

# MW reception of Australia in the UK in the 1930s

Australia was heard for the first time on medium wave during a Sheigra DXpedition on 12 October 2020 when 5RN, ABC Radio National, in Adelaide was heard on 729 kHz.

But was this also a UK first on MW? Well, maybe not, as back in the 1930s, reception of two MW Australian stations was confirmed in Kent. And, remarkably, one of those stations was 5CL in Adelaide on 730 kHz, which in 1991 became (you've guessed it!), 5RN.

Following news of my Australian catch on the Sheigra DXpedition appeared in Communication (December 2020) Mike Barraclough told me that a report in Medium Wave News (MWN) in April 1959 had told of amazing pre-war MW reception of Australia by Kenneth Judd in Orpington, Kent:

*"Pre-War DX 1932-1939: Dick Coales has sent a list of the DX logged by Kenneth Judd. It makes incredible reading. His location was Orpington. Here is a list of countries heard, where more than one station was heard the number is quoted after the country; Ceylon, China (6), Formosa, French Indo-China, Hong Kong, India (5), Japan (7), Java, Korea, Manchukuo, Palestine, Philippines (2), Siam (2), Algeria, Egypt (2), Morocco, South Africa (2), Cuba (9), Dominican Rep, Guatemala, Honduras, Panama, Argentina (24), Bolivia (2), Brazil (9), Chile (4), Colombia (3), Ecuador (2) including HC2JB 30 watts!, Paraguay (2), Peru, Venezuela (2), Australia (8), New Zealand (4)."*

As many early radio magazines from the 1930s are now available online, especially on the fascinating <https://worldradiohistory.com> site, I decided to search for any reference to Ken Judd's Australian reception. In the early 1930s, DXing, especially of MW stations, seemed a much more mainstream hobby. Some UK listeners realised their new wireless sets, often built from kits, could receive stations, from Europe and even across the Atlantic. Many magazines and clubs sprang up as a result of this new craze. Reading some of the 1930's radio magazines, it seemed quite a competitive hobby though: they are full of lists of awards, "rolls of honour", even degrees, given to DXers based on numbers of stations, continents heard, farthest distance heard etc.

One such magazine was "The Globe Circler", the monthly magazine of the US-based "International DXers Alliance" (IDA), founded in 1932 and one of the most popular pre-war clubs. The IDA was "open for membership to experienced DX'ers who can submit verifications from foreign stations at least 2000 miles distant...." (re "Radio News" June 1934). Searching some 1934 issues of the IDA's "The Globe Circler", I finally managed to find reports of Mr Judd's reception of Australia, as it mentioned two Australian stations he had received QSLs from!



## AUSTRALIA VERIFIED IN ENGLAND

Mr.K. Judd, Orpington, England is the proud possessor of authentic verifications from 5CL, and 2UE of Australia. So another of the "It can't be done" traditions is disproved by the I. D. A.

Left: Mr Judd makes the front page of the April 1934 "Globe Circler"!

...SUNOS, WATOS, WQAU, WDA, W110, WABU, P  
K. Judd, Eng: KMPC, VAS, KDKA, WGY, NAA,  
KDB, 2UE, 5CL.

Above: Ken Judd's entry in the "Roll of Honor" listing stations he'd verified in the last month.

Page 3 of the April 1934 "Globe Circler" also credited Mr K. Judd of Orpington, Eng. with the "best veri's received recently" with his QSLs of 2UE [Sydney 1025kHz] & 5CL [Adelaide 730kHz].

In the September 1934 edition of "Radio Index" (RADEX), another US magazine, a letter from Mr Judd himself appeared, mentioning his reception of Honolulu as well as the two Australians:

**Honolulu From England** "I must say that I am very pleased that the IDA, of which I am a member, brought RADEX to my notice. I only wish that it was published this side of the Atlantic," comments K. Judd, 68, Mayfield Ave., Orpington, Kent, England. "During the 1933-34 DX season, I received the following, all being first reports from England: KDB, KERN, KGU, KMPC, NAA, 2UE and 5CL. I received 2UE, 10,500 miles away with 3000 watts, at midday. I received the first TP degree to be issued in Europe by the IDA....." We hope Mr. Judd will describe his receiver in his next letter. Picking up Honolulu and 100 -watt stations on our West Coast, is no small feat.

KGU Honolulu was on 750 kHz at the time, with 2,500 watts. "TP degree" I guess is Trans-Pacific.

**R**ECENT remarks in this column about the impossibility of receiving Australia on the medium broadcast band, as compared with the extreme ease with which it is possible on the short waves, have brought forth an interesting letter.

Mr. K. Judd, of Orpington, produces verification of the reception of the Australian broadcast stations 2UE and 5CL on the medium broadcast band. He also claims to have heard ten other Australian and four New Zealand stations, together with 26 in Argentina, 21 in Mexico, 7 in Japan. He also claims several other startling scalps.

Truly, we of the short-wave fraternity do not realise what is possible on the much-despised "long waves." In a sense, however, these claims back up the argument that short waves have been poor for the last three years, while the longer waves have been abnormally good. One ventures to suggest that in five years' time even the reception of the U.S.A. on 300 metres will be a rarity. What the short waves will be like we dare not imagine.

left: Ken Judd's Australian catches were referred to in the June 1<sup>st</sup> 1934 'Wireless World' in their 'The Shortwave-World' column.

But 'Wireless World' in June 1934 also wrote:

### **Straight from the Shoulder**

**B**LACK sheep among amateur transmitters are the subject of a devastating editorial in the May, 1934, *Globe Circular*, the organ of the International DX'ers Alliance. The attack is levelled at amateurs who obtain supposed verifications of remarkable long-distance working by unfair or unsportsmanlike methods.

"These actions," writes the Editor, "reflect seriously not only on the DXer, but on his colleagues, the radio stations, and the entire sport. The vast majority of DXers are honest, and would not report a station unless they had some definite proof of identification. . . . To those who, while not openly dishonest, nevertheless use unethical DX methods, we beg of you to give them up *now*."

The May 1934 "Globe Circler" referred to is not online, but in a subsequent edition of 'Wireless World', they made it clear that "the writer's remarks concerned "DX-ers"- that is long-distance listeners. No reflection was intended on the transmitting fraternity."

Ken Judd was still living in Kent after WW2 – the Newark News Radio Club's (NNRC) February 1<sup>st</sup> 1948 bulletin now showed his location as Folkestone, not Orpington. I wonder if his QSL cards or logbook survive? And I'm yet to find out what receiver or aerials he used back in 1933-34?

His Australian catches were again mentioned by the NNRC in December 1947:

"Ken Judd in England logs only 2000-mile stations. His farthest stations verified are 2UE Sydney, Australia with 1 kW (10,000 miles), KDB Santa Barbara Cal. 100w (5,400 Miles) and KGU Honolulu 2500w (7,000 miles). (NNRC March 1975 "The Pioneers Days", On the Shortwaves, archived at: <https://www.radioheritage.com/collections/our-archive-mirror-of-on-the-shortwaves-com/>)

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