if these cards already have been checked and if

records are still on file. Records are maintained by the Award Manager for two years following an applicant's latest update. If licensed before 1980, an applicant must include a statement that contacts being claimed using paperwork from another award were made after January 1, 1980.

Multi-Field Entities

Another 85 or so entities have segments in two fields while 25 have parts in three fields. Just a handful of entities are spread over 10 or more fields. If a grid locator or exact coordinates are not printed on the card, detailed maps, such as those published by National Geographic, can assist. Use the city or district of the station as printed on the card when researching maps. In addition, listings on at least one online callsign database, <www.hamcall.net>, include coordinates and grid locator information where available. Also, a cross-reference guide will be available on the CQ website to assist applicants and checkpoints. Access this guide through <www.cq-amateur-radio.com> by clicking on the appropriate link.

Finally, the Award Manager maintains maps and is glad to assist if the correct field for a contact cannot be determined. Use e-mail to <n4uf@cq-amateur-radio.com> for making an inquiry.

The Original CQ DX Award

The CQ DX Field Award is a new award in addition to the original CQ DX Award, not a replacement for it. We encourage all hams who have confirmed 100 or more countries to apply for the original CQ DX Award. Complete rules for the new CQ DX Field Award follow. Application forms may be downloaded from our website at <<http://www.cq-amateur-radio.com>> or mailed to you from the CQ office if you send in a request and a self-addressed stamped envelope (SASE). Have fun and good hunting!

What's Next?

This is the first of three new programs we're introducing in an effort to "wake up DXing." The second program will be introduced next month, and all we can say right now is that it will be a cross between a contest and an award program, and that what's old is new again. The third program, to be announced in the June issue of CQ, will be an introductory award aimed at encouraging newer hams to discover the joys of DXing. Stay tuned . . . ■

Rules:

The CQ DX Field Award

1. The CQ DX Field Award is issued in four categories—Mixed, CW, SSB, and Digital—for confirmed two-way contacts with 50 or more Grid Fields, based on the Maidenhead grid system. There are 324 Grid Fields, 10-degree latitude by 20-degree longitude rectangles lettered AA through RR, covering the entire world. Applications should be submitted on the official CQ DX Field Award application (form 2504). Reasonable facsimiles or computer printouts are also acceptable.

2. All contacts must be two-way in the mode(s) for which the application is made. Cross-mode or one-way contacts are not valid. QSLs must be listed in alphabetical order by grid field (AA-RR). All contacts must have been made on or after **January 1, 1980**.

3. QSL cards must be verified by one of the authorized check points for the CQ DX Awards, or must be included with the application. Return postage must be included. Electronic verifications from sources approved by CQ are acceptable. See the CQ website for acceptable online sources.

4. Grid Field endorsement stickers are issued for increments of 50 additional fields, between 50 and 150, then in increments of 25 fields between 150 and 300, with a final endorsement for confirming all 324 grid fields. A fee of \$1.00 per sticker (where stickers are issued) is charged. An SASE must be enclosed with all endorsement applications. Stations outside the United States must include an SAE with two IRCs for airmail return.

5. Special endorsements to the basic award, as follows, are available for a fee of \$1.00 each:

(a) 28 MHz endorsement—for 50 or more grid fields confirmed on the 10-meter band.

(b) 3.5/7 MHz endorsement—for 50 or more grid fields confirmed using any combination of the 40 and 80 meter bands.

(c) 1.8 MHz endorsement—for 25 or

more grid fields confirmed using the 160-meter band.

(d) 50 MHz endorsement—for 25 or more grid fields confirmed using the 6-meter band.

(e) QRPP endorsement—for 25 or more grid fields confirmed using 5 watts output or less.

(f) Mobile endorsement—for 25 or more grid fields confirmed with the applicant operating mobile.

(g) Slow Scan TV endorsement—for 25 or more grid fields confirmed using two-way SSTV.

(h) OSCAR endorsement—for 25 or more grid fields confirmed via amateur satellite.

6. Any altered or forged confirmations will result in permanent disqualification of the applicant.

7. Fair play and good sportsmanship in operating are required for all amateurs working toward CQ DX Awards. Continued use of poor ethics will result in disqualification of the applicant.

8. A fee of \$6.00 is required for CQ subscribers applying for a CQ DX Field Award certificate. The latest CQ mailing label must be attached for the subscriber discount. For non-subscribers the certificate fee is \$12.00. IRCs are acceptable in lieu of check or cash.

9. All contacts must be with land-based or shipboard amateur stations working within authorized amateur bands. Contacts with aircraft are not acceptable.

10. Credit for fields activated by virtue of a DXpedition is dependent on the approval of said DXpedition for traditional CQ DX Award/ARRL DXCC credit. QSLs from mobile or shipboard stations must show grid locator or approximate latitude and longitude (sufficient to determine grid field) at time of contact. Only one grid field may be claimed for each contact. Stations located at exactly 90 degrees south latitude represent grid field AA; 90 degrees north latitude represents grid field RR.

11. For QSLs from fixed stations that do not indicate a grid field, grid locator or station location information sufficient to determine grid field, determination of the grid field will be based on the licensed location of the station as shown in online callsign databases. In these cases, the field may be added, in pencil only, on the address side of the card, or on the electronic confirmation printout. If locator information is not available online or from the station contacted, the contact may not be used for credit toward this award. It is the responsibility of the applicant to collect this information, subject to verification by the card checker and/or CQ DX Awards Manager.

12. In the event of any disputes or disagreements, decisions of the CQ DX Awards Manager shall be final.

CQ DX Grid Field Honor Roll

13. The CQ DX Grid Field Honor Roll is maintained for each of the four CQ DX Field Awards. At least 175 confirmed grid fields are required for a station to appear on the CQ DX Grid Field Honor Roll.

14. To remain listed on CQ DX Honor Roll, an operator must update his or her totals at least once per year. Updates indicating "no change" are acceptable. If confirmation of total is requested, an SASE must be included.

15. An audit sheet is available from the CQ DX Awards Manager. The audit sheet shows grid fields credited to a station. Cost is \$3.00 plus an SASE for each mode.

16. Grid field totals may be adjusted as additional input regarding specific operations is received. Acceptance may be revoked or modified with Honor Roll totals adjusted accordingly. Decisions of the CQ DX Award Manager are final.

17. All checks must be made payable to B. F. Williams. Applications should be sent to Billy Williams, N4UF; P.O. Box 9673; Jacksonville, Florida 32208-0673. Do not send applications to CQ.