

## Ultra Long Delayed Echoes

Mike Doig, ZL2BBS

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I had an odd experience a few years ago, which, maybe, might count as the longest delayed radio echo on record.

To explain it properly, I have to go back a while. Before moving to New Zealand in 1973, I held the call sign G3ROA. Before leaving England I asked the post office not to reallocate the call, because I might return one day and want to claim it back. I got a nice letter saying they would do as I asked. I check on qrz.com occasionally to make sure nobody has my old call sign.

So, imagine my annoyance when I heard a watery signal on 20- meters one evening: "CQ CQ CQ de G3ROA G3ROA K K." Strangely, although the signal was about S5, it was the only European station I could hear. Well, must be someone pirating my old call, I thought, and the only way to deal with pirates is to call them and try to embarrass them in some way. I decided to play it cool to start with.

"G3ROA G3ROA de ZL2BBS ZL2BBS KN"

Back he came straight away, and we exchanged signal reports and names. Turns out his name was Mike, just like mine. Then it got really weird. His QTH was the same I lived in. His rig, he claimed, was a Heathkit DX-40 and a Halicrafters SX-28 receiver.

Back when I was 17 years old and still at high school, I had a DX-40 and trusty old SX-28. The DX-40 WAS CRYSTALL CONTROLLED, AND I ONLY HAD ONE CRYSTALL: 7008 kHz. So I looked at the frequency display on the transceiver, and yeas, there we were on 14016.

By now I was feeling very uncomfortable. After another couple of overs I was uncomfortable still, this operator, whoever he was, was using a bug, and had a quirky way of sending "P": dit daaah dah dit, with an overload first dash. I use a keyer nowadays, and it had almost slipped my mind, but I got told off for doing exactly the same thing when I was a young operator!



ZL2BBS

Anyway, Mike with the DX-40 said it was his first QSO with a ZL and would I please QSL, and so on and so forth. He signed off with "HPE CUAGN SN," and I sat for a long time staring at my rig.

After a while, although feeling foolish, I decided to dig out my old logbooks. I have always been in the habit of recording in the front of each logbook the equipment and antennas I use and the date on which anything changes. I found my old G3ROA logs and looked at the entries during the period when I had the DX-40. There were about 40 pages worth, which reminded me how keen I was newly licensed operator. A lot of the QSOs were made at 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning. Anyway, according to the logs, G3ROA had never worked a ZL during this period. I was relieved about this, but then I felt even more foolish.

There was one last act in this strange and unnerving story. I decided to send a QASL card to G3ROA, via bureau. After a few month the card came back to me, and across the back was simply written: **No longer active.**

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