

# m0blfarticles

## Operating in France April 2000

As you may have noticed from the contents page, I am going abroad to work for a few months. I shall be in France and, as I have some knowledge of 2m operation there, and with the summer holidays coming ever closer, I have decided to write my article this month on the subject of 2m FM on the other side of the channel.

Firstly, it must be remembered that no extra permission is needed for a British amateur to operate in France - the CEPT agreement covers you - but you must have a full (not novice) license. You must also abide by the requirements of the French license. From what I can gather, there are no major differences between the French and British ones but you ought to get a copy of the requirements if you can anyway. (The address supplied by the RSGB will only result in your envelope being returned and marked 'Insufficient Address' by the French Post Office, by the way.) [NB: Some areas of France, near borders with other European countries which still use Band I television, still do not have 6m access]

Another similarity with the UK is that main broadcast transmitter sites have, by and large, become too expensive for amateur repeater groups to afford. They therefore tend to occupy smaller masts in not-so-advantageous positions, thus reducing their coverage. (One exception to this is the Pierre St. Martin repeater. Perched high on a mountain in the Pyrenees, it can be heard normally over about 250 miles in South West France). The network in France is, therefore, not so complete as here, and there are many areas where no two metre repeater can be heard. Where they do exist they tend to be slightly more advanced technically than over here as licensing conditions do not appear to be so strict.

For example, it is relatively normal to hear a French repeater with a voice identification as well as the standard Morse Code callsign. This is something that has only been legal in Britain for the past couple years and has not been widely taken up. There are French repeaters which will also give you a signal report at the end of each over - the Liborne repeater near Bordeaux might say 'cinquante-sept' ('five and seven') between overs, instead of the more familiar 'pips'. French repeaters are also allowed to play music and so a short extract of nursery rhyme at the end of a contact is also not uncommon.

Slightly rarer are France's so-called 'Invisible Repeaters'. These, I believe, are experimental and I am still at a loss to explain how they work (please email me if you know) but basically they have an input frequency which is the same as the output and there are no 'pips' between overs. The only give-away to their presence are the callsign transmitted every 15 minutes and the fact that reception is better than a normal simplex contact. An example of this type of repeater is one in the Deux-Sevres department (West France) which can be found, if I remember correctly, on 145.475MHz.

Access to French repeaters is the same as in the rest of Europe - a 1750kHz toneburst of 500ms or, where fitted, a CTCSS tone of the appropriate frequency. Talking repeaters will normally explain the exact access method required: the Liborne repeater mentioned above gives a three minute lecture on the subject on the hour but (fortunately for regular listeners!) only if it has not been used for the last twenty minutes. Frequencies in France on 2m are the same as in the UK (145.000MHz-145.200MHz input & 145.600MHz-145.800MHz output) for all except a handful. (Caen has a repeater which has its output on 145.325MHz!) Although this article is not about 70cms (as I have no experience of working this band over there), I will mention that frequencies there are different (431.625-431.925MHz inputs and 430.025-430.725MHz outputs).

Finally, a list of French repeaters is available via the REF Union website but some which I have used are: Douarnenez (145.625); Lannion (145.6); Rennes (145.675); Les Herbiers (145.775); Niort (145.75); Liborne (145.725); Bordeaux (145.775); Pierre St. Martin (145.700).

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