

country, bypassing the trunk circuits. Because the internal routing codes in the UK network are not the same as those dialed by the caller, the phreaks had to discover them by 'probe and listen' techniques or more commonly known in the US -- scanning. What they did was put in likely signals and listened to find out if they succeeded. The results of scanning were circulated to other phreaks. Discovering each other took time at first, but eventually the phreaks became organized. The "tap" of Britain was called "undercurrents" which enabled British phreaks to share the info on new numbers, equipment etc.

To understand what the British phreaks did, think of the phone network in three layers of lines: Local, trunk, and international. In the UK, subscriber trunk dialing (std), is the mechanism which takes a call from the local lines and (legitimately) elevates it to a trunk or international level. The UK phreaks figured that a call at trunk level can be routed through any number of exchanges, provided that the right routing codes were found and used correctly. They also had to discover how to get from local to trunk level either without being charged (which they did with a bleeper box) or without using (std). Chaining has already been mentioned but it requires long strings of digits and speech gets more and more faint as the chain grows, just like it does when you stack trunks back and forth across the US. The way the security reps snagged the phreaks was to put a simple 'printer meter' or as we call it: A pen register on the suspects line, which shows every digit dialed from the subscribers line.

The British prefer to get onto the trunks rather than chaining. One way was to discover where local calls use the trunks between neighboring exchanges, start a call and stay on the trunk instead of returning to the local level on reaching the distant switch. This again required exhaustive dialing and made more work for titan; it also revealed 'fiddles', which were inserted by post office engineers.

What fiddling means is that the engineers rewired the exchanges for their own benefit. The equipment is modified to give access to a trunk without being charged, an operation which is pretty easy in step by step (SxS) electro-mechanical exchanges, which were installed in Britain even in the 1970's (Note: I know of a back door into the Canadian system on a 4A Co., so if you are on SxS or a 4A, try scanning 3 digit exchanges, i.e.: dial 999,998,997 etc. And listen for the beep-kerchink, if there are no 3 digit codes which allow direct access to a tandem in your local exchange and bypasses the AMA so you won't be billed, not have to blast 2600 every time you wish to box a call.

A famous British 'fiddler' revealed in the early 1970's worked by dialing 173. The caller then added the trunk code of 1 and the subscribers local number. At that time, most engineering test services began with 17X, so the engineers could hide their fiddles in the nest of service wires. When security reps started searching, the fiddles were concealed by tones signaling: 'Number unobtainable' or 'Equipment engaged' which switched off after a delay. The necessary relays are small and easily hidden.

There was another side to phreaking in the UK in the sixties. Before STD was widespread, many 'ordinary' people were driven to.

Occasional phreaking from sheer frustration at the inefficient operator controlled trunk system. This came to a head during a strike about 1961 when operators could not be reached. Nothing complicated was needed. Many operators had been in the habit of repeating the codes as they dialed the requested numbers so people soon learnt the numbers they called frequently. The only 'trick' was to know which exchanges could be dialed through to pass on the trunk number. Callers also needed a pretty quiet place to do it, since timing relative to clicks was important. The most famous trial of British phreaks was called the old Baily trial. Which started on Oct. 3rd, 1973. What the phreaks did was dial a spare number at a local call rate, but involving a trunk to another exchange then they sent a 'clear forward' to their local exchange, indicating to it that the call was finished; but the distant exchange doesn't realize because the caller's phone is still off the hook. They now have an open line into the distant trunk exchange and sent to it a 'seize' signal: '1' which puts him onto its outgoing lines now, if they know the codes, the world is open to them. All other exchanges trust his local exchange to handle the billing; they just interpret the tones they hear. Meanwhile, the local exchange collects only for a local call. The investigators discovered the phreaks holding a conference somewhere in England surrounded by various phone equipment and bleeper boxes, also printouts listing 'secret' post office codes. (They probably got them from trashing?) The judge said: "Some take to heroin, some take to telephones." for them phone phreaking was not a crime, but a hobby to be shared with phellow enthusiasts and discussed with the post office openly over dinner and by mail. Their approach and attitude to the worlds largest computer, the global telephone system, was that of scientists conducting experiments or programmers and engineers testing programs and systems. The judge appeared to agree, and even asked them for phreaking codes to use from his local exchange!!!

152.Bad as Shit by The Jolly Roger

Recently, a telephone fanatic in the northwest made an interesting discovery. He was exploring the 804 area code (Virginia) and found out that the 840 exchange did something strange.

In the vast majority of cases, in fact in all of the cases except one, he would get a recording as if the exchange didn't exist. However, if he dialed 804-840 and four rather predictable numbers, he got a ring!

After one or two rings, somebody picked up. Being experienced at this kind of thing, he could tell that the call didn't "supe", that is, no charges were being incurred for calling this number.

(Calls that get you to an error message, or a special operator, generally don't supervise.) A female voice, with a hint of a Southern accent said, "Operator, can I help you?"

"Yes," he said, "What number have I reached?"