



The 2016 European DX Council (EDXC) Conference was held at the **Castlefield Hotel** in Manchester (in North West England) between Friday 9th and Monday 12th September hosted by the British DX Club. Over 40 delegates and partners attended, some for the whole four days, others just for one conference session or excursion. Eighteen delegates came from overseas (11 from Finland, 4 from Denmark and 1 each from France, Italy and Japan). More than twenty BDXC members from the United Kingdom attended, including Michael Murray who was EDXC Secretary-General the last time the EDXC conference was held in the UK, thirty three years ago in 1983 in London.

left: canal near hotel & the modern 169m Beetham Tower

Many delegates arrived on Friday, when old acquaintances could be renewed and new faces put to names during the registration session. The conference proceedings began on Saturday morning with a welcoming address on behalf of host club, the British DX Club, by **Chrissy Brand**, conference organiser and editor of BDXC's monthly magazine 'Communication'. She mentioned absent friends, including BDXC Board member Mark Savage who had looked forward so much to this conference, and

RVI's 'Brussels Calling' host Franz Vossen, both of whom had tragically passed away earlier this year. Also sadly missed in Manchester was George Brown from Scotland, who had attended many previous EDXC conferences, but who had passed away in December 2015.

EDXC Secretary-General, **Kari Kivekäs**, then also welcomed us to the conference and updated us on **EDXC Matters**: the EDXC News weblog <https://edxcnews.wordpress.com/>, the Facebook page (now with >550 'Likes') and reminded us that the 50th EDXC Conference was to be held in Finland next year. He also mentioned proposals for an EDXC History to be prepared (with an archive of scanned documents etc) and for an EDXC Radio programme. Kari mentioned that the financial position of the EDXC was good and as a result that membership fees could maybe be reduced further.

Jukka Kotovirta (*right*) then gave a fascinating illustrated talk on **FM DXing** from Finland, including some recordings of DX catches. He compared the current FM season with previous years and told how with the FM band so crowded in many towns, Finnish DXers escape on FM DXpeditions to the quieter Baltic island of Utö, Finland's most southerly point. He mentioned some outstanding catches e.g. western China heard in Finland (double-hop SpE) last season and a new record Tropo reception for Finland this year (Croatia 1691km).



Dr David Clayton from the University of York has been researching the take-up of radio sets in rural Africa, and told us the story of the **Eveready ‘J’ type saucepan valve radio** (1948-1953), so-called as its “tropicalised” metal case was made in a London saucepan factory. The set sat on its battery, intended to last 300 hours. Despite the “tropicalisation” of the set, 17% failed. Both SW only and SW/MW variants were made, in particular for sale in central Africa, especially in Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and Nyassaland (now Malawi). Sets sold in Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) were government subsidised to around £5 to make them more affordable. This he suggested was so broadcasts from the CABS station in Lusaka could reach more of the rural population and help counter insurrection in the country’s Copper Belt. Dr Clayton’s investigations are part of the **‘Connecting the Wireless World: Writing Global Radio History’** project funded by the Leverhulme Trust which he enlightened us about in a separate talk later that morning. Much of the historical work on radio has a national focus – this project explores how radio was used to link broadcasters and listeners in different countries. Questions and answers followed, from which I was pleased to learn that that the late John Peel had a great following in Estonia through his programmes on Finnish radio!

ALL FM is one of the UK’s longest running community radio stations and one of the original members of the UK government’s Access Radio pilot scheme in 2002. They broadcast to south, central and east Manchester from the suburb of Levenshulme (the acronym ALL originated from the names of suburbs Ardwick, Levenshulme and Longsight). Station manager, **Ed Connole** came to the conference to tell us about his station’s success and problems it faces. He began with a short film: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8hhULLAgtuo>



Available online at <http://allfm.org/> as well as on 96.9 FM, ALL FM is also a training organisation with a small staff but 106 volunteers putting out 80 different shows, some in languages other than English. It was evident that a lot of dedication and enthusiasm from staff and volunteers is needed to keep the station on air 24/7 with limited funds! Ed was somewhat bemused though as to why anyone in Finland would want to hear ALL FM on 96.9 MHz when it was easier to tune in online!



After lunch on Saturday, we took the Metrolink tram from Castlefield to **MediaCityUK**, the new modern development on the former Salford Docks site, now home to several BBC departments and stations including BBC Radio 5 Live, BBC Radio Manchester, BBC North TV, CBBC (for Children), BBC Sport, and BBC Breakfast.

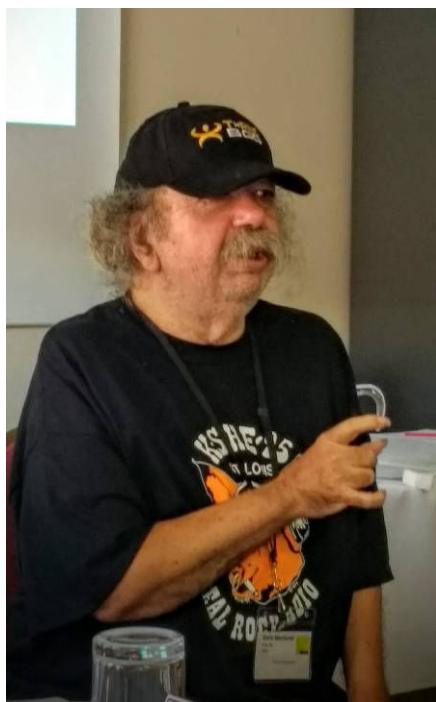
Chrissy had booked us on two **BBC tours** - the tour I was on had very good guides in Shaun and Paul who did their best to involve us (e.g. reading the news and weather in the BBC Breakfast studio). The tour also took in the studio of the famous and long-running children’s TV programme, Blue Peter, a drama studio (with impressive ‘dead air’ audio studio to simulate being outdoors) and the BBC 6 Music radio studio. The latter is on the ground floor of Dock House, one of the three buildings the BBC occupies at MediaCity and interestingly had a window through which the public outside could view what’s going on in the studio! (although there are blinds which can be drawn if a guest wants to remain hidden!). The studio was free (awaiting Craig Charles for his “Funk & Soul show” at 6pm) so we could sit at the DJ console and see the ultra-modern equipment used in a radio studio today, such as the touch screen accessing the Broadcast Network Control System to feed outside sources into the studio (not a vinyl deck in sight!).

Reassuringly, the studio had a space for live bands, including a drum kit sat on an old rug (to stop it moving when being played!). This studio is also used for some Radio 2 programmes e.g. Janice Long's 'After Midnight' show.

(Below left: awaiting the BBC Tour. Right: Alan Pennington BBC 6 Music studio)



To start the Sunday morning conference session, **Chrissy Brand** gave us a flavour of her visit in March this year to the **Radiodays Europe** conference and trade fair in Paris, attended by 1500 delegates from more than 60 countries. And then in April to the **International Radio Festival**, which this year had moved to Milan which focuses on music radio stations, and included a talk by former Caroline North and Luxembourg DJ, Tony Prince (see May 2016 'Communication').



Dario Monferini (left) then told us about his 2015 trip to **Canada** and the French overseas territory of **Saint Pierre et Miquelon** (islands off Newfoundland) with Roberto Pavanello. Cities visited included Montreal, Quebec, Halifax and St John's, where, as always, the main purpose was to visit as many radio stations as possible. These included CBC Radio Canada as well as local AM and FM stations, some of which were familiar to DXers in Europe. The trip also included Signal Hill in St John's, famous for Marconi's transatlantic broadcast. Dario and Roberto met DXers Silvain Naud and Allen Willie on the trip. Sadly, RFO Saint Pierre et Miquelon stopped using 1375 kHz in 2004 – now only on FM. Many photos of the trip accompanied the talk – there are more than 300 you can view in an album on Roberto Pavanello's Facebook page.

BDXC member **Dan Goldfarb** next introduced us to his '**MW Masts**' project which for the past five years has been recording details of worldwide MW (AM) and LW masts: for stations in the North America with power of ≥ 1.5 kilowatts and in the rest of the world for stations with power ≥ 1 kilowatt. This massive project is split over two spreadsheets: one for active stations and one for inactive or closed stations and is constantly being updated and added to. Dan showed us some examples on screen – including details such as geographical coordinates, mast height, studio location, historical power changes and aerial configurations etc.

This impressive project is currently on Yahoo Groups at <https://groups.yahoo.com/neo/groups/mwmasts/info> where there is a much fuller description of the project and how you can join and help. Dan is currently investigating the costs of setting up a website to host the spreadsheets.

”**Crossing Borders, making communities: cultural representations of pirate radio**” was the title of the next talk, given by **Prof. Jopi Nyman** from Finland in which he looked at pirate radio in film and literature. In literature he looked at some novels by black British writers which included inner city pirate radio stations e.g. in London or Manchester. We also saw some clips of 60s offshore radio on screen – from the TV series ‘Heartbeat’ with fictional Radio North and ‘The Boat that Rocked’ with fictional Radio Rock.

Dave Kenny then transported us to the far north westerly tip of Scotland with photos of the **DXpeditions to Sheigra** over the years: the DX cottages used, the equipment and long Beverage aerials radiating across the barren hillsides and the extremes of weather and wildlife encountered. A sample of some QSLs Dave has received from MW stations in Alaska, Japan and USA were also shown, together with a few recordings made at Sheigra. Some of the reports on Sheigra DXpeditions are online at: <http://www.bdx.com/articles.html>

Finally, **Jan-Mikael Nurmela** and **Risto Vähäkainu** of the FDXA gave us details of the plans for next year’s EDXC Conference in the Finnish city of Tampere. 2017 is the 50th Anniversary of EDXC and this notable date is also close to other Finnish anniversaries – Finnish independence in December 1917, the local Tampere DX club (TreDXK) will be 50 years old and it will also be the 60th birthday of the Finnish DX Association in January 2018. The conference dates are 18-20 August 2017 (more details will appear in ‘Communication’ and on the EDXC website).

On Sunday afternoon, delegates had a chance to see some of the sights of **Manchester** with a two hours walking tour. Our guide Steve took us from the hotel, along part of the city’s heritage canal network, visiting some historic buildings and ending at the iconic town hall in Albert Square.



Above: in Albert Square, Manchester Town Hall behind.



On Sunday evening we enjoyed the traditional **EDXC Conference Banquet** at the hotel with a three-course meal served with plenty of wine. During the meal, each guest was invited in turn to say a few words about their DXing hobby interest. Thanks were also expressed to Chrissy (left, with Kari) for organising the conference.

On Monday morning Chrissy had arranged visits to two local Manchester stations: some of us walked to the studios of **Key 103** on Castle Quay, whilst others visited **Gaydio** a brisk 20-minute walk to the city centre:



The **Key 103** building (below left) has four separate studios which we could see into through a studio window: three were in use with DJs broadcasting pop from different decades when we visited at 9.30am: Key 103 (103.0 MHz + DAB, targeting 25-44 year olds); Key 2 (1152 kHz + DAB, targeting 45-64 year olds) and Key 3 (DAB only, targeting 15-24 year olds). The offices are also the northern HQ for owners Bauer Media with about 100 people based there. Our guide James used the term “smoke and mirrors” to describe how, the same programmes on Key 2 and Key 3 were networked across other northern English cities (with local inserts) e.g. as Hallam 2 and 3 in Sheffield. I had been a teenage listener to Piccadilly Radio from its launch day in 1974 on its original FM frequency (97.0 MHz), 40 miles away from its Saddleworth

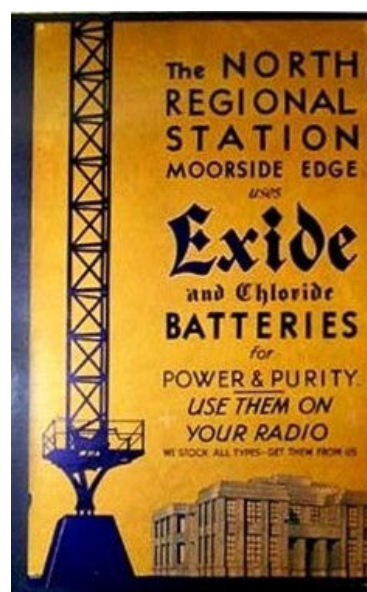
transmitter site, when they had DJs like Roger Day on air. James, our guide, wasn't sure why it changed name to Key 103 in 1988 (before his time). The frequency did change to 103, the station had to split its

MW and FM programming (with a new target audience on FM) and they'd moved from its original studios in Piccadilly Plaza? As we left the impressive Castle Quay studios with our Key 103 pens & stickers, I reflected that a lot had changed since Philip Birch's original Manchester ILR, Piccadilly Radio launched over forty years ago. (photo right: 40 year award in the Key 103 foyer)



A second group of participants visited the studios of **Gaydio**, which broadcasts to the LGBT community across the UK from a modern office block (Manchester One) in the centre of Manchester. We were made very welcome and given an informative talk by the station's director and founder, Ian Wallace. Gaydio has an FM community radio licence in Manchester on 88.4 MHz which includes some local programming. The national stream is broadcast online and via DAB in London, Brighton, Glasgow, Manchester, Portsmouth and Birmingham.

The final excursion of the conference was eastwards by coach into Yorkshire, with first stop the medium wave transmitter site at **Moorside Edge**. The tops of its twin masts high up on the Pennine hills near Huddersfield were visible as we approached on the M62 - our coach driver managed to drive right up the narrow track to the site where Lee Parkins, an Arqiva engineer, was waiting to give us a tour. The original 1931 building and masts were demolished and a new station built in the 1980s. Inside the transmitter hall we saw 4 x Marconi B6034 50 kW valve transmitters used for BBC Radio 5 Live on 909 kHz (=200 kW 24hrs). Plus 4 x 50 kW Harris DX50 solid state transmitters: 2 used for Absolute Radio on 1215 kHz (=100 kW 24hrs) and 2 used for TalkSport on 1089 kHz (run at 50kW daytime, 100kW at night). Outside, two 158 metre high lattice masts towered above us, supporting the transmitting wires. The marshy ground the site is built on provides a very good earth. Before we left, we were also shown inside the bunker, designed by the BBC to house four personnel in the event of a nuclear attack.



Above left: Ydun Ritz and the Radio 5 Live transmitters at Moorside Edge. <https://mediumwave.info/>

Above right: Poster picturing the original Moorside Edge transmitter building built in 1931 for the BBC North Regional Station. A copy of this poster was on the wall in the office outside the BBC 6 Music studio at MediaCity.

After a good lunch at the Ford Inn near Holmfirth, our coach driver drove us right up to the gates of the **Holme Moss** FM (and now DAB) transmitter mast a few miles away. This single 228 metre high mast is 524 metres above sea level and is used for BBC National Radio on FM, plus Classic FM and three BBC local radio stations (Manchester, Leeds and Sheffield). It also now carries DAB. The original mast on the site was built in 1951 for 405 lines VHF TV which ceased in 1985.

Right: the Holme Moss FM & DAB mast. The site opened in 1951, originally as a site for a 405 lines VHF TV mast. There's a film about the 'Holme Moss Open Day' in 1961 on the bbceng.info website and on YouTube at: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=3ZektaxfWs>

As well as organising the whole conference, Chrissy had compiled a comprehensive 9-page guide for delegates with tips on what to see, do, eat and drink in Manchester! Many of her suggested attractions were within walking distance of our hotel in the historic Castlefield canal basin district, in particular the award-winning **Museum of Industry and Science** (MOSI), just across the road from the hotel, which incorporates the famous Liverpool Road railway station. The museum also houses some displays of radio and television in its 'Connecting Manchester' gallery in the 1830 Warehouse building. <http://msimanchester.org.uk/> Regular attendee at EDXC conferences from Japan SW Club, **Toshi Ohtake**, comments:

"Before leaving the city, I visited MOSI across the street of the hotel. It displayed a lot of historical hardware by which I was quite moved as a professional engineer. This is my first visit to the city, and I really impressed by the history and the important role played by the industry of Manchester in early days."



An enjoyable first visit to the city in fact for many of us – I'm sure we'll return!

left: old BBC microphones on display at MOSI.

right: Toshi at MediaCityUK with a Dalek from the BBC Doctor Who TV series.





Above: Group photo taken outside the BBC North HQ at Media City UK in Salford during the EDXC conference in Manchester, September 2016.



Left: awaiting tour in foyer of studios of radio station Key 103.



Right: Manchester Town Hall in Albert Square on the EDXC walking tour of the city centre.

Report by Alan Pennington © British DX Club 2016