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NEW ZEALAND & AUSTRALIAN AMATEUR RADIO



NEW ZEALAND & AUSTRALIAN AMATEUR RADIO MAGAZINE

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Operator ZL1GUD

VOL. 17 NOVEMBER 2026 A Free Magazine with Product News, DIY and Interviews

NEW ZEALAND & AUSTRALIAN AMATEUR RADIO MAGAZINE

A FREE MAGAZINE PUBLISHED BY THE HAM SHACK
AMBRIG LIMITED T/A THE HAM SHACK

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ZL1GUD@proton.me

THANK YOU TO ALL THE AMAZING CONTRIBUTORS.

New Zealand & Australian Amateur Radio Magazine is now being sent to every amateur radio club in New Zealand and Australia ... and it's all for FREE

Our aim is to bring you inspiring stories and news of exciting activations and give you ideas to fuel your amateur radio dreams, whether it is a project, review or DX-Pedition.

New Zealand Amateur Radio magazine is free and includes Product News, International Amateur Radio News, DIY projects, Interviews, POTA and SOTA news and DX Pedition news. Club news is for the clubs and will not be included in the magazine.

I you want to be featured or have a project that you want to feature then email me the details and we will include it.

Greg
ZL1GUD

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This issue:

- Page 01 Introduction
- Page 02 Calling New Zealand
- Page 03 From the Editor
- Page 05 Calling New Zealand
- Page 06 CW News
- Page 08 Magnetic Loop
- Page 15 Hamvention
- Page 17 QTC Magazine
- Page 18 AREC South
- Page 20 On the Air
- Page 21 DX World
- Page 25 Martin & Lynch
- Page 27 Activations
- Page 29 Plan B
- Page 32 Feedback
- Page 33 CQ WW SSB
- Page 34 Cemetries on the Air
- Page 36 DX Reports
- Page 39 ZL VHF Update
- Page 44 Competition Calendar
- Page 45 Oceania DX Comp
- Page 46 Mini 1300 Analyser
- Page 48 New ZL Parks
- Page 50 Klaas ZL1KH
- Page 51 My Alinco DR 735
- Page 53 YL Beam
- Page 56 Shack Light Box
- Page 57 HamGPT
- Page 59 Yaesu FT710 power
- Page 62 PMR171
- Page 63 SGARS JOTA
- Page 64 Redfest
- Page 65 Windom Antenna
- Page 67 On the Air
- Page 68 Pebble HF Radio
- Page 73 One and Done
- Page 75 Antenna Wire
- Page 76 Guohetec SWR
- Page 77 Classifieds

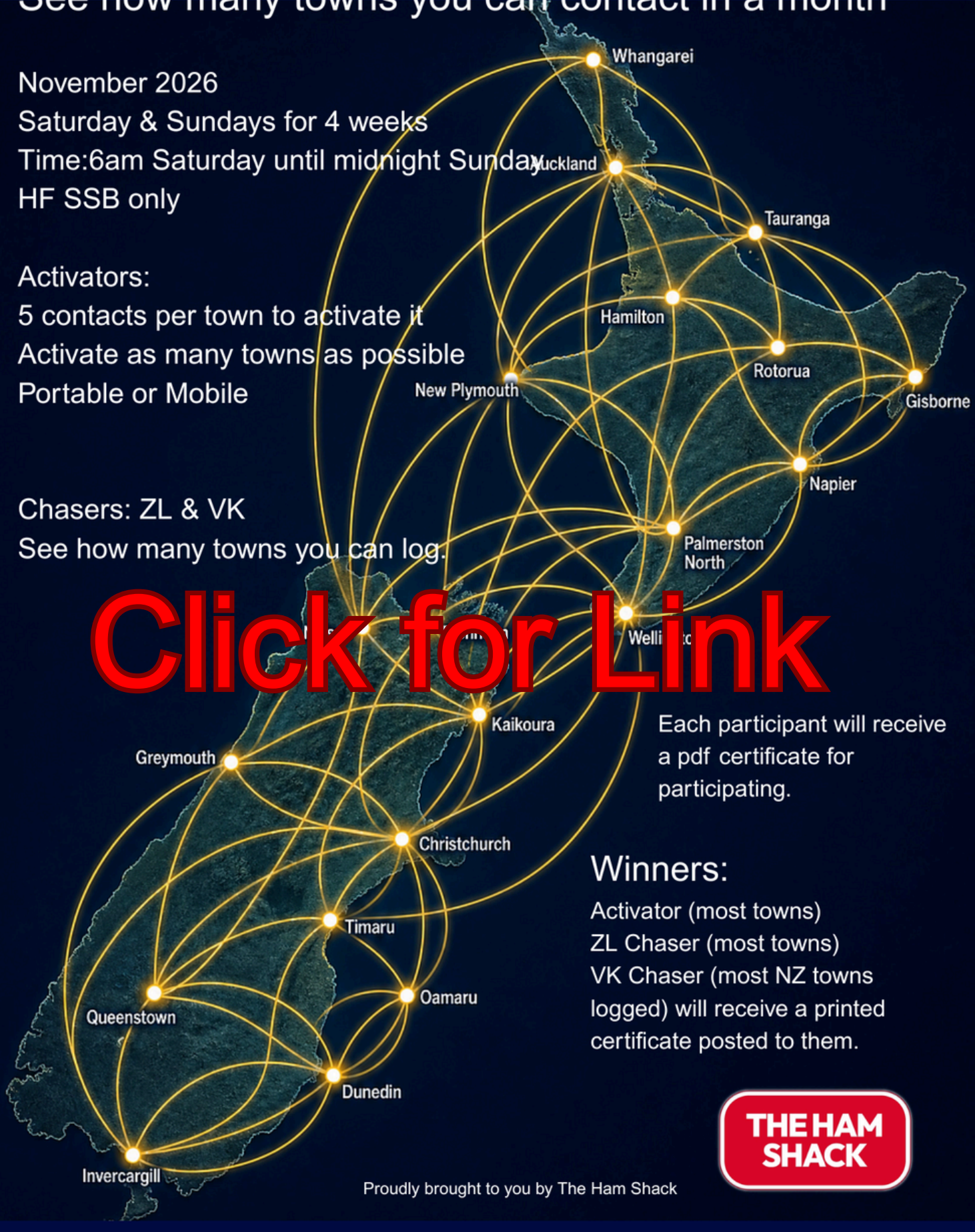
Calling New Zealand

See how many towns you can contact in a month

November 2026
Saturday & Sundays for 4 weeks
Time:6am Saturday until midnight Sunday
HF SSB only

Activators:
5 contacts per town to activate it
Activate as many towns as possible
Portable or Mobile

Chasers: ZL & VK
See how many towns you can log.



Click for Link

Each participant will receive a pdf certificate for participating.

Winners:

Activator (most towns)
ZL Chaser (most towns)
VK Chaser (most NZ towns logged) will receive a printed certificate posted to them.

THE HAM SHACK

Proudly brought to you by The Ham Shack



Wind gusting 55kpm during our Ashley River Activation on 26th October

From the Editor

November is upon us, and we are now on magazine edition number 17. It's been amazing receiving all the feedback we've got from readers.

November is **Calling New Zealand** competition. It's the first competition that the Ham Shack have hosted, and once again we've had lots and lots of positive response from Australia and New Zealand. We're hoping that a lot of people participate.

We have also decided to only advertise in this magazine. We've cancelled our adverts in the other amateur radio magazine as the exposure is just not worth the investment, I could say a lot more but sometimes it's not worth it.

Anyway, it's been a bit mad, October was busier than Christmas 2025 and I've got a lot of stock arriving before Christmas from both Guohetec (radios and antennas), we have a lot more stock is arriving from SotaBeams, and we have a lot of stock from SpiderBeam.

We always look forward to chatting and hope to catch you on POTA activations sometime.

All the best and 73s.

Greg — Editor

Join us for Calling New Zealand during the weekends of November

Band	Calling NZ Frequency	Range+/- 40 khz
160m	1.860	
80m	3.585	
40m	7.100	
20m	14.200	
15m	21.300	
10m	28.480	

I will be out there ZL1GUD

CQ CQ CQ this is ZL1GUD Calling New Zealand

My town is Rangiora, South Island CQ CQ CQ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Please join in and give us a call.

Recommended calling frequencies

Band	Calling NZ Frequency	Range+/- 40 khz
160m	1.860	
80m	3.585	
40m	7.100	
20m	14.200	
15m	21.300	
10m	28.480	

Chasing New Zealand 2026

RULES:
Dates of operation 7 & 8th, 14 & 15th, 21 & 22nd and 28 & 29th November
Logs submitted the first weekend of December i.e. midnight on the 6 December 2026
Time from Saturday 6am until Sunday midnight NZST
Mode SSB, all Bands and HF ONLY

Chasers
You can operate from home or portable
Log as many towns as possible.
You get 1 point per town/City
Use the attached log and enter the callsign , date, time, etc. into the logsheet - next to the town's name.
Each Chaser will be sent a digital certificate.
The winner gets a printed certificate posted to them.
Each Chaser will be sent a digital certificate.

Winners
The ZL (located in NZ) person activating the most towns/cities wins.
The chaser logging the most towns/cities wins.
The VK logging the most NZ towns and cities

Chaser Log
Name:
Callsign:
Home Town:

Towns and Cities

There are 464 towns and cities on the list, so that should keep you busy.

	Date	Time	Callsign	Name	Mode	SSB Band/Frec	Sent RST	Received RST
Ahipara								
Akaroa								
Alexandra								
Algies Bay								
Amberley								
Aotea								
Apiti								



MORSE CODE - STORIES

Caryn KD2GUT

These are the sounds of Parks on the Air:

Breeze.....Gentle, easy on antenna masts.
Crunch....Fallen leaves and acorns underfoot. (Autumn here in the Northern Hemisphere.)
Hum...Activators shutting car engines.
Crackle...Igniting the grill.
Pop.....Beverage cans opening, (Right?)
Static.....Always.
Birds... Their own brand of code.
Dit. Dah. Dah. Dit.....That's us, baffling the birds but not the POTA hunters.

These are the sounds of Parks on the Air, two worlds gently colliding - not so much a collision but a friendly merger. The outdoor shack has no walls, doors or borders. On the air, there are no borders, either, as a California op reports a 4 4 9 from the west and in the next breath, one in Italy intones the same from over the sea. In these moments, the radio is the center of our vast universe. So if you feel like cheering, do so -- but quietly and with respect.

These are the sounds of QRP from New York.

We live in a world of noise, so the sounds we find (and create) in the park give us our respite. We claim it under this sky, beside these trees and in one another's company. Add beverages and BBQ and soon another sound joins the mix: chatter.

The chase halts and steps aside, yielding to fellowship and food. There's plenty to go around. This is where the QRP stops. We pack away our keys and our rigs and one by one, navigate back to where the world grows amplified again: gentle breezes become wind, crunch becomes clatter, hum turns to a rumble or a roar.

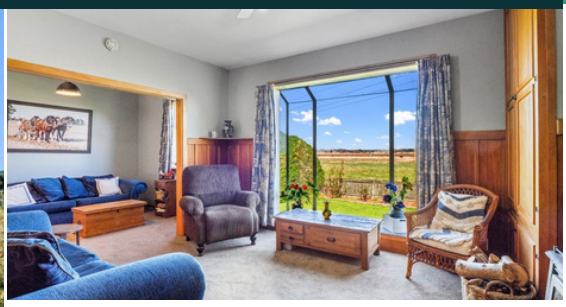
But like all that clamor that awaits us, today's goodbye – 72 – won't last long either.



ARIZTO

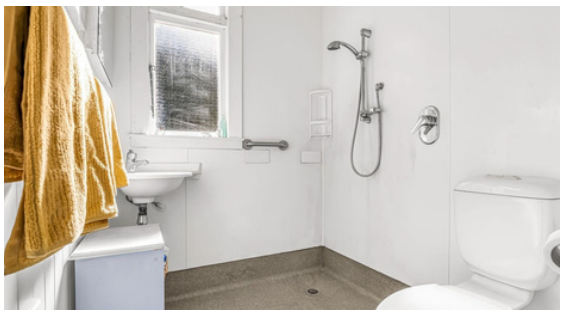
2890 Christchurch Akaroa Road, Prices Valley on way to Little River

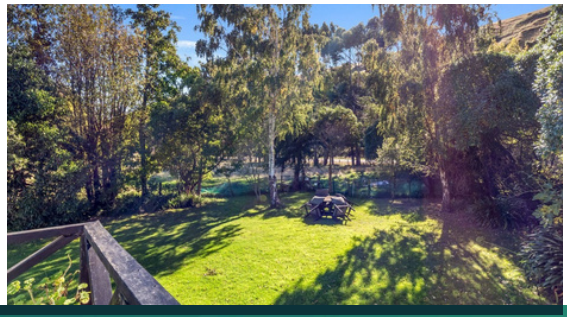












2 | 1 | 4

Floor Size: 120sqm
Land Size: 7.68ha

Country Calm - Holiday or Live Flexibility

Quiet mornings, birdsong and open green outlooks shape everyday life at this Prices Valley lifestyle property. Set on 7.86ha with a 120m² floor area, this two-bedroom, one-bathroom home offers the kind of space that helps you slow down and breathe out. With multiple car parks, plenty of outbuildings and a peaceful rural setting, it will appeal to buyers wanting a country base that still feels practical for daily living.

There's an easy, grounded feel through the main living spaces, with a layout that gives both connection and flexibility. The kitchen and dining sit as a light-filled hub with a pleasant outlook to the garden. Cooking, conversation and daily routines can happen easily and french doors open from the dining area to the deck. The two living rooms with the view across the wetlands still has the warm cozy feel with the log burner for cooler nights. There is a bright sun-filled sunroom which give more space to enjoy the garden with its own outdoor access to a deck.

Set away from the busier living zones, the main bedroom feels peaceful creating a comfortable place to start and end the day with views to the garden and beyond. The second bedroom enjoys good natural light. This could be your flexi space - room for guests or even a home office. A separate bathroom (shower and toilet), laundry and additional toilet add to the everyday practicality, keeping the home functional and well organised.

Outside, the home connects easily to its rural surroundings. Around the house the lawns are great for that game of cricket or hide and seek amongst the trees. There are plenty of paddock options for stock and the chickens have a large coop to call their home. The outbuildings give you storage for lifestyle equipment or parking for caravan/boats or other toys.

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Loopfest, Tuesday 8th September, just days after the first contact.
Left to right, ZL's 3LIZ, 3HAM, 3ADO, 2GD, 3GM and 3AWB.

I've always had an interest in low band antennas for "small sections", although I don't live on one yet. The time will come I'm sure. One of the quintessential antennas for such locations has always been the Magnetic Loop. A couple of years ago I took the bull by the horns and decided to do a bit more in-depth research into such an antenna. I purchased the "Amateur Radio Magnetic Loop Antennas" book, by Bernard Robbins ZL2BD, from Wellington Branch 50. This is a great reference book for those interested in the topic. The Branch also has a variable capacitor "kit" available from time to time. Unfortunately its never been available when I've enquired. Either way, the book and lots of other articles available on the web got me interested to try something myself. I felt that 80, 60 and 40 meters would be achievable on a single loop, and these bands would be the hardest to have access to from a small section, so why not try for these bands. Figure 1 shows the finished loop before fitting of the tuning capacitors and coax cable.



Figure 1 Loop general arrangement, wheeled out of the workshop.

Magnetic Loops would seem to be a very good solution for a small section as they are small in size (relatively). They pick up the magnetic component of the radio signal as opposed to the electrical component. Being slightly directional could be an advantage or disadvantage.Interference from household appliances usually consist of electrical interference, this making the Magnetic Loop quieter than an equivalent vertical or long wire. As they are also somewhat directional, containing a slight null through the face, this could be used to adjust the antenna position to minimise an interference source.

Loop antennas have been well explored before and a whole series of mathematical formula are available to identify the various values for all parameters of the antenna. A very good resource is VK3CPU's web site that allows you to adjust various parameters to optimise your particular desired antenna graphically on-screen.

So, to build the antenna I broke the system down to 3 stages.The hardest (in my opinion) first,
•the capacitor, then;
•the controller and finally;
the loop structure.

The Capacitor

With no suitable "kit" available, at least in this part of the world, I decided to build all the component bits myself. Working out the butterfly capacitor dimensions and committing this to CAD dfx files was relatively easy. I did not like the idea of the armature shaft running directly in perspex end plates, so identified small high speed grinder bearings from Aliexpress for just over $5 each, and designed the end plates to suit.Accuracy is imperative in the capacitor unit, so, using the dfx files, had perspex end plates, accommodating holes for the bearings, laser cut at a local sign writing establishment. They ended up around $3 each. Similarly the rotor and stator plates were laser cut at a metal shop in Christchurch. These, at the time, were just cents each, but I'm aware the price has risen dramatically since then.

6 mm threaded steel rod was used to assemble prototypes of the variable capacitor. However, these rods were replaced with solid brass rod, threaded at just the ends, for the finished capacitors, once the right values are obtained. This helps significantly with mechanical rigidity of the capacitor system. Even so, I believe the 80 meter version is reaching the limit of rotor / stator stack size. Anything larger should be scaled up dimensionally to reduce length. It is possible to use threaded rod within the capacitor, but eliminating any mechanical clearances in the system aides repeatability and operational variation due to vibration from wind etc. of the component when in use. The last thing you need is the capacitor value to change for no apparent reason while you are operating. The Q of the antenna is so high, your SWR would go out of safe range in no time.

I've been experimenting with stator and rotor air gaps to determine how far they need to be apart to be able to transmit 100 watts at 100% humidity. Humidity value is important, as when the atmosphere becomes saturated the dielectric value decreases. Since 80 meters (my initial targeted band) is active during the grey-line, most often 100% humidity (dew point) occurs at this very time of day. With the help of Sparky ZL3THP we passed several thousand volts through the home-made capacitors to determine their break-down value. It appears that an 8 mm spacer, giving a 3.55 mm gap, for 0.9 mm aluminium sheet provides the required distance for around 5.5kv. The Figure 2 show the "fully-in-mesh" capacitors of 6 mm and 8 mm breaking down at their respective voltages, turning them into "light bulbs" for a short time, while reading off the applied AC voltage.



Turning each variable capacitor into a ‘arc’ light bulb to determine the break-down voltage across the plates.

- 6 mm flash over occurred around 4.5 kv
- 8 mm flash over occurred around 5.5 kv

Figure. 2. 6 mm air gap between plates



Figure. 3. 8 mm air gap between plates

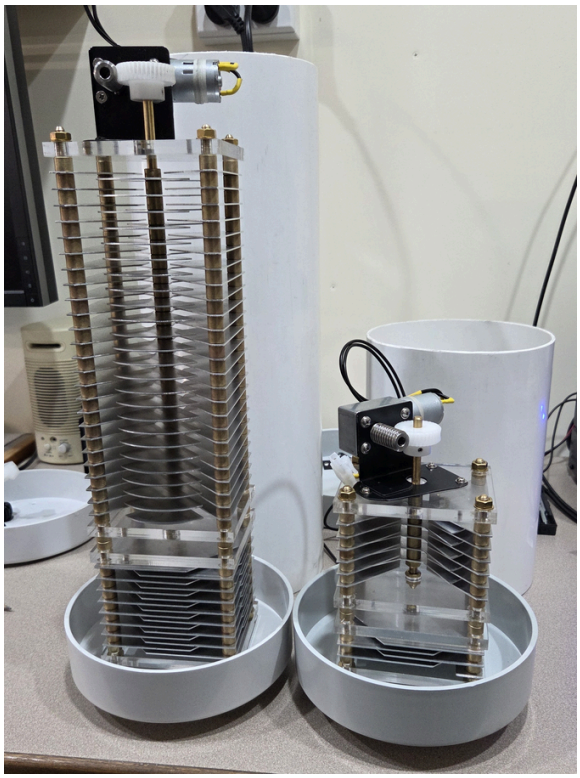

Figure 4. Relative sizes of the 80 and 40 variable and fixed capacitors

Values of capacitance are easy to calculate for the size of antenna you want to make, however, only once you’ve connected it to your loop do you actually know if those values work in your system. I can say in my particular case the calculated values have mirrored the actual very closely. Alway build in a little extra variable capacitance to overlap each end of the band if you want to make final tuning easy. Also, I elected to make separate capacitor stacks for 80 and 40, as to use the one capacitor for both, would make tuning, particularly on the 40 meter band, use only a few degrees of armature adjustment. That would make tuning difficult. I wanted to “optimise” the capacitors so they would use their full 90 degrees of rotation across the whole band. Tuning has been found, then, to be straight forward and easy. The controller is just providing + or – 12 volts to a standard reservable electric motor to drive through a worm and wheel gear set to rotate the armature.

Figure 4 shows both the 80 and 40 meter capacitors with their respective gear trains and electric motors attached.

Note the fixed capacitance stack at the base of each variable, used to bring the capacitor to the top end of each band repectivley.

The Controller

I folded up a steel box matching my power supply dimensional width to house a simple up and down push buttons. This worked well, but the gearing down of the drive motor assembly meant I had to hold the button continuously to get from one end of the band to the other.

The first modification was to add a three position switch to facilitate that. I began to get cold feet around this time, thinking that perhaps when fine tuning, I needed to slow the motor even further.That meant buying a DC motor speed-controller from Aliexpress. This turned out to be cheaper than buying a single relay here in NZ. Go figure. So adding that was the next modification. Ultimately, when in use, the speed controller “chops” the DC on-and-off and the length of the DC line to the variable capacitance at the loop will act as an antenna for the “chop” signal, so I wanted to be able to power it down when not in use. That meant adding a switch and LED light to alert you that the speed controller is active.



Figure 5. Controller layout

I also added another LED to let me know power was available.That completed the controller, see Figure 5. When the antenna was completed, this “chop” interference from the speed-controller was a real issue, though not noticed on the receiving frequency, was displayed on the radio waterfall and something that would be difficult if not impossible to eliminate otherwise, so this modification has proved worthwhile. It is possible to bring the antenna “on-tune” at full motor speed using 13.8 v so the speed controller may not have been necessary, but it does make adjustment of SWR very easy in operation.

The Loop

Having 75 mm diameter aluminium pipe available made the choice of loop material easier to make. I have no ready source of LD4-50 coax or any of the other products usually used for the loop, so this became an obvious choice. I couldn’t roll that large a diameter of pipe in my workshop, but pipe this diameter (usually of Stainless Steel) is used in the milk industry all the time. It was relatively easy to find a local engineering firm to roll and weld a coupling halfway onto the loop. I deliberately did this to allow the two loop halves to be transported home on a standard 6 x 4 garden trailer. Alway a good idea if you’re building for the small section.



Figure 6.Assembling loop to frame

Similarly the wooden components of the loop support structure break down to trailer transportable sizes, by design. The antenna is too large to assemble in the workshop vertically, so assembled the loop to the wooden cross support horizontally on the floor. See Figure 6 showing the loop being attached to the wooden support frame. This was then lifted outside and again assembled horizontally to the base. The base having two fixed and two castering pneumatic wheels attached to make it easy to push round the garden and angle toward or away from a station or interference as the need be.

The wooden frame is insulated from the aluminium loop using strips of insertion rubber. As Sparky (ZL3THP) reminded me, you don’t use wooden fence posts to insulate an electric fence so nor should you with your loop. The voltage will be equally as high. Figure 7 shows the minimal thickness of the insertion rubber next to the loop. You must take account of its thickness when trimming the wooden cross members.

The coupling loop was made of 19 mm tube (¾ inch in old money) and is mounted by zip ties to nylon supports cut from a kitchen chopping board. The supports are, in turn, zip tied to a wooden dowel projecting up from the support cross frame. The zip ties allow movement of the induction loop up and down and twisting from side to side to find the optimum position for lowest SWR. Figure 8 provides the details.

The completed loop was then lifted vertically by my neighbour and myself. Once vertical it is easy to move about. The first job after that is to go round and tighten all the bolts through the support structure. These are the only metallic parts of the structure. Its best to keep anything metallic other than the antenna, to a minimum.



Figure 7. Loop attachment



Figure 8. Attachment details of the coupling loop

Final installation of the Capacitors

Both capacitors were then fixed to the loop via a wooden vertical support strut. Zip ties are used to fix these to structure. These, along with the two leads connecting each to the loop hold them in place firmly. Of course only one capacitor has both leads connected at any one time, the other with one lead disconnected. See figure 9 and 10 for details. Both capacitors, so close together had an effected on each other. This was not unexpected, but in hindsight, I probably spent too much time getting them spot-on in the first place. Near enough would have been just fine. I needed to reduce the fixed capacitance of each slightly, as a result, so that the variable part covered the complete band.Both sitting so close together created added capacitance to each. Zip tying the capacitors to structure proved to be a good idea at this point, having to replace all ties again once the capacitance was re-adjusted.

Once the loop was tuned to any frequency in the 80 meter band, the coupling loop was moved progressive up and down to achieve the minimum SWR. In theory one could rotate the coupling loop around its axis vertically too, but I did not find that necessary. Tuning onto another frequency on the 40 meter band was then completed, but on checking the SWR here, it was found to be above 2:1. So it was back up the ladder to re-adjust the coupling loop to, now not achieve the lowest SWR, but to find an appropriate compromise between 80 and 40 that was acceptable to both. This ended up around 1.4:1 on both bands. Somewhat disappointing, as if the loop was being used as a mono-band antenna, the SWR could have been adjusted to almost 1:1. This concludes the 'setting-up' of the antenna. Now it was just a matter of on-air testing.



Figure 9. Completed Loop



Figure 10. Capacitor loop connections.

Note the No. 4 AWG cables to the loop. All connections are brass, cable of copper and loop Aluminium to keep resistance to a minimum. No steel or stainless parts anywhere



Figure 11. Coupling loop details.

Note; there is a small screw through the lower nylon support bracket, permanently fixing the loop to the vertical dowel once the SWR is adjusted.

On air tests

I had a low power test with ZL3HAM when initially working on getting the capacitor set up for 80 meters, so knew that the antenna was going to radiate to an extent. However, once both capacitor sets were installed and the SWR brought within a good compromise range for both, I popped a screw into the mounting board for the coupling loop and commenced transmission trials. On the 1st of September I made my first 40 meter test transmission of the completed antenna using 100 watts. I was surprised to get a response almost straight away, from Chris, ZL4AV, based in Whanganui, and then soon after Peter, ZL2MS, in the Hawkes Bay. Soon after, contacting Tony, ZL3HAM, we tried FM and AM on 40 at 100 watts and 50 watts respectively to determine if the high Q of the antenna was rolling off wider bandwidth signals. The results show that both FM and AM are indeed capable of being transmitted and, of course, received with the Magnetic Loop. Not that either mode is now used or specified in my initial design case for the Loop. On the 2nd, 80 meters was used in a morning net, back-to-back with my off centre fed dipole. The results showed that using the Loop dropped the received signal for the receiving stations only a S point of two. My received signals also showed a similar drop, but the signal to noise ratio was superior. See Figures 12 and 13 for graphic comparisons between the Magnetic Loop and Long Wire.



Figure 12. 80 meter noise on the Magnetic Loop. Note S3 noise level.



Figure 13. 80 meter noise on the Long Wire, without readjusting the scope sensitivity.
Note S7 noise level

I thought that finding other signals on the band outside of where the Loop is currently tuned might be difficult. This is not actually the case. Seeing a signal on the scope and tuning to a desired signal on the VFO pulls in the signal just fine, but then bringing the loop 'on frequency' just makes the signal come alive. If just listening, there is no need to adjust the capacitor too finely, that is really only necessary if a transmission is to be made.

One problem found that I've yet to overcome is a series of interference spikes that occurs when the $3 PWM (off Aliexpress) speed controller is in use. The pulses extending down the line act as a really good antenna, and, of course, go right up under the loop. The filtering and by-pass capacitor fixed within the main capacitor covers are really there to remove RF induced from the antenna to the control line, not the other way round. As the PWM control is only in use during the tuning on transmit, it is annoying but not critical to the operation. Large excursions up and down band are done at the highest speed possible and so the controller is not producing pulses at that time.

So, the result….. I think the project, although long and involved has certainly proven the the Magnetic Loop is a viable alternative to a high inverted V or OCFD wire antenna. For 80 and 40 meter bands I suspect is at the very least equal or better than a vertical.Recognising the minimal size of the complete setup it also possesses many advantages over both types in a small section environment. This is a fun and challenging engineering project, but could be outside the scope of those that don't have access to a decent workshop.

Advantages

- Acts as a high Q turned circuit feeding the receiver. Will make up for inadequacies in front end overload and poor front end filtering of a cheaper radio.
- Small size and footprint allows it to be set up in any convenient back yard.This meets any of the local body regulations for size, height etc.
- Good performance when measured against an inverted V or long wire.Superior to an equivalent vertical.
- Reduced noise allows for better signal to noise ratio.
- Can null out electrical interference (not tested).

Disadvantages

- A carrier must be transmitted over the air while fine tuning to a desired frequency. As such, if wanting to break in on an existing QSO, you will be creating interference for a few seconds, which will obviously be annoying to those on frequency.
- Acts as a high Q turned circuit coupled to the transmitter. Okay if sitting at one frequency, but move up or down band by just a few kc and re-tuning of the capacitor is required.
- The PWM speed controller can cause interference when in use.
- Somewhat directional

Next steps

The 60 meter add-on is next to be built. This will consist of just a fixed capacitance that will connect across the stator plates of the 40 meter capacitor set. This should be completed within the next month or so.

Specifications

Magnetic Loop: 2500 mm diameter.
Material Aluminum at 75 mm diameter, 3 mm thickness.
AMS 6060.

Coupling Loop: 500 mm diameter (1/5 of main loop).
Material Aluminum at 19 mm diameter, 3 mm thickness
AMS 6060

Capacitor sets: 2 separate variable and fixed capacitor sets covering just the band in question.
Type: Fixed; plate type.
Variable; in butterfly configuration.
Stator and Rotor Material; AMS 5052 0.9 mm thick.
Nominal air gap; 3.55 mm.

Height above ground: 1500 mm.
Total Height: 4000 mm.

Southern Peninsula Amateur Radio Club Inc.

Temporary replacement for Rosebud RadioFest 2026

GIANT CAR BOOT SALE

Sunday November 15th 2026

Dromana 3 Drive In, Nepean Highway, Dromana
Commencing at 10:00am. Entry $2.00
Vendor sites available @ $10:00 per Car/Ute
$20.00 per trailer/car combo or truck
Limited tables for hire.
Vendor setup from 7.00am
Food and drinks for sale throughout the event
Bookings/Enquiries: Email John Ross VK3MK Secretary@sparc.asn.au

SPARC's Giant Car Boot Sale updates will be featured on Hamfests Australasia Group's Facebook page, under 'EVENTS' tab.





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QTC Magazine

October 2026

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Whatever Turns You On - The Peculiar World of Switches

Spring and Amateur Radio

Morse With Purpose

ZL News

Parks n Peaks - Important News

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Contesting

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AREC Southland Training Camp – Lake Mavora

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16–18 October 2026
With the upcoming Southern District Search and Rescue Exercise (SAREX) and a busy summer events season approaching, AREC Southland Group Leader Daniel Erickson, ZL4DE, saw an opportunity to get members out into the field for a practical training weekend. From 16–18 October, Southland AREC members gathered at Lake Mavora for a weekend of communications training, equipment testing and team building in a remote outdoor environment.
The aim of the camp was to put our procedures into practice, familiarise members with newly acquired equipment and ensure our team is prepared for the challenges of supporting search and rescue operations and community events over the coming months.

Putting Our Equipment to the Test
The remote setting at Lake Mavora provided an ideal opportunity to test several new additions to the AREC equipment inventory, including an awning for the communications vehicle, a six-man tent and a long-wire HF antenna for Search and Rescue frequencies.

Operating away from established facilities also allowed us to assess the power systems in our AREC communications vehicle and identify any issues that may need attention before future deployments. Getting hands-on experience with the new equipment was a key part of the weekend, giving members the opportunity to learn how everything works together in a field environment.

As expected, a few challenges arose while setting up and operating the equipment, particularly with the HF radio. These provided valuable opportunities to troubleshoot issues, learn from one another and identify areas for improvement.



Communications Testing and Planning
Communications was a major focus of the weekend. Members tested VHF coverage using established repeater sites, successfully communicating back to our Invercargill-based “AREC Town Base”. A big thank you to Tom, ZL4HD, for supporting the exercise from town and helping us test our communications links.

The team also practised deploying the portable repeater and testing the cross-band radio, exploring how these systems could support operations when conventional communications coverage is limited.

Alongside the practical radio work, members discussed communications planning and reviewed how our systems and procedures could be applied during future deployments. These discussions helped reinforce the importance of having reliable primary communications and suitable backup options when operating in remote areas.

The weekend also provided an opportunity to practise working together while remaining self-sufficient in the outdoors, an important consideration for extended search and rescue operations.





A Stunning Location and Great Team Spirit
The weather certainly made the weekend memorable, with hot days, clear skies and cold, frosty nights. Lake Mavora provided a spectacular backdrop for the training, and it was a privilege to operate in such a beautiful part of Southland.

Of course, no successful training camp would be complete without good food. Rodger, ZL4RCC, did a marvellous job taking on the role of camp chef, keeping everyone well fed throughout the weekend.

Reflecting on the camp, Rodger said:

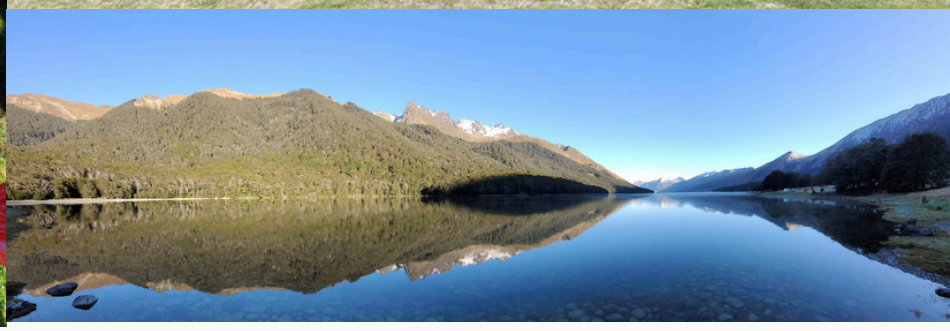
“All went really well. We had to troubleshoot a few issues with the equipment, mainly the HF radio, and figure out all the new equipment for the first time. Everyone seemed to have a really good time.”











Looking Ahead
The Lake Mavora training camp was a valuable opportunity for AREC Southland to build confidence with our equipment, test communications systems and strengthen our readiness for upcoming SAREX activities and the summer events season.

While there were a few teething issues to work through, that is precisely why getting out into the field is so important. Identifying and resolving problems during training means we can improve our systems and procedures before they are needed in a real-world emergency.

A big thank you to everyone who attended and contributed to the weekend, and to Tom, ZL4HD, for providing support from AREC Town Base.

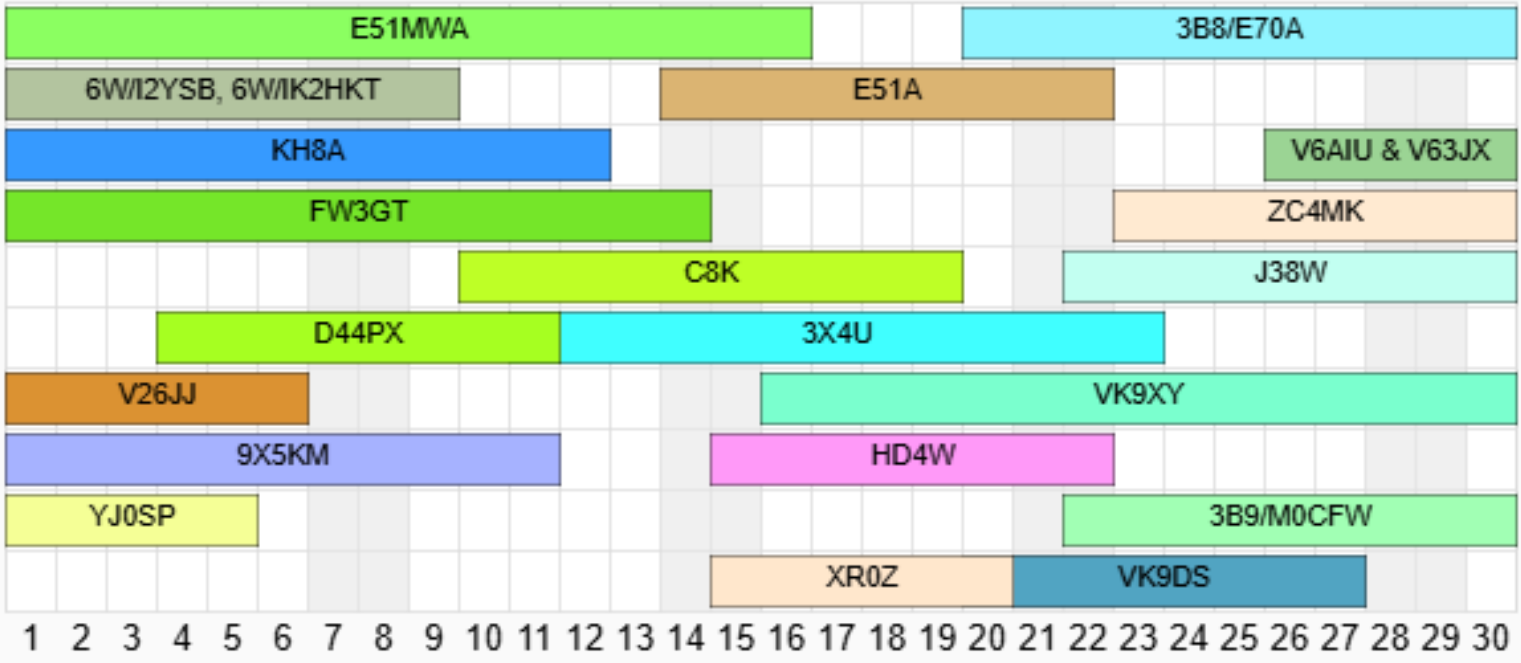
With new equipment tested, lessons learned and team connections strengthened, AREC Southland is better prepared for the busy months ahead.



DX WORLD.net

FEATURED DXPEDITIONS TIMELINE

Last update: October 28, 2026



Edited by MM0NDX

NOVEMBER

IK8LOV Max Laconca



Courtesy of DXworld.net



- by Frank, F8DVD.

As in previous years, Oleg ZS7ANF will be working in Antarctica again this season. Currently in Cape Town, he is heading to Antarctica in the coming days. The season is going to be more or less the same as usual, until February 20, 2027. He plans to be active with the callsign ZS7ANF from Wolf's Fang Runway, Which Away camp, and maybe from some remote places. Let's hope so! He will be working with a FT-710 transceiver and wide band dipole and SteppIR vertical antenna.

Previously
Oleg, ZS7ANF has recently been operating from New Depot Camp. Coordinates: 70° 17'S – 2° 25'W. It's the very first ham radio activity from this camp. He tends to call on 14024 listening up 1. QSL via RK1PWA. Picture courtesy Oleg.





Falkland Islands as VP8TTX during April 1-15, 2027

Freddy, F4HEC will be active from the Falkland Islands as VP8TTX during April 1-15, 2027. QRV on HF bands; focus on low bands; CW & SSB using a Hexbeam and dipoles. QSL via homecall.







WHEN YOU ARE SERIOUS ABOUT DX

NEW ZEALAND OFFICIAL AGENTS

- 3 Band Yagi's 10m, 15m & 20m Kit
- 3 Band Yagi's 10m, 15m & 20m Pre-assembled
- 5 Band Yagi's 10m, 12, 15m, 17m & 20m Kit
- 5 Band Yagi's Pre-assembled
- 5 Band Yagi's Portable Pre-assembled
- 40m add on (use with Spiderbeam yagis)
- GOPAK 12m mast and 404 7 band antenna
- 404 7 band antenna & 807 9 band antenna
- 12m Masts with collars
- 10m Masts
- Mast bags

LOTS OF STOCK

SOTABEAMS

SOTABEAMS Masts - more stock has arrived

- 7m Tactical
- 6m Tactical
- 6m Carbon
- 4m very portable
- Antennas
- Sotabeams wire (lots of options)
- Guying rings and guying kits.

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Watch Now

This week, Tony and I take you on a little tour of last week's RSGB Convention We catch up with some familiar faces, explore the various clubs and displays, and show you what makes this such a great weekend for amateur radio. If you've never been before, here's your chance to see what you've been missing!

Back at the shop, we've also had a few interesting new products arrive that we thought were worth sharing. Four in particular have caught our attention, covering everything from clever networked antenna switching and station control to RF filtering and a simple but effective portable EFHW antenna.

We've put together a quick blog looking at the SO9I HamCore, Sierra Radio Systems, RF Meca filters and the Wonder Wand EFHW, explaining what they do and why they might be worth a look for your own setup.

73

David Millward
M0TPT - Purchasing Manager

OH NO!! THE SPARC ROSEBUD RADIOFEST HAS BEEN POSTPONED.

(Don't worry, it's only for this year, and SPARC have something special for you, instead.)

SPARC have been advised by Eastbourne Primary School that their much-needed school renovations have begun, which is wonderful news for the school.

So what will SPARC stage in place of this year's event?

SPARC member Paul VK3DPW has generously offered us the use of his Dromana Triple Drive In theatre, the perfect place to stage SPARC's 2026 GIANT CAR BOOT SALE !!

It will take place on Sunday, November 15th, 2026 at the Dromana 3 Drive In, Nepean Highway, Dromana, commencing at 10:00 am

Goods sold will be anything related to Amateur Radio, CB, marine, 4WD radio, etc., aviation, commercial comms, electronics and IT-related items.

Sellers may hire a site at $10.00 per car/ute, $20.00 per trailer or truck.
Entry for buyers and the general public will be just $2.00.

Some tables will be available for hire if required, SPARC to be advised by vendors when booking. (Price per table TBA)

The Rosebud Sea Scouts will supply catering on the day.

Bookings / enquiries email John Ross VK3MK, secretary@sparc.asn.au

ZL4AT

ACTIVATIONS

Photographs used with permission of FaceBook page owner/admin



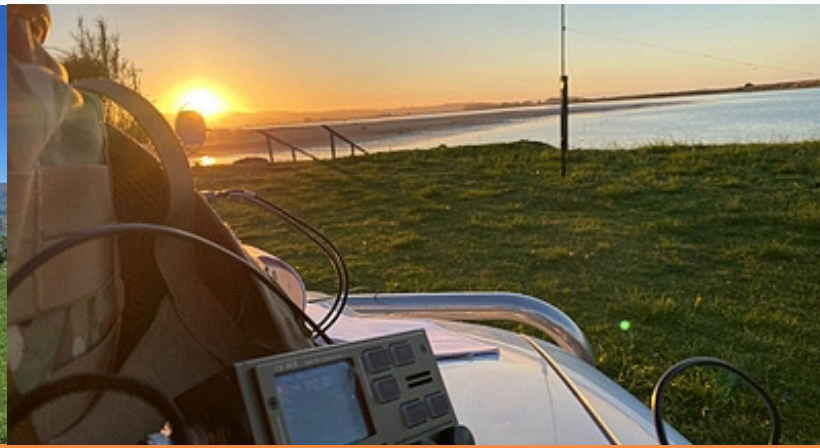
During Oct John ZL2BH and Marion my XYL took a drive from Blenheim over to the West Coast for an R &R session. This trip provided an opportunity to activate numerous Lakes & Parks as we travelled south as far as Franz Josef Glacier.

Activation of Lake Wahapo.
Conditions foiled my 1st attempt (morning) to fully activate this lake, but conditions improved vastly late afternoon and 22 Chasers (ZLs & VKs) were logged under the Lakes and Lagoons program.

Many thanks to those that spotted me as cell coverage was non existent in this stunning part of the world

Other Activations/Activators












3.4 mtrs

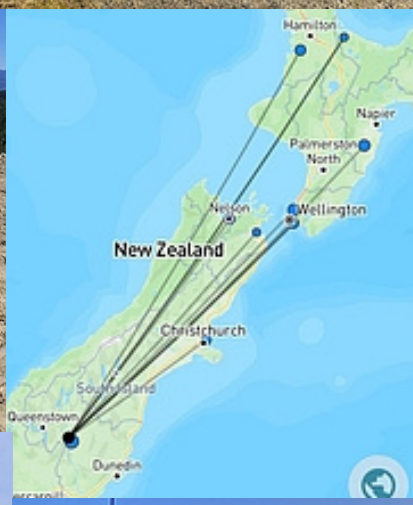







VK2YL at Wodonga Regional Park

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Napier
Palmerston North
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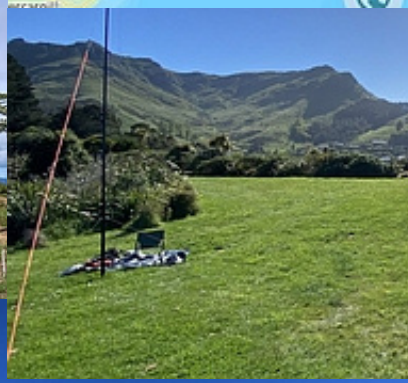







Plan B

by Ben ZL4AT

Our original intention for Labour Day was to head out onto Lake Wānaka and activate Mou Waho Island. Everything was organised, the water taxi was booked, and we were looking forward to a rather special island activation.

Unfortunately, Mother Nature had other ideas.

A particularly nasty weather front was sweeping up the country, bringing strong winds and some pretty unpleasant conditions. With considerable disappointment, we made the decision to cancel the water taxi and switch to a couple of land-based POTA activations instead.



First Stop - Bannockburn Sluicings
Nick (ZL2NEB) and I met up with Ryan (ZL4RY) at the Sluicings car park, and the three of us made our way up into the activation zone.

After a brief scout around, we settled on a rather splendid operating position: the window ledge of an old stone hut. This was Ryan's first-ever POTA activation, although you wouldn't have known it. He slipped straight into the rhythm of things, and before long we were happily working stations on 40 metres.

We were using Nick's PMR-171 with an EFHW antenna configured as an inverted-L, and despite some rubbish band conditions, we managed to clock up 15 QSOs.

It was that bad that ZL1BRT had to crank his power all the way up to 9 watts to make the contact, so you know things must have been getting desperate!

As the activation progressed, the wind steadily increased, and we were particularly grateful for the shelter afforded by our little stone hut. Thankfully, the rain held off, and we completed the activation in the dry.

15 contacts in the log, Ryan's first POTA activation successfully completed, and a very enjoyable start to the day.
With the weather deteriorating, Nick and I decided to retreat eastwards, away from the oncoming storm, and try another activation closer to home in Alexandra.

Our destination was a park beside the Manuherikia River that I'd never activated before.
We arrived at a lovely wooded area beside the river, and initially everything looked rather promising. It was peaceful, sheltered and quite picturesque.



Then we walked into the actual activation zone.

Oh dear.
Our options appeared to consist of either a narrow strip of open ground directly beneath power lines or a fairly dense patch of woodland. Neither was particularly appealing, and with no intention of setting up an antenna anywhere near the power lines, we opted for the trees.

We eventually found a reasonably clear patch of woodland and stood there scratching our heads, wondering quite how we were going to get an antenna into the air.

Nick suggested it was time to demonstrate my extraordinary antenna line-throwing abilities to the good people of YouTube.

Nick was filming, the pressure was on, and thankfully I delivered first throw. Straight over the branch. Absolute perfection!

A deeply satisfying moment, and one I suspect will feature prominently in Nick's video. I shall try not to let the fame go to my head but no promises!

Our initial plan was to erect an EFHW, but after a bit of experimentation we changed tack and settled on a 12-metre random wire instead.

I'd never used a random-wire antenna before, so this was something of an education for me. One of the great things about heading out with other amateurs is that there's always something new to learn, and I enjoyed seeing how Nick approached the problem and made the available space work for us.

With the antenna finally sorted, Nick fired up his FX4CR and we got down to business.

It wasn't exactly a pile-up!

We struggled our way to 9 QSOs on 40 metres, with the band proving rather uncooperative. A move to 20 metres produced one VK contact, bringing our total for the second activation to 10.

Not a spectacular haul, perhaps, but considering the conditions and our rather improvised antenna arrangement, we were happy enough.

Besides, the real excitement was still to come.

Throughout the second activation, we'd been keeping an eye on the approaching weather. Although conditions had remained manageable while we were operating, the storm we'd been trying to stay ahead of was rapidly catching up with us.

And just as we began packing away, it arrived.

The wind suddenly became ferocious.

High above us, the tree canopy was whipping around violently, and branches began crashing down through the woodland. Some were small.

Others were decidedly not.

Indeed, a few were quite large enough to have brought our amateur radio careers to a very abrupt and permanent conclusion! What had been a pleasant little woodland operating position only minutes earlier had suddenly become somewhere we very much wanted to leave.

A large fallen branch was now blocking our route out. Fortunately, Nick's Jimny is a rather capable little machine. Into four-wheel drive we went, taking an alternative track through some impressively deep muddy water before finally emerging safely from the woodland.

So that was our Labour Day adventure. We'd started out with grand plans for an island activation on Lake Wānaka and ended up operating from an old stone hut, improvising an antenna in the woods, dodging falling branches and escaping through muddy tracks in a four-wheel drive.

I was gutted not to make it to the island, but the increasingly wild weather had thoroughly vindicated our decision to not go.

But that's part of the appeal of portable amateur radio. Things don't always go according to plan, and sometimes the unexpected adventures turn out to be just as memorable as the ones you've spent weeks organising.
We got out, made contacts, learned a few things, had plenty of laughs and returned home in one piece.
73,
Ben
ZL4AT





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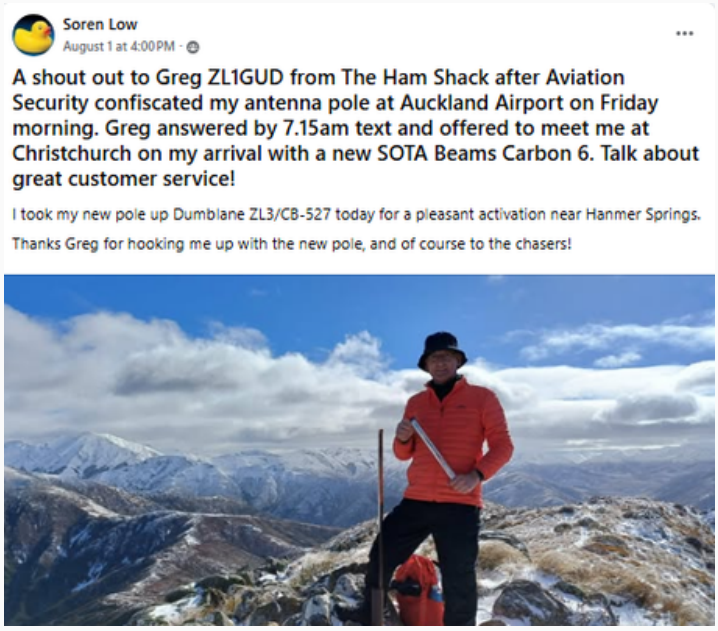
We try and give the BEST service, answer EVERY call and help in whatever way we can..

Also we are one of the few radio businesses that are on the air, playing radio, doing an activation, chasing, calling CQ or just ragchewing on HF - almost every day. We actually use all the gear we sell!



Greg at the HAM Shack provides absolutely outstanding service and is always incredibly generous with his time. He's more than happy to answer questions, offer advice and share his considerable knowledge, whether you're buying something or simply looking for a bit of guidance. It's this genuine willingness to help fellow amateurs that makes the HAM Shack such a pleasure to deal with.
Ben ZL4AT

Like bad service, good service is something that sticks with you as a customer. Greg at The Ham Shack on the other hand has set the bar very high, and I've been incredibly impressed with his service. Emails answered, he is happy to take a call and discuss options and ideas, even if you aren't buying something. He is genuinely happy to talk Radios and trouble shoot ideas. If you want someone to show you the POTA "ropes" he will do that as well. Ah and don"t forget he also publishes what may be the best Amateur Radio Magazine that the Ham World has seen. Keep up the great work.
PHIL ZL3PAE

Great service and very quick delivery. Arrived in Hamilton 1 day after I ordered it. Will definitely buy more from the Ham Shack.... Oh, I already have .... bought EFHW antenna kit.
ZL1BOG

Thank you so much for your awesome support. It's great that you answer your phone and you are "always" so willing to help & reply with a solution in a very timely manner. Thanks again.
Cheers Grant ZL1GGL

I've purchased a few products from The Ham Shack over the last year. I've been impressed with their service, speedy delivery and knowledgeable advice. One thing that I really appreciate is that Greg is an operator himself and uses the products he sells for his own activities. This means that the answers I get are based on practical real world experience. That's a point of difference that I really value.
Nick ZL2NEB

As for the equipment I bought through you, I was actually surprised that you were able to supply non stock Sotabeam equipment. I honestly didn't expect that, I was expecting "sorry, we don't stock that".
The Contest Console for the IC-7300 mk2 works like a dream. It has changed the way I use the radio and my display settings. For it to arrive from the UK in less than a fortnight was amazing. Thank you
Pete zl4te

Good quality pole, very heavy duty. Great packaging, quick shipping, and as always awesome service from the Ham Shack! Gareth

I bought a linked dipole from The Ham Shack and am very happy with the antenna, I wanted different bands then the standard and this was no problem and got the antenna in a couple of days. It works really well, has a low swr and good results on all the bands.
Thanks very much ! 73 ZL2HTO

CQ World Wide DX Contest

CQ WW Contest Dates

SSB: October 24 - 25, 2026

CW: November 28 - 29, 2026

Starts: 0000 UTC Saturday
Ends: 2359 UTC Sunday





Cemeteries on the Air

Photo by Pexels

ZL4AT & ZL2NEB kick start Cemeteries on the Air

Our Branch 61 Tuesday evening net on 80 metres has earned itself a rather unusual nickname: the “Graveyard Net”. There’s a perfectly reasonable explanation. With no 80-metre antenna at my QTH, I operate portable from Alexandra Cemetery, where there’s suitable space to put up a dipole. It’s a peaceful location, the neighbours are quiet, and nobody has yet complained about my operating.



Then last week, an update to the ontheair website opened up minor parks for activation. Looking through the map, I discovered that the cemeteries in every town I checked were now listed as ZLP parks. Suddenly, my regular net location offered another possibility: Cemeteries on the Air.

With Nick ZL2NEB still in town on his POTA rove, I invited him to join me for a Tuesday evening cemetery activation. I suspect the prospect of playing radio in a graveyard after dark rather tickled him, because he needed very little persuading.

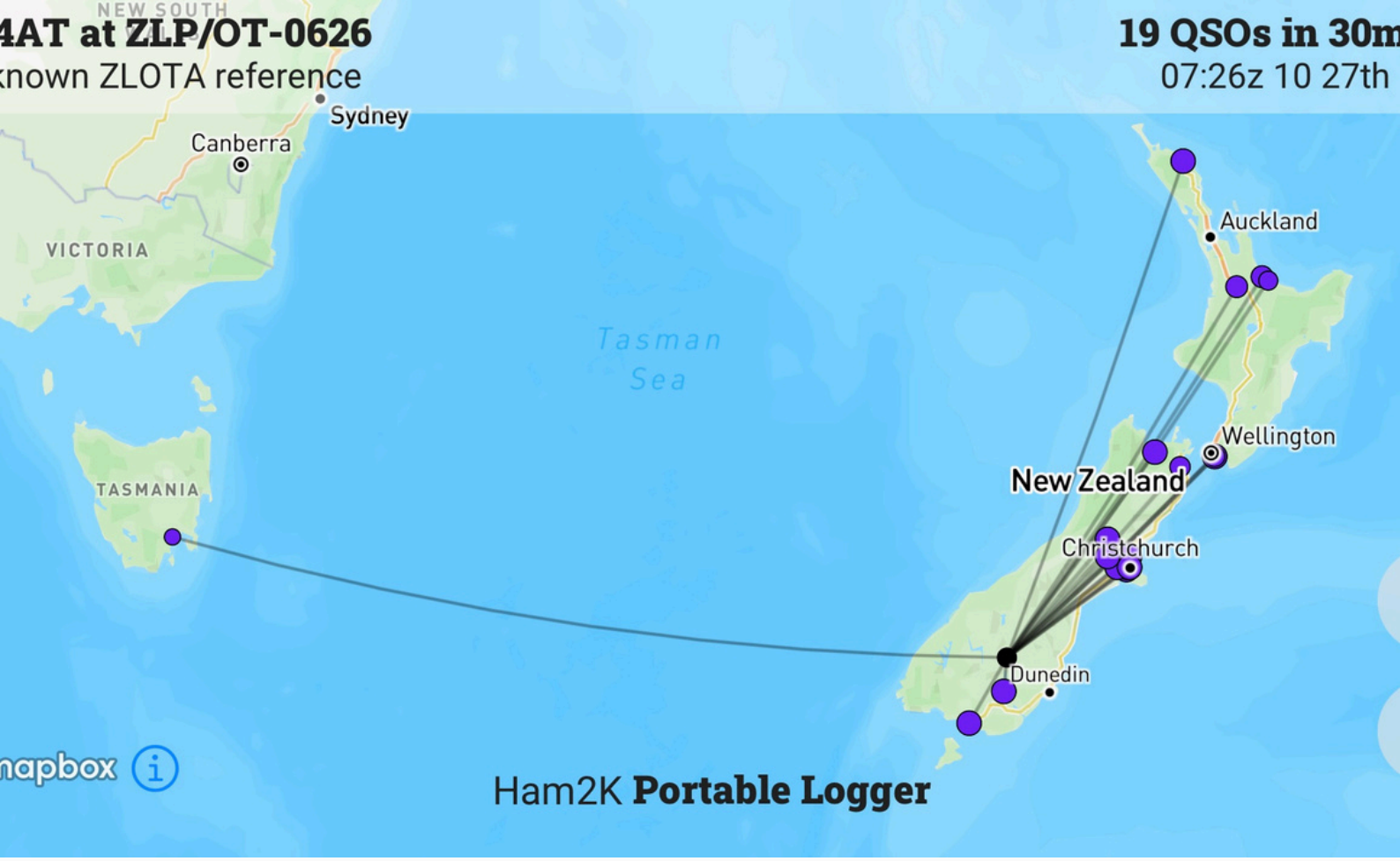
Normally, I run the net from the car. This evening, however, was far too pleasant to spend behind the steering wheel. Instead, I strapped the 10-metre Spiderbeam mast to a post, set up the 80-metre dipole, and settled onto the grass.

The net brought in some of our regular stations, along with ZL3RIK from Christchurch. Partway through proceedings, Nick arrived with his camera in hand, giving me the opportunity to explain to the good people of YouTube why we were sitting in a cemetery with a radio.

At 8:30 pm it was time to put the cemetery properly on the air. We wrapped up the net and moved to 3.695 MHz. This frequency is the typical starting place for the monthly Go QRP night contest which I take keen pleasure in entering.

I’d decided to stick exclusively to 80 metres, largely because the dipole was already up. It proved to be a good decision, and a refreshing change from the 40-metre operating that features so heavily in our New Zealand portable activations.





The signals were strong and clear, with that pleasant audio quality I've come to expect from 80 metres in the evening. We logged 19 contacts, stretching from Invercargill to the Bay of Islands, with the majority reporting 59 in both directions.

One particularly enjoyable contact was with Mike ZL2AUA in the far north. He'd happened across our CQ call and had never heard of Cemeteries on the Air. There's nothing quite like telling someone you're transmitting from among the gravestones to give an otherwise ordinary radio contact an unexpected twist.

We also made it across to Tasmania, a fairly familiar evening path on 80 metres, but always satisfying from a portable setup.

As darkness settled around us, we switched on the red lights. The occasional thin whistle and wandering signal on the band took on a slightly different character in those surroundings. The faint signals were either put down to possible DX or calls from "the other side"

At 9:30 pm, we were not getting any responses from our calls and we called it a night, packing away the station by head torchlight, leaving our quiet neighbours to get on with their evening.

Without doubt, it was one of the most enjoyable activations I've done so far. What began as a practical place to run the weekly net had become the setting for our first Cemeteries on the Air outing. As far as Nick and I are concerned, CEOTA in New Zealand is now well and truly under way.

I'm already planning the next one in the Clyde Graveyard. I'll be sticking with 80 metres in the early evening: excellent signals, a little atmosphere, and fewer passers-by asking what the hell I'm doing.
Ben ZL4AT



HF DX Conditions — November 2026
New Zealand | Prepared 29 October 2026

November looks workable rather than spectacular for HF DX from New Zealand. The NOAA 45-day outlook available at preparation time forecasts daily 10.7 cm solar flux between 80 and 88 solar flux units across November. That points to 20 metres as the most dependable daytime DX band, with 30 and 40 metres carrying much of the evening and overnight activity. Seventeen and 15 metres remain worth checking, but sustained worldwide openings on 12 and 10 metres should not be taken for granted. These are propagation expectations based on the forecast, not guarantees for a particular path.

Late spring also changes the daily operating pattern. New Zealand's daylight is lengthening and its nights are shortening. Daytime absorption on the lower bands increases towards summer, while the developing sporadic-E season adds another opportunity on 10 metres. Longer days do not automatically mean higher F2-layer usable frequencies: seasonal behaviour is more complicated, and November should not simply be treated as another equinox month.

Solar and geomagnetic outlook
The latest observed row in NOAA's daily solar data records F10.7 flux of 89 and a sunspot number of 25 on 27 October. Flux had reached 137 on 18 October before falling sharply towards the end of the month. That recent variation is a useful reminder that the low November forecast could be revised if new active regions develop or returning regions remain productive.

NOAA's weekly forecast, issued 26 October and covering the period through 21 November, expects predominantly low solar activity but allows a varying chance of M-class flares. A flare can produce a sudden HF fadeout on the sunlit side of Earth, even if the geomagnetic field was quiet beforehand. Lower HF frequencies are often affected most by the resulting D-region absorption, so moving down a band is not always the answer during a flare-related blackout.

Recurring coronal-hole high-speed solar-wind streams are the main planned-for geomagnetic risk. The weekly outlook predicts a G1 minor storm on 31 October, followed by active conditions on 1 November, 9 November and 17–18 November. Those intervals may bring weaker signals, more fading and reduced maximum usable frequencies, particularly on routes passing through higher geomagnetic latitudes. Southern New Zealand operators should be especially alert to changes on southerly and high-latitude paths.

The 45-day outlook also flags 27–28 November as an elevated geomagnetic interval, with forecast planetary Ap values of 30 and 20 respectively. This is longer-range recurrence guidance, not a confirmed storm warning. The most settled windows in that same forecast are 3–4, 8, 13–15 and 20–26 November, plus 30 November, when Ap is forecast at 5. Quiet dates are useful opportunities, but they do not guarantee a high enough usable frequency for every DX route.

All space-weather forecast dates above are UTC. In November, New Zealand is on NZDT, thirteen hours ahead of UTC. A forecast UTC day therefore spans 1 pm on the named New Zealand date to 1 pm the following day. NOAA's first seven forecast days are updated daily; the longer outlook relies mainly on the recurrence of solar features. Check the forecasts again before planning a difficult contact or contest effort.

The Australian Space Weather Forecasting Centre's report issued late on 27 October described global HF conditions as fair and Australian daytime maximum usable frequencies as depressed by up to 15%. This is regional context rather than a New Zealand path prediction, but it illustrates why conditions can be less productive than the solar-flux number alone suggests. Its daily solar and geophysical report is a useful companion to NOAA's outlook.

Band-by-band prospects

80 metres

Eighty metres is moving away from its favourable winter pattern. Concentrate on the shorter hours of darkness, with serious DX listening around local sunset and especially the period before sunrise. Trans-Tasman and regional contacts should remain worthwhile after dark, while distant contacts depend more strongly on low noise and a suitable dark or twilight route. The same seasonal constraints apply even more strongly to 160 metres.

Do not abandon 80 metres simply because it is late spring. Quiet geomagnetic nights can still reward patient listening. However, sunrise and sunset opportunities are path-specific: the other station's twilight and the illumination along the route matter as much as your own local clock.

40 metres

Forty metres should remain one of November's most useful bands. Expect the strongest regional and long-haul opportunities around dusk, through the night and into the dawn transition. Daytime contacts are still possible, but greater D-region absorption makes long-distance operation less dependable than after dark.

For New Zealand stations, make both dawn and evening checks for Europe and the Americas rather than relying on one fixed schedule. When 20 metres has lost support, 40 metres is a sensible next choice. Geomagnetic disturbance can still damage it, especially on high-latitude routes; it is an alternative, not an immunity from space weather.

30 metres

Thirty metres should be a valuable CW and digital DX option between the noisier low bands and the more solar-dependent higher bands. Try it during the morning and evening transitions and through the night, particularly when 20 metres is fading but 40 metres is crowded or noisy. Its position between those bands makes it a practical frequency to test as the ionosphere changes.

It is also a useful refuge during the major contest weekend. Thirty metres is not included in CQ WW, although normal amateur activity continues alongside the contest on other bands.

20 metres

Twenty metres is the best first choice for general DX this month. Check it from local morning through the day, with further opportunities around sunset. Some routes may remain usable into the evening because the F2 region does not disappear when the Sun sets, but the modest forecast flux means all-night openings should not be assumed.

For Europe, deliberately include pre-dawn and morning long-path checks. Try both short- and long-path headings if your antenna allows it. Europe is not an evening-only target from ZL. The Americas also deserve morning and daytime listening, while Asia and the western Pacific become natural targets as daylight overlap develops. Treat these as broad search windows, not scheduled openings; the continent, route and conditions at the far end all matter.

17 metres
Seventeen metres should offer selective daytime DX with less contest congestion than 20 or 15 metres. Start checking as the morning develops and continue through the afternoon, following signals and beacon reports rather than a rigid timetable. It may close earlier than 20 metres as the usable frequency falls.

A quiet band is not necessarily closed. A few calls on CW, or a look at digital reception reports, can expose an opening. Digital decodes demonstrate that a path exists, but do not necessarily mean signals are strong enough for easy SSB contacts.

15 metres
Fifteen metres is worth regular attention, particularly on quiet days, but should be regarded as an opportunity band under the present forecast. Asia and the Pacific are useful daytime targets; the Americas deserve checks earlier in the day, and Europe should be monitored during suitable morning or later daylight windows. Actual openings will depend on whether the whole route supports 21 MHz, not just on New Zealand sunshine.

If it opens, lower noise and reduced congestion can make 15 metres very productive. If it does not, move to 17 or 20 metres rather than waiting indefinitely for the solar-flux number to improve.

12 and 10 metres
The forecast does not support an expectation of sustained worldwide F2 openings on these bands. Nevertheless, short-lived openings can occur, so beacons and digital activity remain worth checking through the daylight period. Twelve metres may be usable when 10 metres is just beyond a path's maximum usable frequency.

Developing summer sporadic E is the additional attraction on 10 metres. It can produce strong regional or trans-Tasman signals even when longer F2 paths are poor. Sporadic E is intermittent and more prevalent in summer daytime and early evening at low and middle latitudes. A strong Australian opening does not by itself establish that 10 metres is open worldwide.

Making the most of November
Use dawn and dusk as daily checkpoints, but follow the moving daylight rather than recycling winter operating times. On the low bands, reduced D-region absorption near darkness is helpful; on the higher bands, the route still needs enough F-region ionisation. "Greyline" is an opportunity to investigate, not a guarantee that signals will follow the day–night boundary.

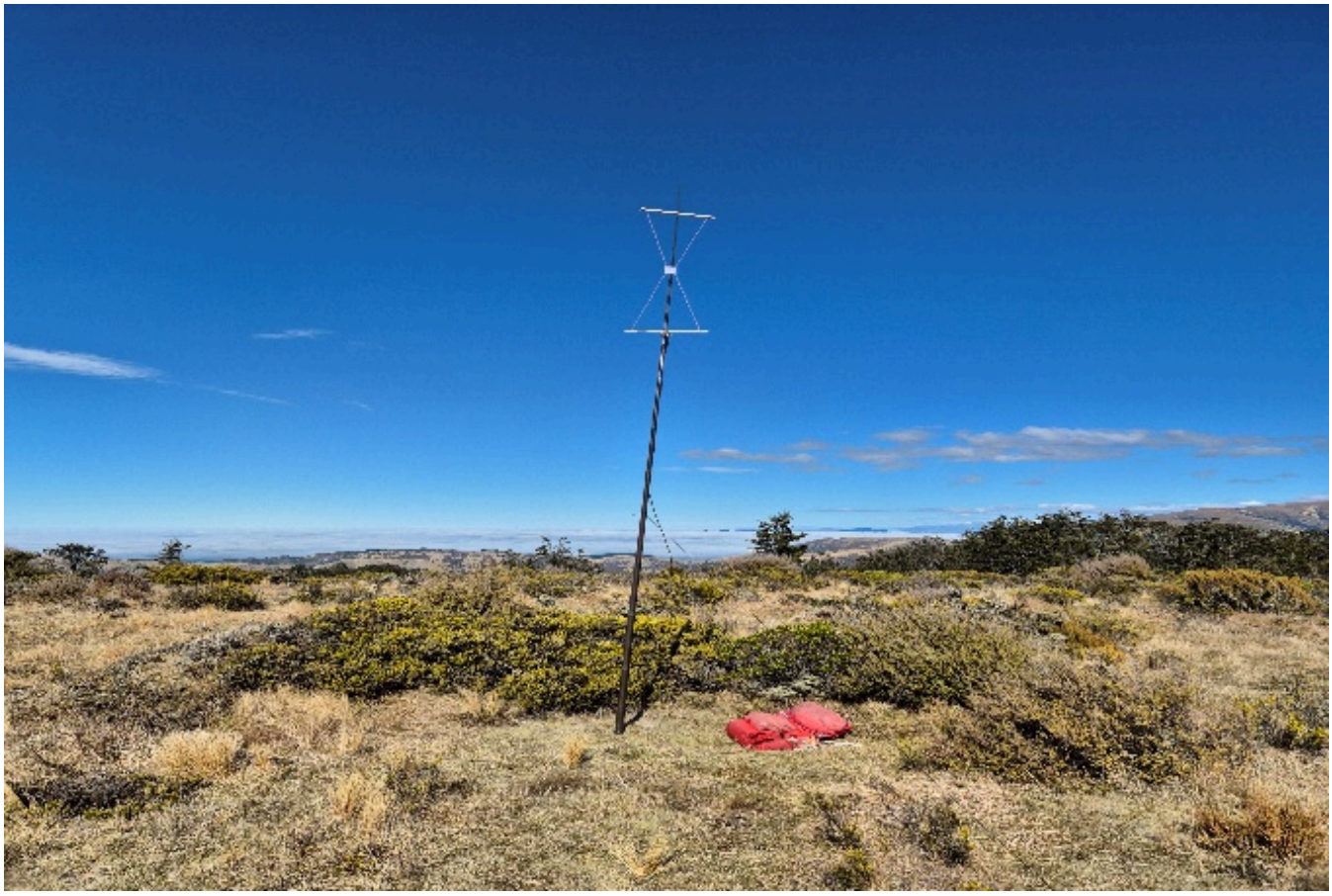
For a practical ZL routine, include Europe long-path listening on 20 metres in the morning, Americas checks from morning through the appropriate daylight overlap, and Asia or western Pacific checks later in the day. After dark, give 30 and 40 metres priority and add 80 metres when the route and noise level justify it. Use the highest band actually carrying useful signals, then work down as its support fades.



The CQ World Wide DX Contest CW runs on 28–29 November 2026, from 0000 UTC Saturday to 2359 UTC Sunday. In New Zealand that is 1 pm Saturday 28 November until 1 pm Monday 30 November, with the final minute beginning at 12:59 pm Monday. Its bands are 160, 80, 40, 20, 15 and 10 metres; 30, 17 and 12 metres are outside the contest.[8] [9] The present outlook is less favourable at the start: planetary Ap is forecast at 20 on 28 November, easing to 10 on the 29th and 5 on the 30th, while solar flux remains near 82–84. If that pattern holds, conditions may improve during the weekend, although ionospheric recovery can lag the falling geomagnetic index. These late-month values are recurrence estimates and should be replaced with the latest forecast nearer the event.

Plan for 20 metres during daylight and 40 metres through darkness, with 80 metres for suitable quiet-night paths. Check 15 and 10 metres regularly: the contest brings enough stations onto the air to reveal brief openings that might otherwise go unnoticed. November's modest outlook does not mean an empty log—good timing and flexibility should still produce worthwhile DX.

ZL VHF+ Activity Days: Unlocking ZL Above 50 MHz



Across New Zealand, interest in VHF and above (50 MHz through 10 GHz+) is growing. These monthly, informal Activity Days are designed to get operators on the air, test equipment, explore non-line-of-sight propagation, and build real-time activity across ZL without the burden of formal contest rules or heavy administration.

Whether you're a mountain-top SOTA operator, setting up portable on a lookout, testing a driveway station, or running Yagis from your home shack. Everyone is encouraged to "have a go."



1.The Concept: Simple and Flexible

* When: Every 3rd Saturday of the month, running through an extended daytime window (07:00 NZDT to 18:00 NZDT).

* Immediate Start: We aren't waiting for 2027—the base activity is already out there every weekend. We are striking while the iron is hot: Saturday 21st November 2026.

* **Simplex Focus:** All contacts are simplex contacts across 6m, 2m, 70cm, 23cm, and higher.
* **The Goal**: Connect stations everywhere—whether home shacks, hilltop SOTA activators, portable lookouts, or driveway setups.
* **All polarization styles are welcome.** While horizontal polarization is encouraged for SSB skeds (ideal for N–S ZL paths), vertical antennas on FM or SSB work just as well for making contacts!
* **Explore propagation beyond line-of-sight:** tropospheric ducting, rain scatter, and aircraft scatter across all operating locations.

2. Event Format & Operating Schedule

Cows can be an added stressor! Roger ZL3RC-Kaikoura

To keep the day low-stress and accessible, the format is kept as simple as possible:

* Flexible Participation: The 07:00 to 18:00 window is organized into informal 1-hour blocks so operators can plan when they will be active. Jump on for an hour, a few blocks, or the whole day.



* SOTA/POTA & Portable Friendly: SOTA activators often operate around peak windows (Saturdays/Sundays 21:00 UTC to 01:00 UTC / 09:00 NZDT to 13:00 NZDT). SOTA ops carry strict weight limits (~10 kg) and cannot easily extend time on summit, so home stations and chasers are encouraged to align with their active summit windows.

* Any Band, Any Mode: Work 6m, 2m, 70cm, 23cm, or microwave using SSB, CW, FM, FT8, Q65, or VARA at any time during the day.



3. Real-Time Coordination & Backchannels

Because very high-frequency beam widths are narrow and portable operators are mobile, live coordination is essential for scheduling contacts:

* Liaison On-Air: The National System and local 2m/70cm repeaters are used for live coordination and liaison.

* Backchannel Chat Group: Dedicated WhatsApp group chat is used to:

* **Drop live GPS pins** / 6- or 8-digit Maidenhead grid references.

* **Coordinate skeds,** dish alignments, and band changes.

* **Share photos** of portable setups and operating locations.

* **Propagation Tracking:** Operators are encouraged to use tools like Air Scout, Tropo Scout, or Hepburn charts to track aircraft scatter and tropospheric ducting paths in real time.



4. Minimal Logging & Zero Admin

Keep admin virtually non-existent by using existing tools and simple log details:
Recommended Logging Details (if desired):
* Date (YYYY-MM-DD)
* Time in UTC
* Station Worked (Callsign)
* Grid Locator (6-digit or 8-digit Maidenhead, e.g., RE54fa)
* Signal Report (RST for analog / dB for digital)

Online Mapping & Uploads:
* SOTA Operators: Log via www.sotadata.org.uk.
* Those who want to: Upload logs to www.ontheair.nz (developed by Matt ZL4NVW) to automatically generate map visuals of contacts achieved.
* Paper record: Works just fine too!

5. How to Participate on the Day

* 07:00 NZDT – Setup & Post Pin: Arrive on site or power up the shack. Drop your call sign in, intended frequencies, and grid locator in the WhatsApp group or call on the National System. Logging your intentions early would be greatly appreciated so everyone is aware of who will be active and of potential field operators in their area!

* 08:00–17:00 NZDT – Active Operating: Call CQ on simplex frequencies (e.g., 146.500 FM, 432.900 FM, 144.200 SSB, 432.200 SSB, 1296.200 SSB) or arrange skeds via the liaison channels/backchannels.

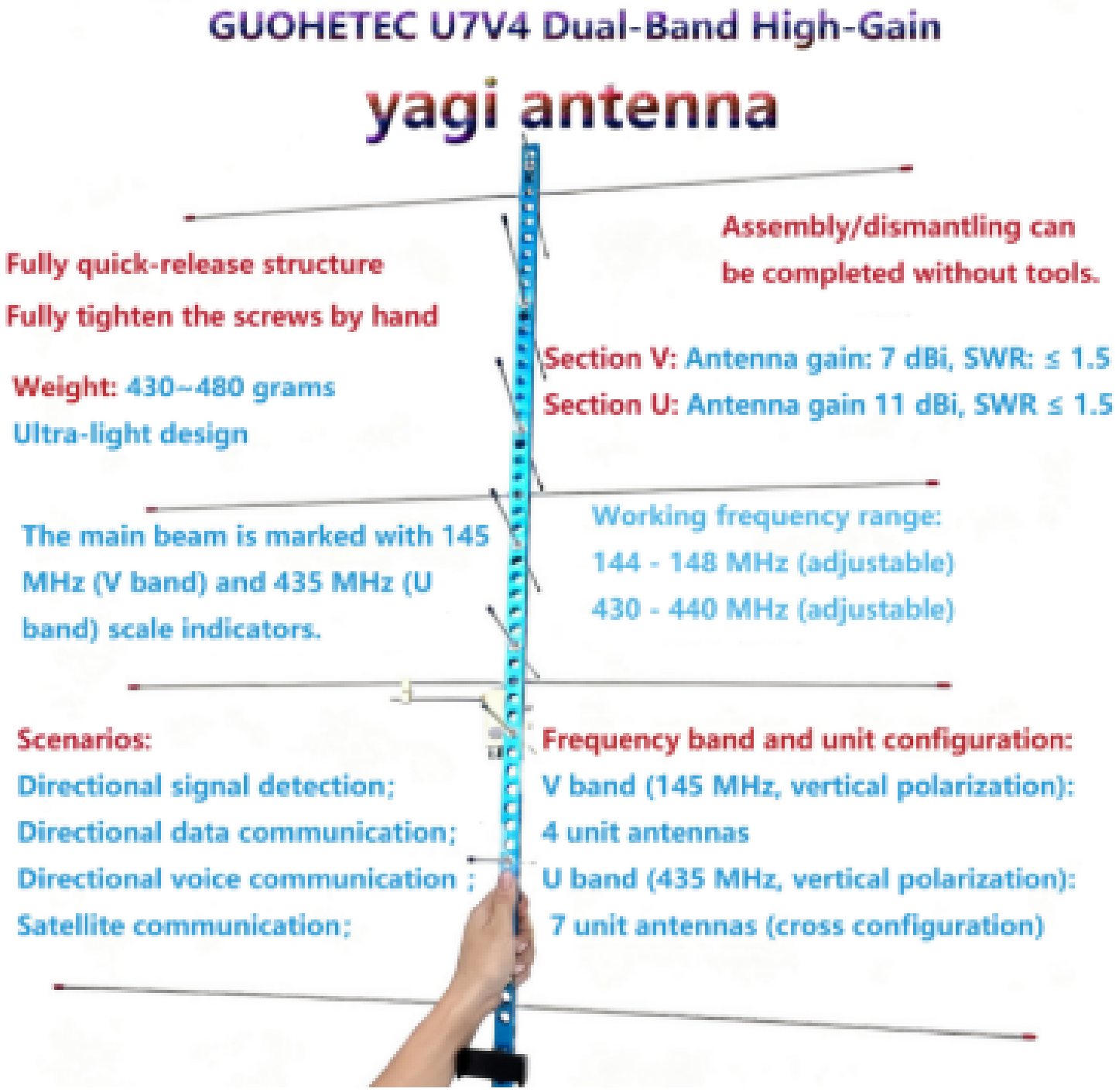
* 17:00–18:00 NZDT – Wrap Up: Pack down during daylight, upload contacts to ontheair.nz, and share photos and summary distance notes on the backchannel group.

We look forward to you joining us on the air. Mark your calendars and join us for our first ZL VHF+ Activity Day on Saturday 21 November 2026.

Organized by:

*** Geoff, ZL3GA * Roger, ZL3RC * Richard, ZL4ES**

Dual band yagi for your VHF & UHF activations

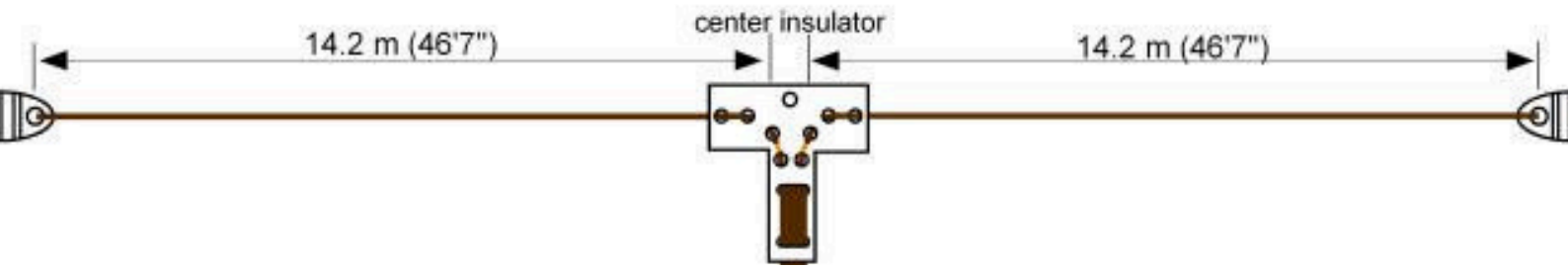


- Very quick assembly (less than 5 min)
- Price includes zip up bag
- Lots of stock
- 10% Discount to ZL VHF Group

WWW.THEHAMSHACK.CO.NZ


145.500
PHOTA for pot holes on the air


WESTERN SUBURBS RADIO CLUB
– USED EQUIPMENT SALE! – SAT, 14th NOV 2026 –
Rosebank Primary School. 217 Rosebank Rd. Avondale
– Sellers 0800hrs / Buyers 0900hrs – ENTRY $2.00
– GREAT RAFFLES! – Coffee, Drinks & Food! – RWB LTD & QSL BUREAD ATTENDING!
– Sellers & Vendors Welcome! – ENQUIRIES: wsrc@outlook.co.nz
WSRC
GREAT RAFFLES!
REFRESHMENTS!
RWB LTD & QSL BUREAU!
ATTENDING!
REFRESHMENT



COMPETITION CALENDAR

WA7BNM Contest Calendar

Powered by ICOM

Follow @wa7bnmcalendar | October 20 - 27, 2026 | October 28 - November 4, 2026 | November 5 - 12, 2026

	Oct 28 Wednesday	Oct 29 Thursday	Oct 30 Friday	Oct 31 Saturday	Nov 1 Sunday	Nov 2 Monday	Nov 3 Tuesday	Nov 4 Wednesday
SKCC Sprint								
Phone Weekly Test								
A1Club AWT								
CWops Test (CWT)								
Mini-Test 40								
Mini-Test 80								
CWops Test (CWT)								
UKEICC 80m Contest								
CWops Test (CWT)								
CWops Test (CWT)								
NCCC FT4 Sprint								
Weekly RTTY Test								
NCCC Sprint								
Zombie Shuffle								
K1USN Slow Speed Test								
ARRL EME Contest								
UK/EI DX Contest, SSB								
Russian WW MultiMode Contest								
North American SSB Sprint Contest								
Silent Key Memorial Contest								
EANET Sprint								
Classic Exchange, CW								
High Speed Club CW Contest								
Real Time Contest								
K1USN Slow Speed Test								
ICWC Medium Speed Test								
OK1WC Memorial (MWC)								
ICWC Medium Speed Test								
RSGB 80m Autumn Series, Data								
ARS Spartan Sprint								
Worldwide Sideband Activity Contest								
ICWC Medium Speed Test								
Tuesday's Telegraphy Contest								
QRP Fox Hunt								
Phone Weekly Test								
A1Club AWT								
CWops Test (CWT)								
VHF-UHF FT8 Activity Contest								
Mini-Test 40								
Mini-Test 80								
CWops Test (CWT)								
UKEICC 80m Contest								

OceaniaDXcontest

The 2026 Oceania DX Contest's SSB section ran for 24 hours on 3–4 October, starting at 0600 UTC. This 83rd edition gave New Zealand, Australian and Pacific stations the opportunity to become sought-after DX, with overseas entrants seeking Oceania contacts on the six traditional HF contest bands.

As checked on 29 October, the official Phone logs-received list contained 1,028 entries, including 24 New Zealand callsigns. This is a submitted-log count, not the total number of individual participants: multi-operator stations can involve several people, while some active stations do not submit logs.

Official 2026 winners and adjudicated scores have not yet been published. Log submissions closed on 25 October, and the organisers say results will be announced in due course. Consequently, naming category winners now would be premature. The final results will establish the successful stations after checking contacts and exchanges, and will provide a fuller picture of this year's contest.



I travelled to NSW for the October long-weekend to join my friends VK2IR, VK2JJC, VK3YP and VK2AOE (@TheArtofEngineering) for a very wet Oceania DX Contest where we operated as VK2C. Despite the weather, we had an absolute blast.





Calibrating the Mini 1300

For a digital manual - click here

Sometimes you purchase something thinking it's going to be great, and you realise afterwards you wasted your money.

I have a MFJ antenna analyzer, which I think is amazing. It is now probably 18 years old, and when I test it against other SWR metres, it's still spot on.

Last year I bought the Mini 1300, and my feeling then was it was great. I calibrated it three times, then tested against the MFJ (2 different models), the PMR171 SWR meter and the G90 SWR meter, these four were all almost identical but the Mini 1300 was around 100Khz off frequency.

There's no manual with mine and so I looked to Youtube for wisdom as we always do. I calibrated the Mini 1300 again and it was spot on, a week later and after charging it, it was slightly off again. It has got to the point where I don't trust the unit unless I calibrate it every time I use it.

Calibration is essential if you want it to be accurate.

Mini 1300 antenna analyser — calibration sequence

Routine antenna-port calibration for SWR and impedance measurements
The Mini 1300 is sold with several firmware and hardware versions. The sequence below applies to units with Configuration → Calibration → OSL Calibration. OSL means open, short and load, although the usual on-screen scan order is short → load → open. Match the displayed standard values to your actual calibration kit before starting.[

1. Prepare the analyser and standards
Disconnect the antenna and all other equipment. Charge the battery, switch the analyser on and allow it to settle for a few minutes at the temperature where it will be used. Where your firmware saves calibration to a microSD/TF card, ensure the existing card is fitted and working. Back up important files before making changes; do not format the card as part of routine calibration.

A multimeter can help distinguish a short, approximately 50 Ω load and open, or a resistive kit containing approximately 5.1 Ω, 50 Ω and 300 Ω. Do not identify them solely by their shape or whether a centre pin is visible. A DC resistance check identifies the parts.

2. Check that the settings match the kit
Open Configuration → Calibration → OSL Calibration and read the values beside the three scan buttons before running anything.

For a true short/open kit, the values must be short = 0 Ω, load = 50 Ω, open = Open/∞. Some Mini 1300 versions instead expect 5.1 Ω, 50 Ω and 300 Ω. A 300 Ω resistor is not an open circuit, and a 5.1 Ω resistor is not a zero-ohm short.

If the values do not match your kit, return to the configuration/parameter editor. Where these settings are available, adjust OSL_RSHORT, OSL_RLOAD and OSL_ROPEN to match the standards. Keep the system reference impedance at 50 Ω for normal amateur-radio antenna work. Save the settings. If calibration profiles are offered, select the intended active profile rather than “None”. Menu wording varies.

Stop if you cannot establish which standards you have or cannot find the matching settings. A photograph of the calibration screen and kit is enough to help identify the next step.

3. Run the three scans

1. Short/low-resistance standard: Attach the standard matching the first button—0 Ω or the specified low resistance. Tap Scan short … Ω. Wait until the scan has fully finished before disconnecting it.

2. 50 Ω load: Remove the first standard and attach the 50 Ω calibration load at exactly the same point. Tap Scan load 50 Ω and wait for completion.

3. Open/high-resistance standard: Fit the proper open standard if the screen says Open/∞. If it specifies 300 Ω, fit the 300 Ω standard instead. Tap Scan open … and wait for completion. Do not substitute a plastic dust cap for an RF calibration standard.

4. Save: When all three scans are complete, select Save and exit—not Cancel and exit. Keep the analyser powered while it finishes saving.

5. Verify before measuring an antenna
Refit a known good 50 Ω RF load at the calibration point. Open Single Frequency and check several frequencies covering the bands you intend to use. Expect resistance near 50 Ω, reactance near zero and SWR near 1:1—not necessarily exact readings at every frequency.

An independent known load is a stronger check than remeasuring the calibration load. A sweep should also show a reasonably consistent match over the useful frequency range of the load. Switch the analyser off and on, then repeat a check to confirm the saved calibration remains active.

If readings are poor, first check the active profile, standard values, connector seating, adaptors and saved files. Do not assume every error requires internal hardware calibration. Recalibrate when the measurement connection or relevant configuration changes, and verify after firmware changes or significant temperature changes.

Separate routines: hardware and S21
Do not select “HW Calibration, only at first run” as part of this routine.

On some designs it requires an internal jumper or other board-specific preparation. Running it in the wrong hardware state can invalidate the internal calibration.

S21 gain calibration is separate and is not required for ordinary antenna SWR measurements. For filter or cable transmission measurements, the documented routine uses a suitable through cable between ANT and VNA/S21, then S21 gain calibration → Start … calibration. Wait for completion/success and follow the firmware’s save/exit prompt. This does not replace the antenna-port calibration above.

Quick reminder: Check standard values → ANT port → short/low resistance → 50 Ω load → open/high resistance → Save and exit → verify with a known load.



New ZL Parks have now been officially sanctioned for the NZART Parklands Award

As most of these don't show up on the normal web site some special sleuthing is required to find them.

This can take a while but hopefully they will eventually become easier to find. Practically nearly all of them are ATNO's (Another Totally New One) and already some activators are out there alerting & spotting their intentions. I did one recently not too far from home. Quite a lot of them are no bigger than a cricket pitch with just enough room for a bowler to do a run up but they still count.

The pic shows my set up for a narrow strip although I had the whole car park to use. By using popup warning cones I was able to make the passing public aware of where my antenna was placed. I didn't encounter any problems, just vacant stares as people walked past.

We must remember that the public are entitled to use the area we are in as well as us.

We are the ambassaders to amatuer radio

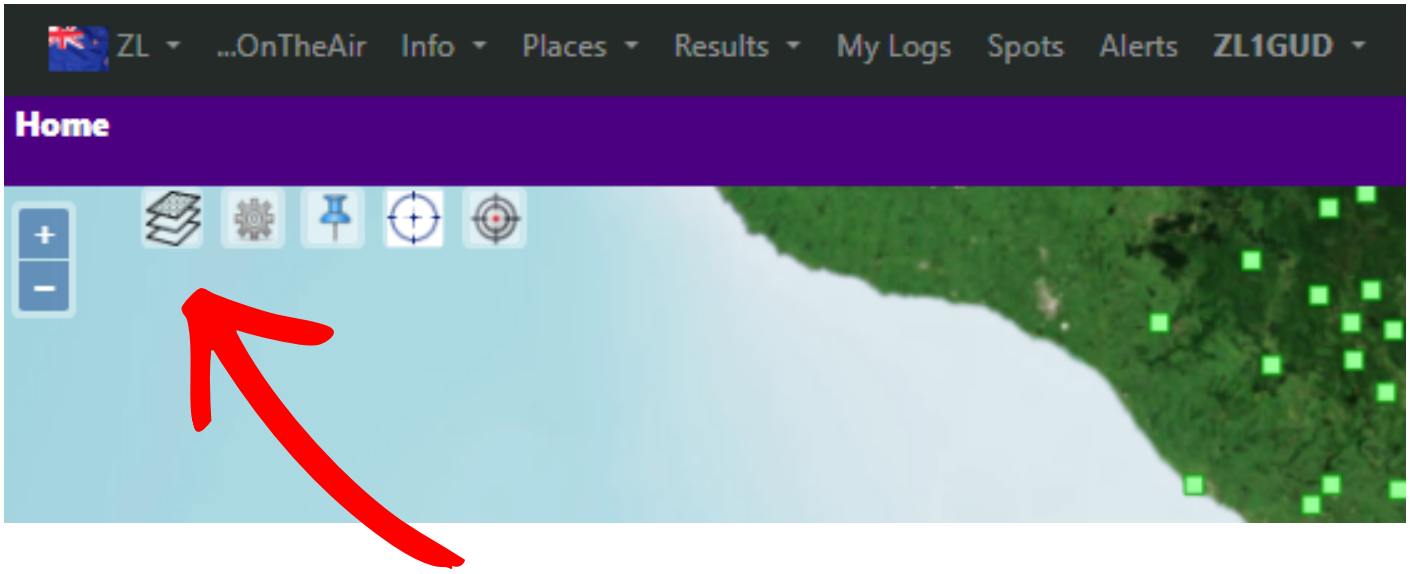
Rick
ZL3RIK



How to find the new parks

Nick ZL2NEB stopped by on his trip down South and showed me where to find the New parks.

Log into you www.ontheair.com account



Click on layers and go to Polygon layers

Select the layers you want and click “Apply”



I now have another 50+ parks within a 10km radius.









The Antenna That Wasn’t There - by Klaas ZL1KH

A little Dutch radio interference, a suspicious-looking rope, and a visit from the authorities. When I obtained my amateur radio licence in the Netherlands in 1975, I lived on the second floor of a multi-storey apartment building. Fortunately, I had access to the roof, which offered some interesting possibilities for antenna experiments.

In those days, many people used antenna amplifiers or signal boosters to improve their radio reception. Unfortunately, some of the cheaper models were little more than wideband amplifiers. They amplified just about everything they could pick up, whether it was a wanted television signal or unwanted radio-frequency noise.

The result was a wonderful recipe for interference. Motorbikes, Fiat cars, household appliances and, occasionally, intermodulation products from amateur radio stations could all find their way into someone's television.

Fellow radio amateurs had already warned me about the problem, so I decided to conduct a little experiment of my own. I fastened a pole to a chimney at each end of the roof and strung a 40-metre rope between them. From the middle, I hung another length of rope downwards, making the whole arrangement look vaguely like an antenna installation.

Then I waited.

About a week later, the telephone rang. It was the local Radio Control Service. They had received numerous complaints about radio interference and were on their way to investigate. They also wanted access to the roof. I imagine they expected to find a newly licensed amateur with a powerful transmitter.

I still remember. They were grinning from ear to ear!

They explained that I needn't worry about the interference caused by people using cheap antenna amplifiers. My installation was clearly not the culprit.

The following day, I replaced the rope with a real antenna and went on the air.

And then something remarkable happened.

Nothing. I never heard another complaint.

Not even a few months later, when a few fellow radio amateurs and I, decided to have some fun by taping around twenty fluorescent tubes to the antenna wire.

When we transmitted, the tubes lit up along the wire, producing a spectacular display, like the Martians had just landed on the roof.

Yet, despite this rather unusual light show, nobody came knocking on my door. Perhaps the cheap television amplifiers had finally met their match.



Japanese Quality

Why the Alinco DR-735 is my favourite dual band radio

I purchased my first Alinco radio 2nd hand around 16 years ago. The radio has lived in various Land Cruisers and has been subject to sun and dust for all this time and still works everytime, and so when I saw the DR 735 I like the remote head capability and the the large display. So this was a “to Greg ZL1GUD from Greg” moment.

There is a lot to be said for a radio that makes the everyday business of amateur radio straightforward. I like useful features, but I also want clear information on the display and proper controls that do not require a trip through a menu for every adjustment. That combination is why the Alinco DR-735 is my favourite dual band radio.

For me, its appeal starts with the front panel. The left and right sides have independent tuning, volume and squelch controls. That might sound like a small detail, but it is exactly the sort of thing I value. I can adjust one receiver without having to change the other, and pressing the appropriate volume knob selects the side I want to transmit on. It is a sensible arrangement that puts the everyday controls where I want them.

Two receivers with a practical purpose
The DR-735 is not restricted to listening to one VHF and one UHF frequency. It also supports simultaneous reception of two VHF frequencies or two UHF frequencies. For New Zealand repeater monitoring, that is a particularly useful option: I can keep two repeaters on the same band available without constantly switching between them.

I also appreciate the two external speaker sockets. Being able to separate the receiver audio gives me another way to organise the station. Dual reception is useful, but having control over how I hear those two signals makes it more practical.







A display I can make my own

The large LCD is another reason this radio appeals to me. Brightness, contrast and colour are adjustable, and the colour choices serve a purpose beyond making the shack look attractive. Different colours can identify the left and right receivers, memory channels or operating states such as transmit, receive and standby.

I like the idea of recognising a group of channels at a glance. The six-character memory labels are useful too.

With 1,000 programmable memory channels arranged in ten banks, there is ample room to organise local repeaters, simplex channels and frequencies for travel. I would rather have those channels grouped logically than spend time searching through one long list. Computer programming is supported, with free software available from Alinco and a suitable interface cable required.

Power and installation flexibility

The DR-735 offers approximately 50 watts on both amateur bands, with nominal 20-watt and 5-watt settings and an adjustable middle power level.

The detachable control head is another thoughtful feature. With the optional EDS-30 separation kit and its five-metre cable, the main unit and controls can be mounted separately.

A substantial heatsink and cooling fan complete a design that takes heat management seriously.

Why it remains my favourite

Ultimately, my preference comes down to the combination of independent controls, flexible dual reception and an adaptable display. I do not need every possible feature in one radio. I want the features that matter to be accessible and useful.



Japanese Quality

WWW.THEHAMSHACK.CO.NZ

HEATHER HOLLAND, ZS5YH

Used with permission of
Heather and Radio ZS



Poland - YL SP0PYL Meeting Wrocław, 22 and 23 August 2026. YL, radio, conversations and lots of good energy, we met and… it was truly great!

YL, radio, conversations and lots of good energy – that was our SP0PYL meeting in Wrocław on 22 and 23 August, we met and… it was truly great!

There was lots of laughter, excitement, late-night conversations and above all, great fun on the radio. The microphone was passed around, more stations appeared and YLs that could not reach Wrocław were on the bands with us. And that was when we felt the strongest sense that radio truly connects.

We also talked about where each of us came from. How our radio adventures began, who inspired us with this passion, what our first contacts were like, the stress of pressing the PTT and stories that we now recall with laughter.

Each path was a little different, but they all led us to one place – a shared table and a shared radio station in Wrocław. There were also stories of Polish YLs and SP8PYLs, SP9PYLs, Jerzy SP8TK's recollections and stories about international SP88YL and OL88YL meetings. There were also some interesting things to hear!

Maciej, SQ6RMA took us into the world of antennas, Kazik, SP6MNM talked about the Lower Silesian Emergency Radio Network (DASR), EMCOM and emergency communications and Agnieszka, SQ8BWA (Agnieszka Pasternak-Haczewska) presented the YL Power graduation event.

A special SP0PYL graduation event was also prepared for the meeting itself – YL SP0PYL Meeting – Wrocław, 22 and 23 August 2026 – thanks to which our meeting was heard far beyond Wrocław.

And when we put down our microphones, there was still plenty to talk about. A shared dinner, żurek (sour rye soup), a bonfire, more stories, ideas and plans... Natalia, Arek, SQ6XL Arkadiusz Zając, SP6ZHP "RadioAktywni" Scout Communications Club SP6ZHP RadioAktywni and the Scouts – thanks for the tremendous work and the atmosphere we created together!

This meeting showed us something important: SP0PYL is not just history. It is people, emotions, friendships, a shared passion and a radio that can still provide incredible fun.

We return with heads full of ideas and the feeling that completely new perspectives are opening up before us.
And most importantly – we welcome every YL! It does not matter whether you have been on the bands for decades or just made your first contact.

It does not matter which bands you work on or which mode you like best. If radio is your passion – contact us! We want to meet more YLs, hear your stories, meet up, collaborate and above all, hear each other on the bands.
SP0PYL is a place for YLs – let us create it together! Join us, write, shout out on the band. See you there! 73 & 88!



Peru - Young Ladies OA Operate from the RCP (Radio Club Peruano)
Once again, a group of Young Ladies OA members gathered at the RCP shack Saturday 12 September 2026 starting at 17:00 to operate using their own call signs and make contacts with other stations, aiming to build confidence and gain experience while working at the radio equipment.
Marcela, OA4ELC; Erika, OA4EJB; Ambar, OA4EKZ; Diana, OA4EIW and Andrea, OA4EKI accompanied by Monyka, OA4DYD and Sonia, OA4DEM, were active on the 40-metre band and via the R1 repeater, making local and national contacts as well as connecting with stations in neighbouring countries.

Each of them successfully established contacts with other stations, receiving helpful advice to build the necessary experience with every QSO. They were also supported by Diego, OA4DKN; Oscar, OA4AMN and Raúl OA4EFI. Amidst conversations and radio contacts, they enjoyed a pleasant day, demonstrating how amateur radio fosters learning and camaraderie.
We congratulate our Young Ladies OA on this initiative and look forward to future gatherings that create wonderful moments of fellowship through radio.
18 Sept 2026 Bolen Semanal OA - Radio Club Peruano.

Space Exploration and Amateur Radio
Space exploration is one of humanity's greatest scientific and technological adventures. From Sputnik to OSCAR. From Apollo to the ISS. From the Moon to the future challenge of Mars. Amateur radio demonstrates that the great adventure of space has not belonged solely to astronauts, scientists and agencies.
Radio amateurs have played a part in it, too. Because space exploration has not only been observed. It has also been heard.
https://www.facebook.com/groups/S.A.R.A.CE/ About 8 Sept 2026. Servicio Auxiliar de Radioaficionados de la Armada (SARA)



Germany - Astronaut Rabea Rogge, LB9NJ (Norway) and KD3AID (USA)

Rabea Rogge, LB9NJ, the first German woman in space, drew a large crowd and was a highlight of the trade fair. The interview at the DARC meeting was followed by a book signing for her book “A (Little) Space for Everyone.”

As part of the privately funded SpaceX space mission “Fram2,” Rabea Rogge flew in a polar orbit around the Earth. During the four-day Fram2 mission, she fulfilled the role of pilot. She conducted the first amateur radio contacts from aboard a SpaceX Dragon capsule. Rogge used a battery powered Icom IC-705 aboard the flight.

During the mission, she transmitted images via slow-scan television (SSTV) on 437,550 MHz for a youth amateur radio competition called Fram2Ham.

The name Fram2 refers to the famous Norwegian expedition ship Fram, with which polar explorers such as Fridtjof Nansen and Roald Amundsen carried out their expeditions.

She made history as the first German woman to complete a space mission. Thanks to the collaboration between ARISS (Amateur Radio on the International Space Station) and the DARC (Deutscher Amateur-Radio-Club), she was a guest this year at HAM RADIO 2026 in Friedrichshafen, Europe's largest exhibition for radio amateurs. There, she gave lectures about the Fram2Ham mission, signed her book and spoke about the combination of space travel, robotics and amateur radio.
Rabea Rogge LB9NJ/KD3AID is a German electrical engineer, robotics researcher and radio amateur. She gained international fame when she became the first German woman to fly into space in April 2025 during the private Fram2 mission aboard a SpaceX Crew Dragon capsule. The mission was also the first manned spaceflight in a polar orbit, circling the Earth at both poles.

Rabea Rogge succeeds in bringing three worlds together: space travel, science and amateur radio, which is why her visit made such an impression. She inspired young and old to look beyond the horizon, both literally and figuratively.

Interview Under the Tower #91: Astronaut Rabea Rogge, LB9NJ, at Ham Radio. Auto-dubbed 12.33 mins.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4vAKIIms_sw&t=14s

Jackie Blumer, KC9LEH Appointed as ARISS Associate Director
4 August 2026 - ARISS-USA is pleased to announce that Jackie Blumer, KC9LEH, has been appointed Associate Director of ARISS-USA (Amateur Radio on the International Space Station). Jackie is a nationally recognized science educator with an emphasis on space education.

In her work as an educator, she has often incorporated amateur radio into her curriculum as a teaching tool. In addition to her many responsibilities at ARISS-USA, Jackie has recently served as Business Development Coordinator and Logistics Manager for ARISS-USA. 4 August 2026 ARISS News Release No. 26-44

YLRL - ARRL award YL Harmonics Newsletter
Young Ladies' Radio League, Inc. 15 August 2026
Congratulations to YL Harmonics! We are thrilled to share that the Young Ladies' Radio League newsletter, YL Harmonics, has been honoured with an ARRL award for Best Newsletter for a Specialized Audience — Global Audience.

Young Ladies' Radio League, K4LMB club call — YL Harmonics, Edited by Kathleen Houlihan, WA5DUC. This wonderful recognition celebrates the dedication, creativity and hard work that goes into keeping YLRL members around the world informed, connected and inspired. A very special congratulations and thank you to Kathleen, WA5DUC, for her outstanding work.

Special thanks also to our previous newsletter editors for laying the foundation for our publication. Your commitment to YLRL and to sharing the stories of women in amateur radio truly shines.

We are proud to see YL Harmonics — and YLRL — recognized on the global stage! Congratulations, Kathleen and congratulations to YLRL! YLRL website: http://www.ylrl.org

Radio Club of America (RCA) recognizes Women of Achievement in the Wireless Industry
Dr Grace Hopper invented what is the base for nearly all technology and definitely wireless. While a United States Navy rear admiral, she helped develop COBOL - one of the first high-level programming languages - and invented the first compiler, a programme that translates programming code to machine language.

Hopper earned a Ph.D. in math from Yale in 1934. Only 1 279 math PhDs were awarded in the 72-year period from 1862 - 1934.
She is credited with coining the terms "bug" and "de-bug" as related to computer errors. One day a computer failure stumped Hopper and her team until she opened the machine and found a moth inside. Taping the moth into her logbook, she wrote, "first actual bug found."

Nicknamed "Amazing Grace" by her subordinates, Hopper remained on active duty for 19 years.
Hopper believed that the major obstacle to computers in non-scientific and business applications was the dearth of programmers for these far from user-friendly new machines. The key to opening new worlds to computing, she said in a 1983 interview with "60 Minutes," was the development and refinement of programming languages - languages that could be understood and used by people who were neither mathematicians nor computer experts. It took several years for her to demonstrate that this idea was feasible.



She was a big believer in mentorship, once saying, "The most important thing I have accomplished, other than building the compiler, is training young people. They come to me, you know and say, 'Do you think we can do this?' I say, 'Try it.' And I back 'em up."

At the age of 79, Hopper retired as a rear admiral. She was the oldest serving officer in the US Armed Forces. That same year she went to work as a senior consultant in public relations at the Digital Equipment Corporation, where she worked up until a year before her death in 1992. After her "60 Minutes" interview, Hopper was promoted to Commodore. Combined with her other titles, she was buried with full military honours as Admiral Hopper in Arlington National Cemetery.

Contact
yl.beam news: Editor Eda (Heather) zs6ye.yl@gmail.com
The newsletters can be found at https://wrarcanode.blogspot.com/; Italian Radio Amateurs Union: QTC URI www.unionradio.it/qtc-la-rivistadella-unione-radioamatori-italiani/ and Ham Yl www.facebook.com/ham.yls.

Custom LED "ON AIR" Light Box – Personalised Amateur Radio Shack Display

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Contact rob@kiwiasylum.com

also ask about the winders and POTA lightweight antennas - Editor



HAMgpt Launches as a Personal AI Copilot built specifically for Amateur Radio

Used with permission of Radio ZS

New platform combines an operator's license, station, location and live band conditions to answer a practical question: "What can I do with my radio today?"

July 2026 — HAMgpt, a new AI assistant created specifically for amateur radio operators, is now open to the public at hamgpt.co.

Unlike a general-purpose chatbot, HAMgpt is built around the real operating situation of each ham. It can take into account the operator's license class, country, grid square, radios, antennas and operating history, then combine that station profile with live propagation, space weather, DX activity and current on-air conditions.

Its main purpose is to answer one deceptively simple question:
What can I do with my radio today?

Amateur radio offers an enormous range of possibilities: local repeaters, HF DX, satellites, digital modes, POTA, emergency communications, antenna building, contesting and experimentation. For many newly licensed operators, however, the first experience is much less exciting. They pass the exam, buy an HT or an entry-level rig, turn it on, hear static or silence, and do not know what to try next.

HAMgpt was built to help with that exact moment.
"Many new hams do not leave the hobby because they lack information," said Rodrigo Vazquez, AK6FP / LU6ERV, creator of HAMgpt. "They leave because nobody tells them what to actually do with the radio in their hand. HAMgpt is not trying to out-explain a general chatbot. It is trying to be the reason someone gets on the air instead of putting the radio back in the box."

A Personal Digital Elmer
In amateur radio, an experienced operator who helps others learn the hobby is traditionally known as an Elmer. HAMgpt is designed to work like a personal digital Elmer that already knows the operator's station.

Users can save their license class, location, exact radio models and antennas. HAMgpt reuses that information across conversations, so the operator does not need to explain the same setup every time. That context changes the quality of the answer.

A general explanation of repeaters may be technically correct, but a new ham with an HT usually needs something much more practical: which nearby repeater is likely to be reachable, what offset and tone to use, how to program that specific radio, and what to say when making the first call.

An HF operator may not need another generic explanation of propagation. The useful answer is which bands are active right now, which ones are covered by the station's antenna, what paths are currently open, and where it may be worth calling CQ.

HAMgpt is designed to connect those pieces.

Personalized to the Operator and the Station
HAMgpt uses a persistent station profile that can include:

- License class and country.
- Maidenhead grid locator.
- Multiple radios, including exact makes and models.
- Multiple antennas and the bands they cover.
- Operating history and imported logbook data.

Every answer can be adjusted to the user's actual station and legal privileges.

For example, HAMgpt can help:
·Identify repeaters that may realistically be worked with a particular HT or mobile rig.
·Suggest HF bands based on live conditions and the antennas installed at the station.
·Recommend satellite passes that fit the operator's equipment.
·Find nearby POTA parks to activate.
·Explain how to configure a specific rig for FT8, Winlink, APRS or satellite work.
·Provide antenna dimensions and construction guidance for the operator's target band and available space.

Powered by Live Data from DXLook
HAMgpt is the sister project of DXLook, the live amateur radio propagation and activity platform also developed by Vazquez. The two projects divide the problem clearly:
·DXLook shows what is happening on the air right now.
·HAMgpt helps an individual operator decide what to do about it.
HAMgpt uses DXLook's live data services for band conditions, propagation, space weather and on-air activity. This allows it to go beyond textbook answers about how a band normally behaves.

Instead of saying that 10 metres can be good for DX when conditions improve, HAMgpt can use current data to explain whether 10 metres is active now, what paths appear open and whether the operator's own antenna and rig are suitable for taking advantage of it.

What HAMgpt Can Do Today
HAMgpt is already live with a broad set of features intended for both new and experienced operators.

Live operating guidance
HAMgpt provides a live view of band conditions, space weather and recent DX activity. Recommendations can be filtered through the operator's own radios and antennas, helping identify which bands are not only open, but actually usable from that station.

It can also provide:
·Repeater suggestions based on location and equipment.
·Satellite pass predictions with direction, elevation and timing.
·Nearby POTA parks for activation.
·Local net and APRS activity.
·Band-opening and solar-flare locations.

Antenna design and building help
HAMgpt includes a complete antenna-building layer rather than acting only as a calculator. Operators can request build sheets for:
·Dipoles.
·Inverted-V antennas.
·Verticals.
·Yagis and beam antennas.
·Moxon antennas.
·Magnetic loops.

About HAMgpt
HAMgpt is a personal AI copilot for amateur radio operators.
HAMgpt is the sister project of DXLook, a live amateur radio propagation and activity platform. Both products are built and operated by Rodrigo Vazquez, AK6FP/LU6ERV.
Website: https://hamgpt.co
DXLook: https://dxlook.com
Press contact: qso@dxlook.com

This article has been shortened Ed
Click on the text to follow the link to the website

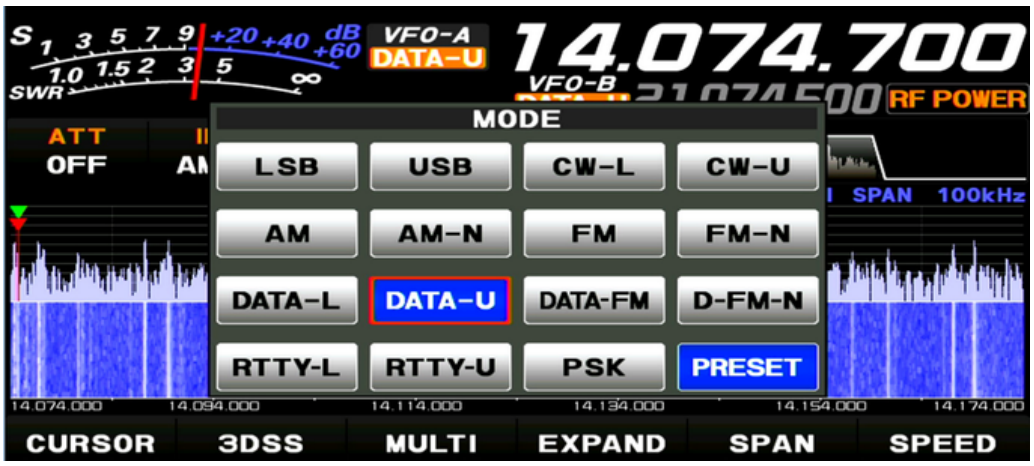
Adjusting the power through ALC for YAESU FT-710 for FT8 working

By VE7LCG, Daniel Romila

Many times, working in FT8 requires keeping the transceiver ON and transmitting for long periods. It is important to have a correct adjustment of the transmitting power both in software and in hardware (the transceiver). This is a mandatory procedure whatever transceiver you would use, but this article describes my particular case, in which I have a YAESU FT-710 transceiver and I use as software a JTDX Enhanced version. I also use WSJT-X, which has similar buttons and similar procedure. The screenshots are for the JTDX Enhanced version, which I mostly use when working FT8 manually, not automated.

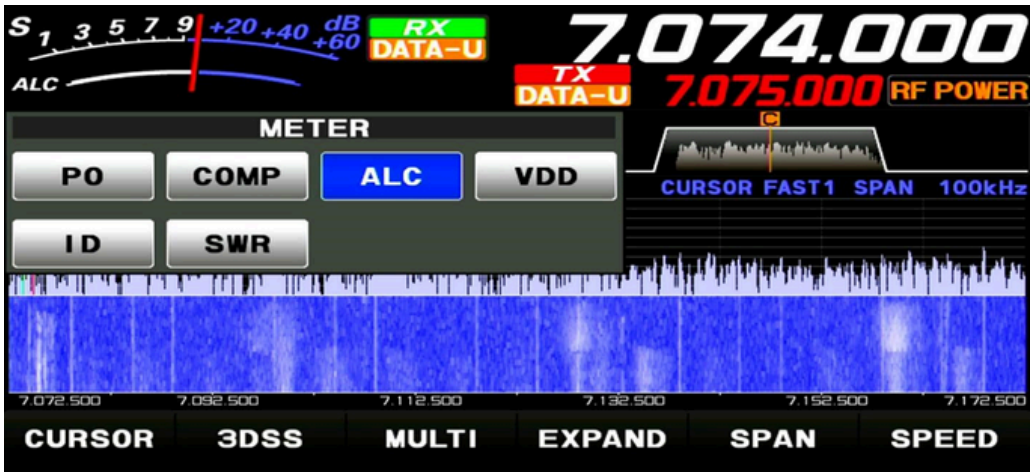
I heard colleagues not getting enough power when working in FT8. I heard colleagues saying their transceiver gets hot and has to be switched OFF after several minutes. This article is about the proper Tx power adjustment when working in FT8, to avoid both mentioned extreme situations.

My transceiver (YAESU FT-710) has a maximum possible power of 100 Watts, and I want to use 85 Watts when working in FT8, not more. I want to be sure that if I decide 85 Watts from transceiver's button, it is indeed 85 Watts FT8 out, and the power meter will not show me 100 Watts or 40 Watts – indication of the true into antenna Tx output. Everything is already connected and set for FT8:

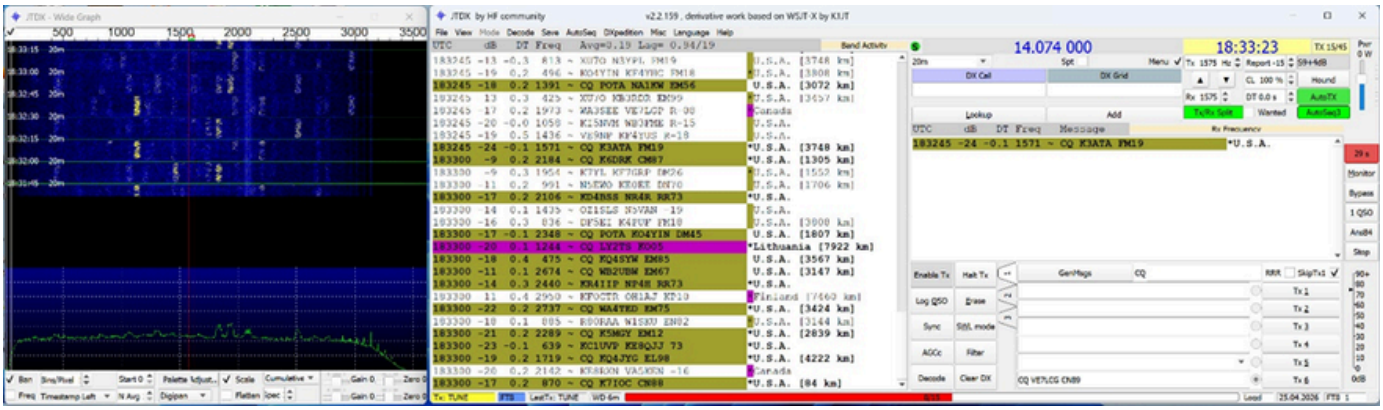


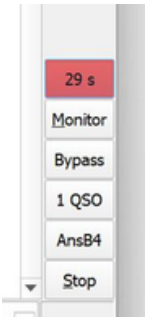
I already did the tuning, before starting the FT8 software, for 85 Watts power output. I start the software, and I see all settings are correct. I recommend you not to skip this step, because the operating system (Windows 11, in my case) can change the audio ports, can steal transceiver's sound card ports by declaring in the operating system itself as "default audio" one of your FT8 ports, and the transceiver will look like transmitting, but it will not.

Once all the above conditions are satisfied and everything looks like being set correctly, we want the S-meter of the transceiver to show ALC. This will indicate the voltage/power applied to the pre-final block of the transceiver.



We get at the above screenshot by touching on the S-meter and choosing “ALC”.
The main screen for my FT8 program looks like:



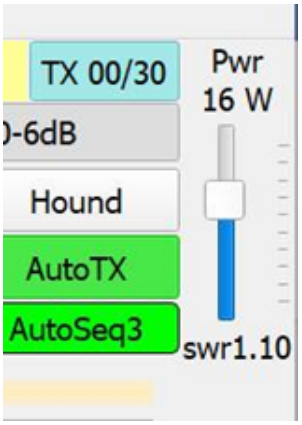


If you use another FT8 program, your screen would be similar. Just find the TUNE button and the Power Adjustment button. In my case they are on the upper right corner, and the TUNE button is already red.

Set the power on your transceiver at minimum, 5 Watts for the YAESU FT-710. Press the TUNE button n your FT8 program.

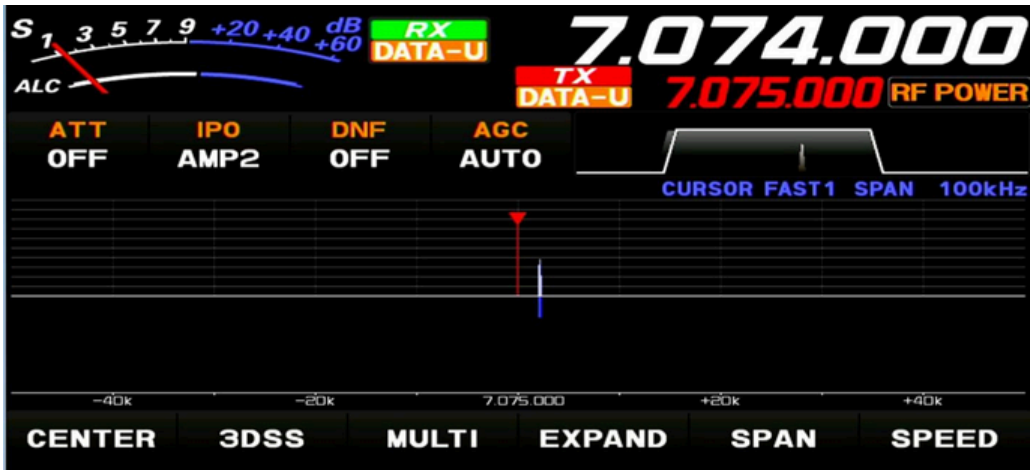
Once the transceiver is transmitting, we want to adjust the POWER slider in the FT8 program (not in the transceiver!).

Please see the next included screenshot:



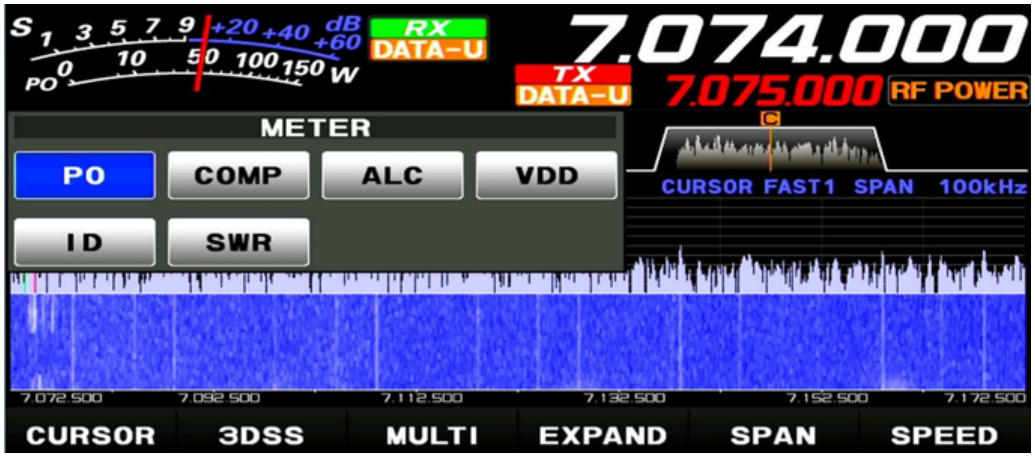
This is not easy to fine adjust. The mouse will not do a fine enough adjustment. After you click with the left mouse button and stayed with the left mouse button on the slider, you can fine adjust with the keyboard’s arrow keys, up and down.

Fine adjust until you see on the transceiver the ALC just above the “1” indication.



Only now your software is in agreement with your hardware (transceiver). Only now what you decide as Tx power on your transceiver will indeed be the real output power of the transceiver. Let's verify for 10 Watts.

We touch the transceiver's screen under the S-meter, and set the S-meter to show POWER, when in Tx mode:

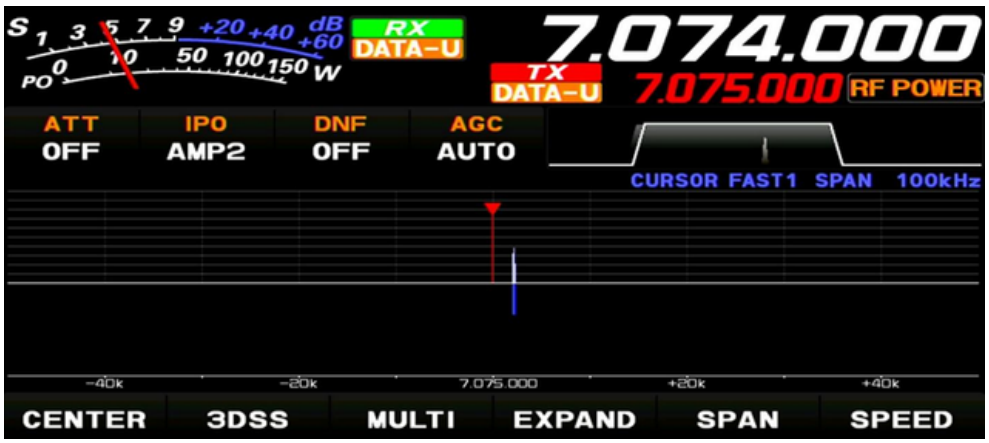


Adjust the transceiver's power to 10 Watts, from your transceiver adjustment



Press the TUNE button on your FT8 software.





The transceiver should show no more than 10 Watts, ideally exactly 10 Watts.
Only now, after this adjustment procedure in both the FT8 software and on the transceiver itself, you can trust that whatever power you decide from the transceiver to use for FT8, it is indeed the power you transmit out, and you can verify on the transceiver's indicator.
Observation: If you use several FT8 programs, like JTDX and also WSJT-X, every time you do the adjustments for one program you destroy the settings for the other program.

PMR171



ALL MODE: SSB, AM, FM, CW, RTTY, FT8
FREQUENCY RX 100 KHZ TO 2 GHZ
TX ITU REGION
AUTOMATIC ANTENNA TUNER
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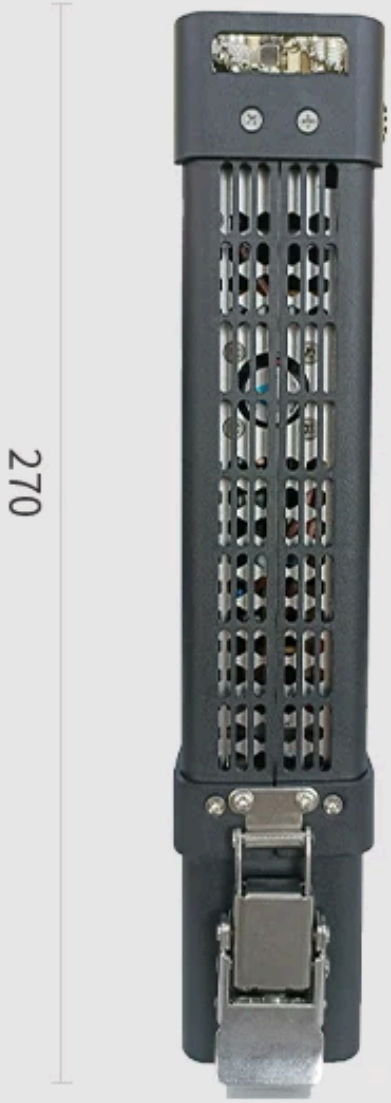
Unit: mm



YOUR POTA SOLUTION FOR HF OR VHF SSB

INCLUDES CLIP ON BATTERY



I have just taken my PMR171 on a trip to Australia (NSW & 5 days in the Outback), the radio worked perfectly and using 20 watts I had a lot of QSO's back to NZ and of course a lot of local contacts. I have a few HF radios and this was the first time I did not take a 100 watt radio. I was a bit concerned but the 20 watts was perfect.

I used the Spiderbeam 404 antenna on a 6m SOTABEAMS Tactical mast, a great combination.

Also, the battery back falls within the Air NZ & Qantas battery allowances so no issues flying with it.

Greg ZL1GUD

WWW.THEHAMSHACK.CO.NZ



OTA brings radio and adventure to Boree Regatta

Paul VK2GX (Secretary SGARS)

More than 350 Scouts and Guides took part in Jamboree On The Air (JOTA) activities at the Boree Regatta in Kurnell, Sydney, on 17–18 October 2026.

The St George Amateur Radio Society (SGARS) team of 13 operators introduced young people from 31 Scout and Guide groups across southern Sydney to amateur radio and radio direction finding. Participants made contacts over 40 metres HF, VK DMR and BrandMeister, and local Sydney 2-metre FM repeaters. The team logged more than 40 contacts with JOTA stations in Sydney, elsewhere in Australia and overseas.

Away from the radios, more than 20 fox hunts gave participants the chance to put their direction-finding skills to the test. Both the youth members and operators enjoyed a busy weekend of radio, teamwork and outdoor activity in perfect Sydney spring weather.









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03 APRIL 2027
9:00 AM – 1:00 PM
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A great day for Amateur Radio!
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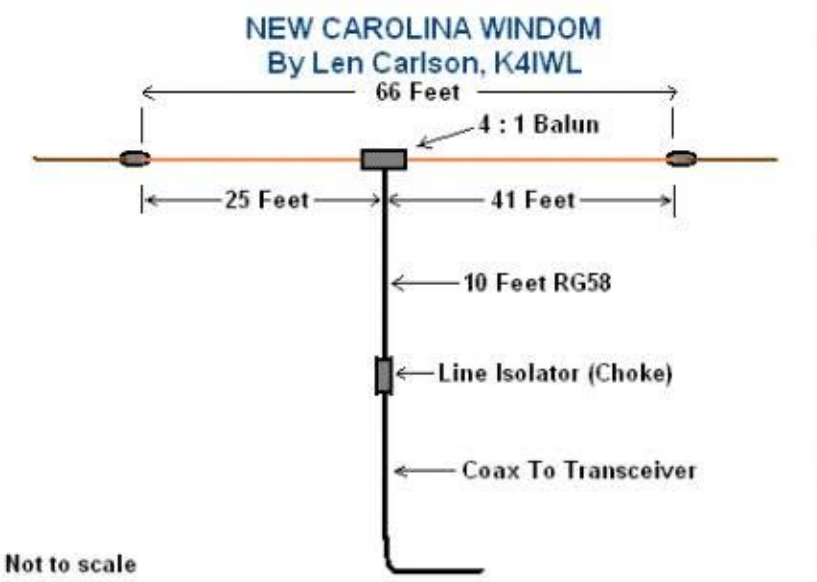


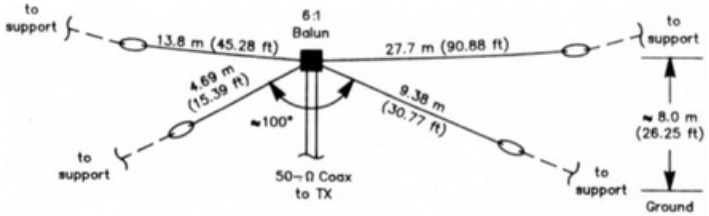
The Windom Antenna — Simple Wire, Impressive Results

The Windom is an attractive option for amateurs wanting several HF bands from one wire antenna and a single feedline. Although the original Windom used a single-wire feeder, most antennas sold under that name today are coax-fed, off-centre-fed dipoles. Their unequal wire lengths place the feedpoint away from the centre, allowing a useful impedance on several harmonically related bands. The main benefits are simplicity, modest cost and multiband operation without traps, a tower or a rotator.

A typical 40-metre version needs approximately 20–21 metres of wire, divided into arms of roughly 6.9 and 13.8 metres, and principally covers 40, 20 and 10 metres. An 80-metre version requires around 40–42 metres, commonly covering 80, 40, 20 and 10 metres. These are starting dimensions: wire insulation, height and surrounding objects affect tuning. A suitable matching balun—often 4:1—and effective common-mode choking are important to prevent unwanted current on the coax. An antenna tuner may still be required; “multiband” does not mean a perfect match everywhere. (Dimensions; matching guidance)

For an encouraging success story, American amateur NU4B reported working 174 countries and 33 CQ zones over three years using five watts or less with a Carolina Windom Short 80, a Windom-derived commercial design. That is an operator’s personal report rather than a controlled comparison, but it demonstrates what a well-installed wire antenna can achieve. For a New Zealand station with sufficient garden space, the Windom remains worth considering: straightforward construction, useful band coverage and genuine DX potential without an elaborate antenna installation.

from ZL1GUD
I built one as an experimental antenna and with the balun at 12m and the ends of the antenna at about 4m above the ground the SWR was acceptable and the signal reports were great. This is an easy and cheap antenna to build.



Double Windom Antenna



WHEN YOU ARE SERIOUS ABOUT DX

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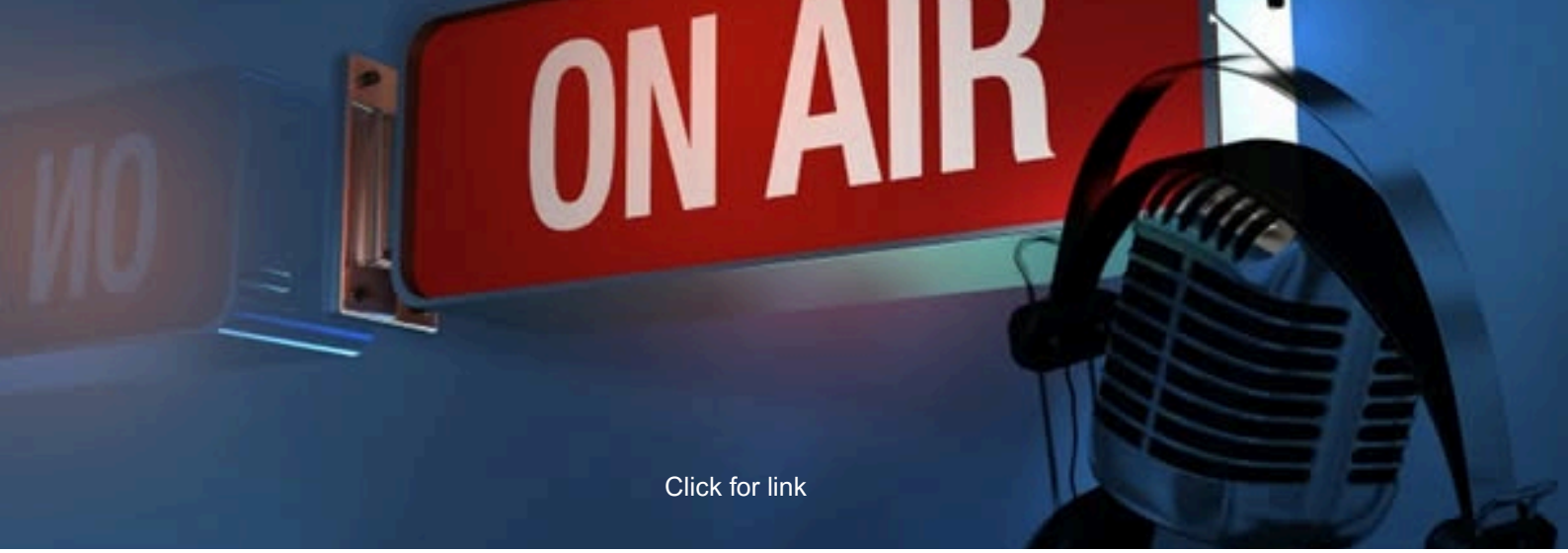


Your next unforgettable contact could be reading this post right now.

A first DX. A new country. A voice that becomes a friend.

Let's get this group on the air.

THE WORLDWIDE SSB MIC CHECK
Five bands. Twenty minutes. Bring your voice.
Big station or modest setup, experienced operator or first HF contact, you're welcome. Choose a band that's open, call CQ, and answer someone.
Proposed pilot windows: 00:00 or 12:00 UTC.
Pick the one that works for you. Dates to follow.
Suggested USB meeting points:
10m: 28.555 · 12m: 24.955 · 15m: 21.325
17m: 18.145 · 20m: 14.255 MHz
Listen first, respect existing contacts, QSY if busy, and follow your licence privileges.
Comment "I'M IN" with your callsign and preferred UTC slot. Tag one radio friend you'd love to hear.

We've seen your callsigns here. Now let's hear them.
73,
Amir, 4X6TT



A Pebble in My Pack

Building a low-cost 40 m radio for SOTA and POTA in New Zealand

Don Short, ZL1DRS

There is something particularly satisfying about making a contact on a radio you have built yourself.

In the case of the Pebble HF, what appealed to me was not the challenge of building a complex transceiver from hundreds of components. I wanted something simple, inexpensive and useful. A radio I would be happy to take up a hill, throw in a pack for a POTA activation, or even lend to someone else without worrying too much about it.

I first came across the Pebble HF through Ham Radio Duo. The version I saw was for 20 metres. While 20 m certainly has its place, it was not really what I wanted for the type of POTA and SOTA operating I do in New Zealand, where 40 m is particularly useful for making contacts around the country.

I then found that Adam at CRkits had produced a 40 m version, which immediately made the Pebble much more interesting to me. I also understand that an Australian radio club has had a number made for a club project, so it will be interesting to see more of these little radios appearing on air on our side of the world.

The 40 m kit cost me US$50, without a case, and I ordered the optional US$20 Bluetooth soundcard at the same time. My plan was simple. I wanted a small 40 m radio primarily for portable SOTA and POTA operating. SSB would be the starting point, but I have also been learning CW and wanted another radio that would give me the opportunity to put that learning into practice on the air.

A little background

The Pebble HF has a particularly nice story behind it. It grew from an idea by Mike N4FFF and Becky N4BKY of Ham Radio Duo to produce a genuinely affordable HF radio that would be simple enough for almost anyone to build and use. The project builds on the work of Barb WB2CBA, whose hardware design provides the foundation for the radio, together with the well-established uSDX firmware developed by Guido PE1NNZ. Mike N4FFF subsequently modified the design and firmware around the Pebble HF concept.

What I particularly like about the project is that affordability and simplicity aren't afterthoughts. They are really the reason the Pebble exists. Most of the surface-mount work is already completed, leaving only 14 through-hole components for the builder to install. It makes the Pebble HF an unusually approachable introduction to building and operating a QRP HF transceiver.

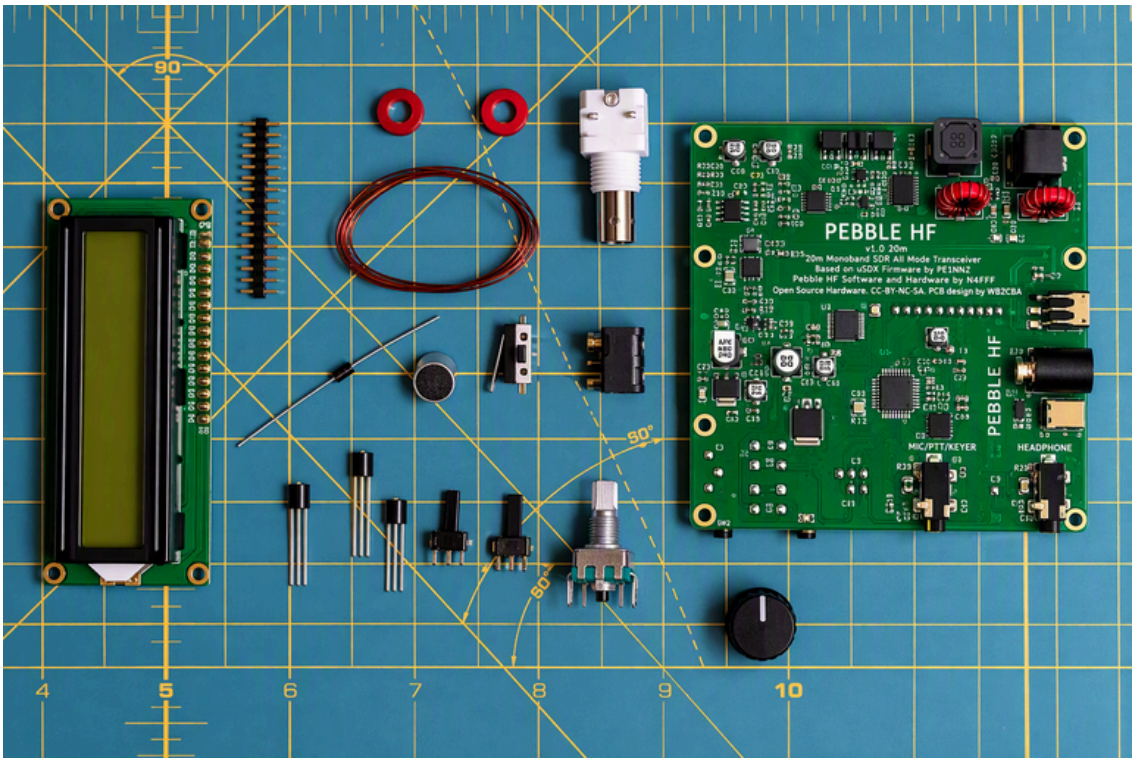
So credit really belongs to the small community behind it: Mike N4FFF and Becky N4BKY for driving the Pebble HF idea, Barb WB2CBA for the hardware design, and Guido PE1NNZ for the uSDX firmware on which it is based.

What is the Pebble HF?

The Pebble HF is a small, single-band QRP transceiver based on the open-source uSDX architecture. Despite its simplicity and low price, the design supports CW, USB and LSB SSB, and digital operation using an external sound interface.

The published specification gives an RF output of approximately 5 W from a 7 to 14 V supply, or about 1 W when running from 5 V USB-C. Receive current is approximately 80 mA, increasing to around 500 to 600 mA on transmit at 12 V. Published weight is less than 132 g.

The Pebble also includes AGC, noise reduction, VOX, CW operation and selectable DSP filters. Straight-key and iambic CW operation are supported. The Pebble was originally released as a 20 m radio; mine is the dedicated 40 m version supplied by Adam at CRkits.



Pebble HF at a glance

Specification	Published information
Architecture	Open-source uSDX-based design
Configuration	Single-band QRP
Modes	CW, USB/LSB SSB and digital capable
RF output	Approx. 5 W with 7-14 V input
USB-C operation	Approx. 1 W at 5 V
Receive current	Approx. 80 mA
Transmit current	Approx. 500-600 mA at 12 V
Published weight	Less than 132 g
CW	Straight-key and iambic operation
DSP filters	Full open, 2500, 1700, 500, 200, 100 and 50 Hz
VOX / AGC / noise reduction	Yes
Digital operation	External sound interface required
Construction	Most SMD components pre-installed
Builder installation	14 through-hole parts

A very approachable kit

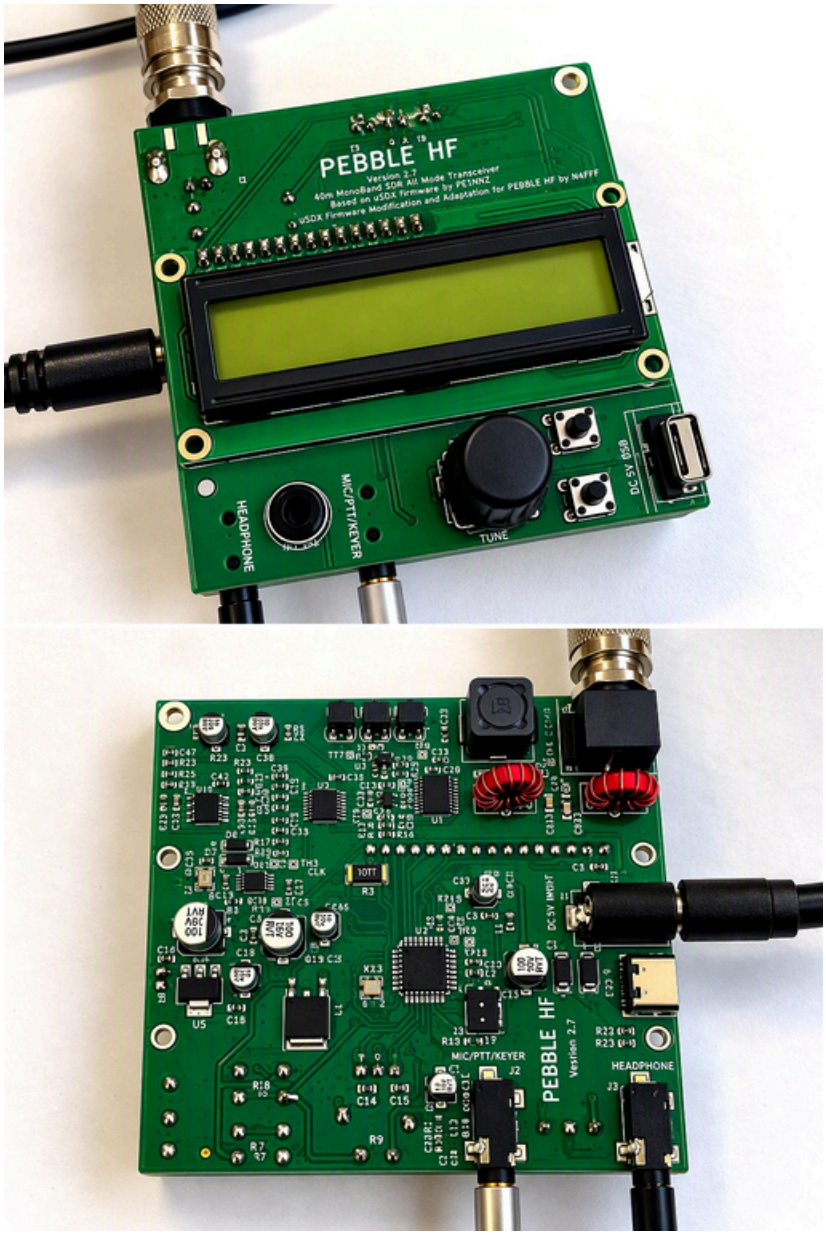
One of the biggest attractions of the Pebble is that this is not a bag containing hundreds of components that need to be individually identified and soldered. All of the surface-mount components are already fitted to the board, leaving only 14 through-hole parts for the builder to install and solder.

Adam had also already loaded the firmware onto my radio. That removes another potential hurdle, particularly for a first-time transceiver builder. My soldering skills are fairly basic and the equipment required was simple: a soldering iron and a pair of side cutters were pretty much all I needed. From opening the kit to having the board assembled took me about an hour.

You still need to think

The assembly instructions include photographs and there is also a video build that you can follow. They are not completely foolproof, though. The main thing I found was that you need to pay attention to which side of the PCB the components are fitted to. Some photographs also show components already installed that, according to the written sequence, should not be fitted until a later stage.

It is not a major problem, and I am sure the instructions will improve over time as more kits are built and feedback comes in. You need to read the words and think about what you are doing. For me, that is not necessarily a bad thing in a kit like this.



Don't be frightened of the toroids

Toroids seem to be one of those things that can put people off building RF kits. The 40 m Pebble requires the builder to wind the toroids, but I found the job considerably less intimidating than it might initially appear.

"If you can count, you can wind the toroids."

Take your time, count the turns properly and compare what you have made with the photographs before installing them. For somebody relatively new to radio construction, this is one of the parts of the project that makes the Pebble feel like you have actually built a radio.

Giving it a home

The standard kit does not include a case, but the design files are available so you can print one yourself. The case was designed by Ham Radio Duo and is intended to be 3D printed. I do not have a printer capable of doing the two-filament print I wanted, so I had someone with a Bambu printer produce one for me in PETG. That cost around NZ$25.

Adam now also has cases available without the lettering for around US$10. Putting the board into the case transforms it from an interesting PCB sitting on the bench into something that feels much more like a proper portable radio, while keeping all of the connectors accessible.

The clever bit: Bluetooth audio

When I ordered the Pebble, I also ordered the US$20 Bluetooth soundcard from Adam. The soundcard is based on a WB2CBA design, with Adam adding the Bluetooth module, and is powered from the USB-C connection on the Pebble.

Digital capability requires an external sound interface. In my setup, the Bluetooth soundcard lets me run a digital mode from my iPhone without physically tethering the phone to the radio with audio cables.

Pebble HF + Bluetooth soundcard + iPhone + 12 V power bank

Putting my CW learning into practice

I have been learning CW, and the Pebble has given me another opportunity to put that learning into practice on the air. Using my Trinity House straight key, I have so far made three 40 m CW contacts with the Pebble.

Station	Operator	Location	Frequency	Reports
ZL1BDS	Graeme N. McKay	Blenheim	7.030 MHz	599 / 599
ZL2LN	Barry Davenport	Motueka	7.018 MHz	599 / 599
ZL2AIM	Ian MacQuillan	Tairua	7.017 MHz	599 / 599

There is something particularly satisfying about using a straight key to make CW contacts on a radio I had assembled myself only hours earlier. I did find the CW audio a little harsh initially compared with what I am accustomed to hearing, although this is a relatively simple radio and I am still getting used to how it sounds.

What surprised me was the CW decoding, which worked pretty well. I do not see the decoder as a substitute for copying CW myself, but it can provide a useful confirmation of what I have copied while putting my learning into practice on air.

Putting FT8 to the test

For my first digital tests I ran the Pebble on 40 m at 7.074 MHz, connected to my G5RV at home. The radio was running 5 W and the Bluetooth soundcard was paired with my iPhone running iFTx 1.8.

The first contact was ZL1RFF in New Zealand, approximately 167 km away. I received ZL1RFF at -2 dB, while my 5 W signal was reported at +8 dB. I then worked VK2AGS in Australia, approximately 2,228 km away. I received VK2AGS at -8 dB and my signal was reported at +11 dB.

Then I put out a CQ. KG6JDX in Guam came back to me. The contact was completed with the Pebble still producing just 5 W. I received KG6JDX at -21 dB, while my signal arriving in Guam was reported at +1 dB. For a US$50 transceiver I had assembled on the bench in about an hour, that was pretty satisfying.

Station	Location	Distance	Received	My signal	Power
ZL1RFF	New Zealand	167 km	-2 dB	+8 dB	5 W
VK2AGS	Australia	2,228 km	-8 dB	+11 dB	5 W
KG6JDX	Guam	International DX	-21 dB	+1 dB	5 W

Powering the Pebble
For my testing at home I connected the Pebble to my G5RV and powered it from a power bank using a 12 V PD cable. Rather than carrying a dedicated 12 V supply, a suitable USB-PD power bank and cable can provide a compact source of power.

As a simple QRP radio without a built-in ATU, the Pebble is best used with a suitable resonant antenna or an appropriate external matching arrangement. That needs to be considered when putting together a portable SOTA or POTA station.

What I learned from the build

- Read the instructions rather than relying only on the photographs.
- Check which side of the PCB you are working on.
- Do not be frightened of the toroids. If you can count, you can wind them.
- Think about your antenna. Five watts is plenty to have fun with, but start with a suitable antenna.
- Do not overthink the build. My basic soldering skills, a soldering iron and side cutters were enough to have the board assembled in about an hour. `



A US$50 radio that actually gets used
Perhaps the best thing about the Pebble is what it is not. It is not an expensive multi-band, all-mode radio that I am going to worry about every time I take it into the bush. It is a US$50, single-band HF transceiver that I put together myself in around an hour.

It is inexpensive enough that I would be comfortable lending it to somebody else, and simple enough that a relatively inexperienced builder can assemble it. Most importantly, it actually works.

I have already put my CW learning into practice with three 40 m contacts using my straight key. With the Bluetooth soundcard and an iPhone I have also worked New Zealand, Australia and Guam on FT8 with just 5 W. SSB and a proper portable SOTA or POTA activation are next.

The build itself only takes an evening. The interesting part is what you can do with it afterwards.
A Pebble in My Pack | Don Short, ZL1DRS



One and Done: From a Hut to a Summit

High-Altitude Activations on the Old Man Range in Central Otago

From historic miners' huts to howling summit winds, a spur-of-the-moment decision turns an early morning hut activation into an epic 20km hike with a SOTA activation tacked on.

The alarm was an ungodly early reminder of the day's ambitions, but by 06:45, after getting a coffee at The Tin Goose, I was hitting the track. The initial objective was straightforward: hike up to White's Reef Hut—perched at an elevation of 940 metres in the Historic Reserve - Obelisk Area, ZLP/OT-0332. Making rapid progress up the trail, I arrived significantly ahead of schedule based on my AI route predictions. That left plenty of time up my sleeve to relax, soak in the absolute solitude, and watch the early morning golden hour light up the range. Being the weekend, occasional vehicles and trail bikes hummed up the access track, but otherwise, the high country was mine.

White's Reef Hut turned out to be a five-star POTA shack in the wilderness. Inside sat a sturdy wooden table paired with a comfortable padded chair that some legendary soul had dragged up the mountain. A single bunk sat inside for overnight stays, provided you don't mind sharing the room with the lingering ghosts of 19th-century gold miners. I spent two and a half hours at the hut chasing and activating. The mountain breeze kept things interesting—at one point collapsing my antenna mast. I tried 60m propagation; however, this was tricky so late in the morning, but I managed to snag a contact with Wayne (ZL3WSL). Happy with the activation, I packed up with the intention of heading back down the range.

That's when alpine ambition took over.

Looking up toward the skyline, towering high above the hut, stood The Obelisk (ZL3/OT-288) at a decent elevation of 1,682 metres (5,518 feet). "I'm already halfway up the range," I thought. "I may as well push for the summit!"

It was the first time I had attempted anything close to this combination of distance and vertical elevation gain. The communications mast is visible from everywhere you go in Alexandra (weather permitting); even from The Tin Goose Café, I had a direct view through the window at the mast. It was becoming an obsession! I had thought about walking up there since December last year and had planned to do it this December.

What followed was a relentless grind. The track offered practically zero flat sections to catch a breath—just a continuous incline (average 12%) under the Central Otago sun. To keep my ego in check, a 53-year-old woman power-walked past me like I was standing still, casually mentioning she was training for the Kepler Challenge ultra-endurance run in December.

As I neared the top, I began to battle a very challenging headwind. I trudged around corner after corner, desperately hoping each bend would reveal the summit junction, only to be met by another corner higher up. I eventually caught up with a couple coming down in a 2WD who gave me that WTF look. I said, "How far to the top?" (there may have been unsavoury words used). They grinned profusely and said, "50m round the corner and you are at the top of the ridge." I found out later on Facebook when I commented on a feed that it was them—they have a very active Outdoors page. Give them a follow: Mealz - The Unfit Hiker NZ.



Reaching the top made every step worth it. A jaw-dropping panorama unfolded to the left: the jagged, snow-capped peaks of the Southern Alps stretched across the horizon like an entirely different world—a breathtaking vista completely hidden from the town of Alexandra down in the valley.

With the wind howling incessantly around the peak, urgency took over. I needed four contacts to qualify the summit for SOTA, and I was fiercely motivated by one thought: There is no way I am walking back up this mountain ever again. Working with frantic efficiency against the gale, I struggled to get the mast up and put out my call. In just 13 minutes, eight callsigns landed in the logbook. Mission accomplished! I could have done better in the spotting. I had a couple of issues...

I stayed at the summit for barely 45 minutes before embarking on the long, daunting 10-kilometre descent. I was genuinely apprehensive about being alone at the top, the 3-hour walk back down, and whether my knee would hold out. As I started down, buffeted by strong crosswinds, memories of a dodgy knee kept whispering warnings, but my trekking poles proved to be absolute lifesavers, taking the brunt of the impact and keeping joint pain to a minor murmur. By the time I returned to the start point at 19:00—nearly twelve hours after setting off—I'd really had enough of walking.

I will put a plug in for my shoes—Hoka Speedgoats. Never had any issues, feet were fine. Also, the Black Diamond Trekking poles have dramatically changed my hiking experience. Worth trading in grandkids for!

It was an unforgettable day in the high country: two activations, sweeping alpine vistas, historic shelters, and a journey into the unknown. But as for trekking up to The Obelisk on foot ever again? One and done! Next time I pay that rock a visit, it will be strictly on four wheels.

Activation Log Reference Summary
- White's Reef Hut: ZLP/OT-097
- Historic Reserve Obelisk: ZLP/OT-0332
- SOTA Summit: ZL3/OT-288
- Kopuwai Conservation Area: ZLP/OT-0010
- Kopuwai Conservation Area: NZ-0146
- Kopuwai Conservation Area: ZLFF-0140

Antenna wire

In the last few months we have sold kilometers of antenna wire, and yesterday a lot more wire arrived from the UK.



Sotabeams DX wire - Ultra light



Sotabeams stranded tinned copper - lightweight



Sotabeams , very strong +/- 75kg and can handle 1500 watts



Ham Shack Heavy Duty wire, perfect for multiple use i.e. linked dipoles



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