

How 2M1HRE Became PA3HJB in 18 Months



In December 1999, at the age of 38, I sat my NOVICE RADIO AMATEURS EXAMINATION. In February 2000 I was on the air as 2M1HRE, having great fun operating on 2m and 6m getting my first contacts with members of the Amateur Radio fraternity and wetting my appetite to try and learn as much as I could about this, in my eyes, amazing hobby.

May 2000 arrived and I sat the RAE (Radio Amateurs Examination). This was followed by the 5wpm CW test and MM5ALB was born. At the time I was quite happy and I felt that I had achieved what I wanted. This was not the case, however...

I was happy making new friends, learning new skills and getting involved with a wide range of organisations. The **International Shortwave League** (GM20997), the **RSGB (Radio Society of Great Britain)** and **RAFARS** (Royal Air Force Amateur Radio Society - membership now lapsed but I was 4221). At the same time I was an Adult Warrant Officer with the Air Training Corps and was involved with radio training and Special Event Stations for the Cadets. Just when I thought everything was ticking along nicely I was offered a job in Holland. Always one for a challenge and after much discussion with my XYL, family and friends I accepted.

This was the point where I started to think about my radio hobby and how I could continue with it in another country. It was then I found out how helpful Amateur Radio Operators can really be.

I was informed that because I was a MM5 my licence would revert to that of a B licence (anything above 30Mhz). Panic set in but help was on its way. I was a regular visitor to the Forfar based club of the Strathmore & District Amateur Radio Club, as a guest of Alan Thompson (MM1EQE) and it was at this club I sat my 5wpm CW test. A phone call to the Morse Examiner (GM0SHD) George Balfour, who is a member of the club, and my 12wpm test was arranged. I managed to pass this test with only one mistake on the Rx side and MM0CXA was on the air – 2 weeks before we left for Holland. Was this the end of my problems??? No chance, there is always another hurdle.

If you want to operate from another CEPT member country, for a period exceeding 3 months, you are required to apply for a licence of that country. OK, I thought, I will do that. Next hurdle coming up.

If you have sat and passed the RAE, in the UK (a CEPT member country) you can obtain a document from the RA (Radio Communications Agency) known as the HAREC (The Harmonisation of Radio Examinations Certificate). This is based on CEPT recommendation T/R 61-02. This entitles you to a licence in the country where you are living.

To obtain the Dutch licence I had to contact the Dutch equivalent of the RA. They are based in the North of the country, in a city called Groningen and they are known as the “**RIJKDIENST VOOR RADIOCOMMUNICATIE**”. I spoke to a gentleman from this organisation and more helpful he could not have been. We discussed how

the licence could be obtained and what I would have to do. This was when it started to become easier.

He informed me that I would require a Full Amateur Licence from my own country, had it. He informed me that I would require a HAREC, had it. He then informed me that I would need 91 Dutch Guilders (€1 - 26). OK, spoke to the XYL, had it. He then said that if I sent all the documents via snail mail it could take a while before the licence was in my possession. As I had a day off coming up I asked if it would be quicker if I paid a visit to his office. "It could be"; was the reply so we made an appointment and on my day off I took a nice leisurely drive through the center of Holland and met the gentleman I had spoken to on the phone. I filled out the relevant documentation and produced copies of my Passport, licence and HAREC, had a cup of coffee and was informed that my licence would be with me in due course. A 250km drive for a 20 minute chat. Four days later I got the shock of my life when my Dutch Amateur Radio licence landed on the doormat. I had now become PA3HJB.

Operating as PA3HJB has had is interesting moments. If I am calling CQ I get a few replies from people who are puzzled why my accent doesn't match my Callsign. This is especially so on VHF/UHF when I try to have a QSO with local operators. Some are a bit wary at first because they think I may be a pirate operator, others are curious why I have a Dutch licence in the first place.

Antennas can be a bit of a problem with the lack of space at my QTH, which by the way is a city called Dordrecht – 20km South East of Rotterdam. If you want to erect a free standing mast you need special permission from the Environmental Department of the Gemeente (the Local Authority). If the antenna is fixed to the building you are limited to a height of 2m above the tallest part of the building. I get around this, mainly by going portable or mobile. I have a telescopic pole from which I hang a ½size G5RV in the back garden. The neighbours are happy because it is temporary and don't complain.

My journey from 2M1HRE to PA3HJB has been an interesting one but I couldn't have done without the help of the following people;

- Ken Horne (GM3YBQ) – NRAE/RAE/Morse Instructor
- John Balfour (GM3PFQ) – lots of help with CW but now, sadly, Silent Key
- George Balfour (GM0SHD) – very patient Morse Examiner