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NEW ZEALAND & AUSTRALIAN AMATEUR RADIO

VOL. 11 MAY 2026

Photograph Nadine Black

ZL4AT - Activating Dart Bridge

VOL. 11 MAY 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

Email:
ZL1GUD@proton.me

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

Note: Right click on text for link to website.

www.thehamshack.co.nz

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AMATEUR RADIO FOR THE GREAT OUTDOORS

The Ham Shack will be at the NZART Conference

We have **LOTS** of conference specials
so, call us or email us at least a week before conference
for a deal and we will bring them with us for
collection at the
NZART 2026 conference
(special deals for conference attendees only)

Anything purchased at the NZART Conference will get you a free cap.

&

Any purchase made at conference or for delivery at conference will put you in a lucky draw to win an Alinco DJ-CRX7* handheld.

We will have all of our products available for purchase (in limited quantities).

The Spiderbeam yagi antennas will be brought on order due to their size.

Order your cables and connectors and we will make up your cable for FREE

Please come and say hello.

Greg ZL1GUD

LOTS of POTA gear available.

*license required

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Proof of Amateur Licence required for all radio purchases

ZL1GUD at Amberley Beach activating ZLP/CB-0784

From the Editor - When the world goes silent — amateur radio speaks

There are moments in history when the fragility of modern communication is laid painfully bare. A cyclone tears through a coastline. An earthquake swallows a city whole. A conflict disrupts an entire nation's infrastructure overnight. In those moments — when cell towers fall silent, internet cables are severed, and power grids collapse — the world is reminded of something that amateur radio operators have always known: the airwaves never fail.

We live in an increasingly uncertain world. Geopolitical tensions are reshaping global stability, natural disasters are growing in both frequency and ferocity, and our dependence on centralised, commercial communications infrastructure has never been greater — or more vulnerable. In times of crisis and natural disasters, amateur radio is often used as a means of emergency communication when wireline, cell phones and other conventional means fail. Unlike commercial systems, amateur radio is usually independent of terrestrial facilities that can fail.

That independence is not a relic of a bygone era. It is more relevant today than at any point in our history.

Here in New Zealand and Australia, we are no strangers to disaster. Floods, earthquakes, and cyclones regularly test our communities and our emergency response systems. When disaster strikes, redundancy is critical — amateur radio provides a backup when primary systems fail due to storms, cyberattacks, or infrastructure collapse. Operators can improvise with car batteries or solar panels, ensuring messages get through even in prolonged outages.

This is why what we do matters far beyond the hobby. Every antenna erected, every licence earned, every net practiced is an investment in community resilience. We are not merely hobbyists — we are the last line of communication when everything else has failed.

Keep the rigs on. The world needs us.
73 Greg — Editor

www.thehamshack.co.nz

HF Ground Wave Reality Check What really works from 160m to 6m

Ground wave is often misunderstood. Many operators assume “HF equals long distance,” but that’s only true when the ionosphere cooperates. Ground wave is different. It hugs the earth’s surface and gives you predictable, infrastructure-free regional coverage — exactly what matters for local nets, emergency work, and reliable day-to-day comms.

If you want dependable ground wave range, stay low in frequency. Once you move above about 10 MHz, ground wave becomes almost irrelevant for practical amateur use.

HF Amateur Bands – Ground Wave & Best Operating Time

Band	Freq (MHz)	Typical Ground Wave Range*	Best Time of Day	Operational Character
160m	1.8–2.0	30–80 km	Night	The king of local night comms. Daytime absorption is severe. Stable and dependable after dark.
80m	3.5–4.0	40–100 km	Night / Early Morning	Excellent regional band. Daytime usable for shorter local work.
60m	5 MHz (ZL channels)	30–80 km	Late Afternoon / Evening	Good NVIS band. Can be unpredictable. Ground wave modest but useful.
40m	7.0–7.3	20–60 km	Morning / Evening	Ground wave limited. Skywave dominates most of the day.
30m	10.1–10.15	10–40 km	Daylight	Primarily a skywave band. Local coverage minimal.
20m	14.0–14.35	5–30 km	Daytime	DX band. Ground wave negligible.
17m	18.068–18.168	5–20 km	Daytime	Mostly long-haul propagation.
15m	21.0–21.45	5–20 km	Daytime (high solar activity)	Solar-cycle dependent. Minimal ground wave.
12m	24.89–24.99	5–15 km	Daytime (good solar conditions)	Little practical ground wave use.
10m	28.0–29.7	5–15 km	Midday (solar peak)	Very short ground wave. Sporadic-E can create surprises.
6m	50–54	2–10 km	Daytime / Summer Es	Essentially VHF behaviour. Ground wave extremely short.

*Distances assume average ground conductivity. Over salt water, ranges can increase dramatically.

The St George Amateur Radio Society Inc

May 2026 Newsletter

A RECENT SUCCESS

Recently, eight candidates qualified as amateur radio operators during our training and assessment weekend, and a further candidate successfully upgraded their qualification.

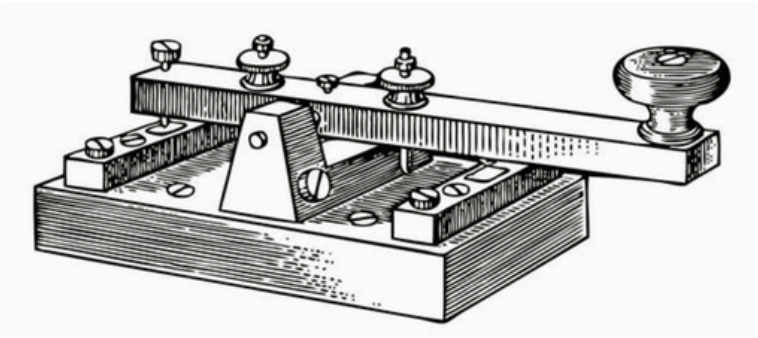
On a sunny Sunday morning, several SGARS members & friends took part in a traditional "fox hunt" activity, at Carss Park in southern Sydney.

Now where is the hidden transmitter?

AMATEUR RADIO TRIVIA NIGHT

This fun and friendly club event is designed for **all levels of amateur radio operators** — from newly licensed hams to seasoned DX chasers and RF gurus. The night will feature **four rounds of questions** covering everything from operating practices and ham culture to propagation,

history. Expect a mix of easy, technical, and "only an Advanced would know that" questions! Be challenged on Wednesday 6th May commencing at 7.30pm local Sydney time, at Mortdale RSL Club, 25 Macquarie Place, Mortdale.



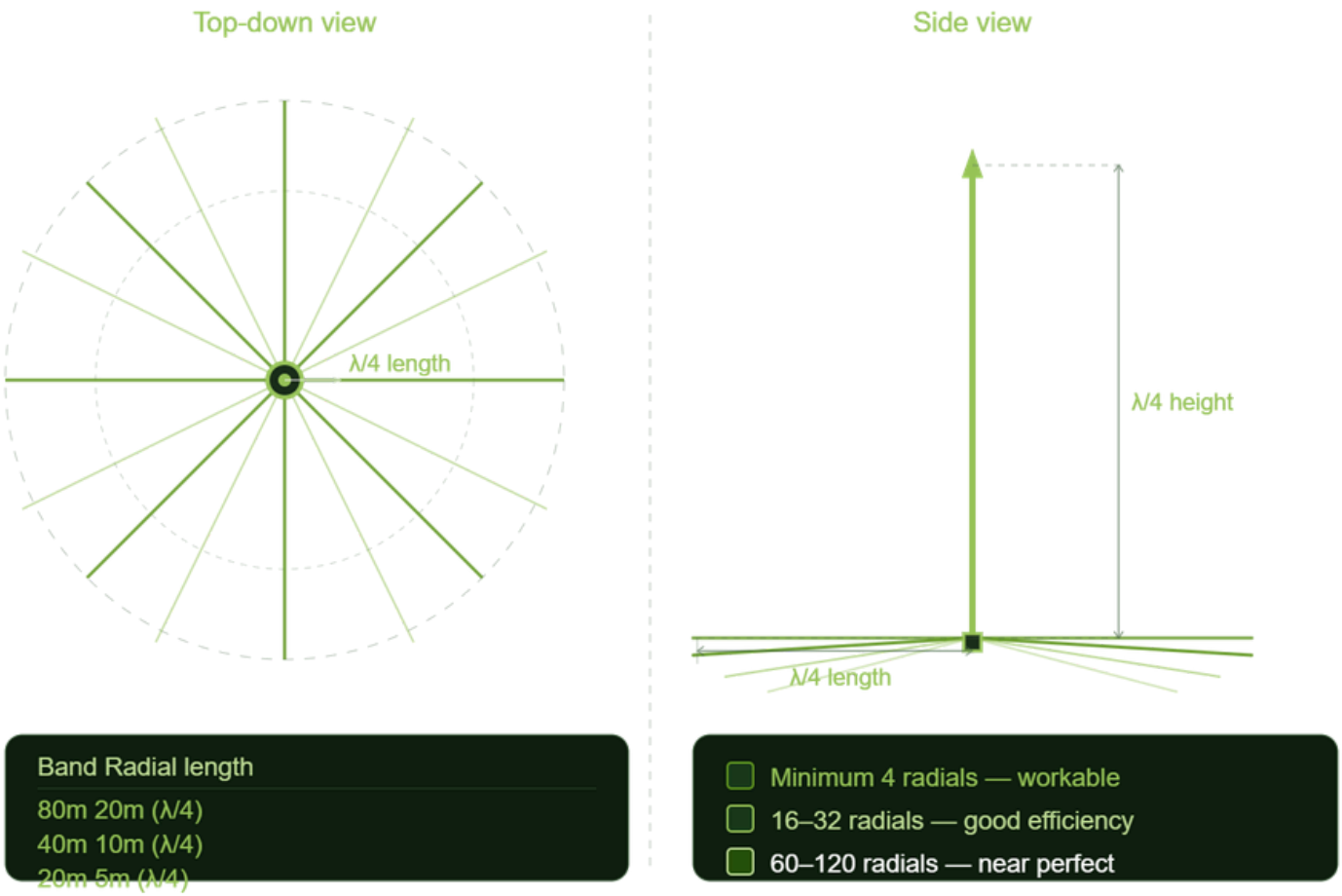
Don Edwards Memorial Slow Morse Contest Returns to the air waves on 40m and 80m bands, over the weekend 16th and 17th May 2026. Don Edwards VK2NV was long-time SGARS member and passionate CW operator. This event is designed to encourage all amateurs to get on the key and enjoy Morse code in a relaxed, welcoming environment.

The St George Amateur Radio Society sponsors a number of amateur radio contest during the year.

For more information about all our events and activities, please our website www.sgars.org, follow us on Facebook, keep in touch via SGARS WhatsApp group, or call into our local 2m FM repeater VK2RLE on 146.800 MHz – 600 kHz.

The power of radial wires

why your vertical antenna needs a good ground system



Why Radial Wires Make or Break Your Vertical Antenna

If you're running a vertical HF antenna, the bit you can't see matters just as much as the bit you can. Your radial system — those wires laying on or buried in the ground — is literally half your antenna. Skimp on it and you're burning power as heat in the ground rather than sending signals around the world.

How many do you need?

4 radials — Better than nothing, you'll make contacts
16–32 radials — A solid, efficient system most operators aim for
60–120 radials — Near broadcast-quality ground system, maximum efficiency

The good news? Each additional radial you add brings improvement, so start with what you have and keep adding.

How long should they be?

Radials should be a quarter-wavelength (λ/4) long for the band you're operating on:

80m band → 20m per radial
40m band → 10m per radial
20m band → 5m per radial

They don't need to be perfectly straight — winding them around the yard is fine. Buried or on-ground both work well.

Bottom line — 16 radials at quarter-wave length will transform the performance of your vertical. Give it a try and hear the difference!

73 de Greg
ZL1GUD & ZL3THS

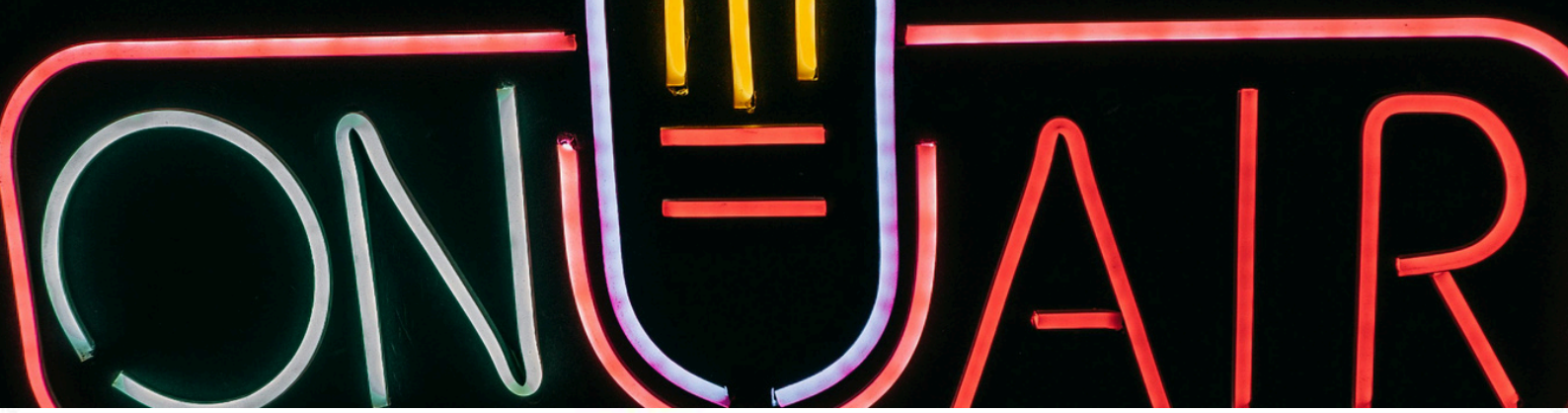
Z66SP
POLISH DXPEDITION TO KOSOVO

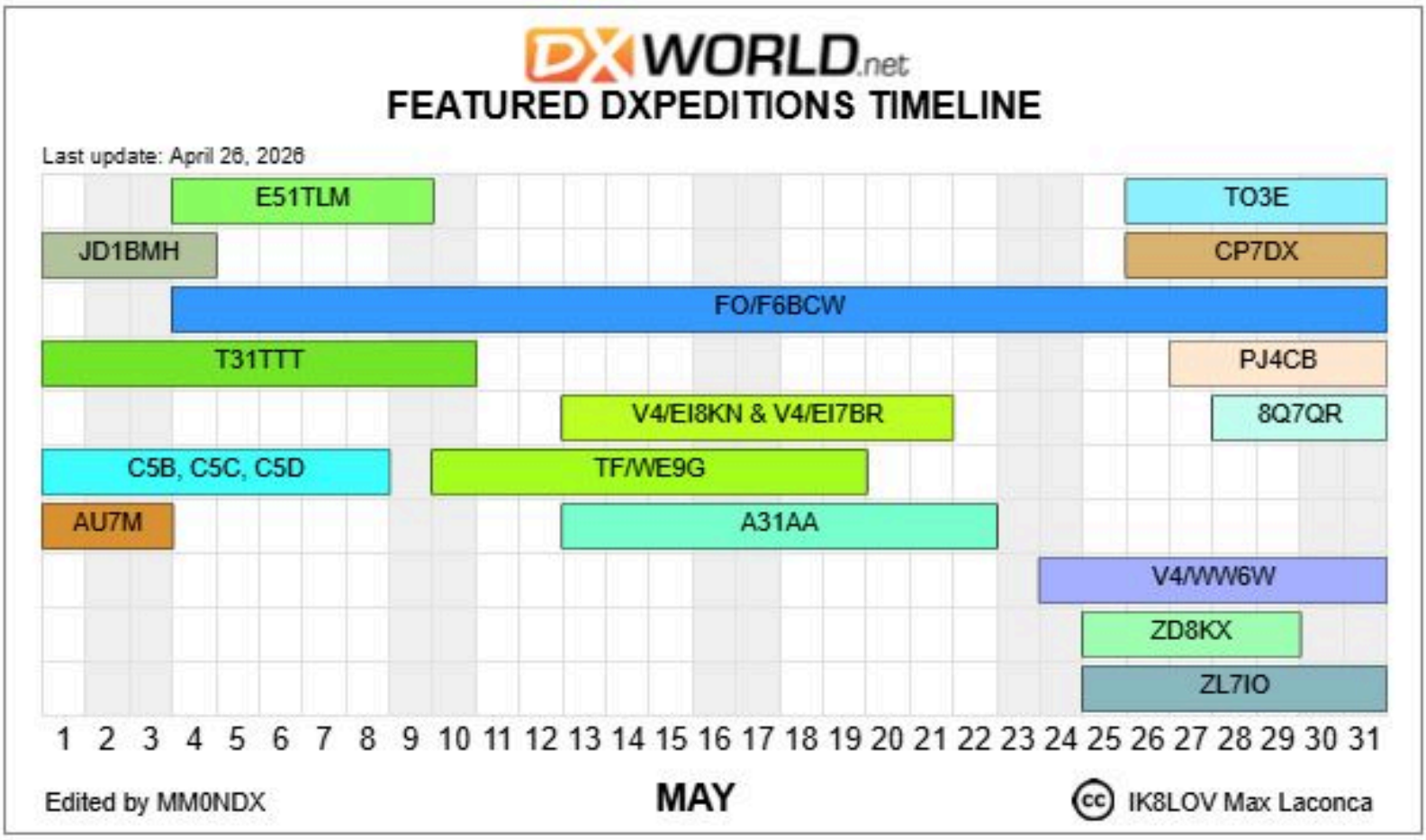
A special thanks to DX-World for permission to use material from their sites. Ed

As planned, we have been active since April 23, 2026. We intended to start operating in the morning, but due to minor issues during customs clearance, we did not get on the air until late evening. We are now active on all bands available to us. Local site conditions allowed us to deploy only four antennas instead of the full setup we had originally planned.

Since early April, intensive preparations have been underway for our trip to Kosovo. One of the steps was setting up three antennas that we planned as the main ones. The antennas have been assembled, adjusted and tested. There is also a dish for QO-100. The antennas are ready to go.

We set up each antenna for testing. We reviewed the assembly instructions, verified that all components were present, and most importantly, connect the antennas to the radio to check for proper operation. The SWR measurement results are positive, and the resonances are on the band, so we believe this part of the equipment is ready and is currently in storage awaiting packing.





TF/WE9G – ICELAND

Rikk, WE9G will be active from Borg, Iceland as TF/WE9G during May 10-19, 2026. Grid: HP94ob. QRV mostly on FT8 with some CW and SSB. QSO uploads to Club Log, QRZ, and LoTW will be real-time (and free) as usual.

QSL via WE9G for direct/bureau and via VP9/WE9G for Club Log OQRS, QRZ, LoTW.

Courtesy of DXworld.net

7P8WR – LESOTHO

Paolo IZ0EVI, Diego IZ0EWJ and Luca IZ6DSQ will be active from Lesotho as 7P8WR during April 23 to May 1, 2026. QRV on 40-10m; SSB & FT8. QSL via IZ0EWJ. Website and Logsearch. Band-plan below.

BAND	40m	30m	20m	17m	15m	12m	10m
PHONE	7125		14215	18140	21290	24940	28450
FT8	7056	10131	14090	18095	21090	24911	28090
FT4	7047	10140	14080	18104	21140	24919	28180

WHEN YOU ARE SERIOUS ABOUT DX

A BIG CONSIGNMENT OF SPIDERBEAM ANTENNAS HAS JUST ARRIVED FROM GERMANY

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

WWW.THEHAMSHACK.CO.NZ

CELEBRATING 100 YEARS OF NZART

1926 2026

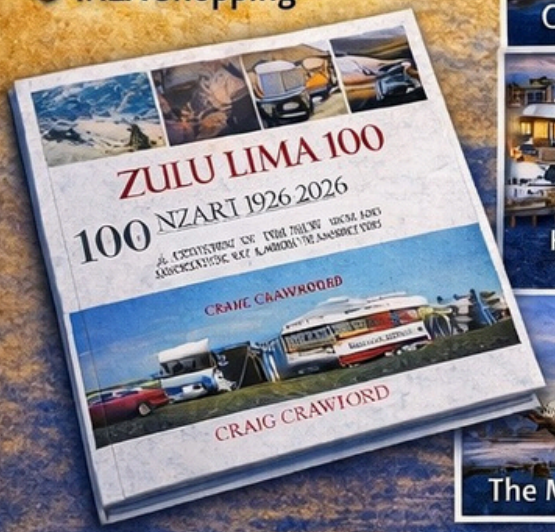
KING'S BIRTHDAY WEEKEND • 30–31 MAY 2026

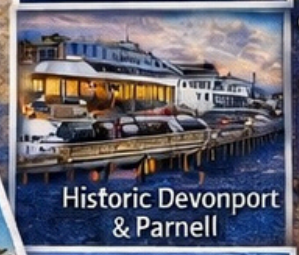
- **Centenary History Book** for All Fully Paid Attendees
- Fascinating Forums & Gala Dinner
- Meet Operators from NZ & Overseas!

ALTERNATIVE PARTNERS' PROGRAM!

Wonderful Tours & Activities in and around Auckland

- Candle Making
- Historic Devonport & Parnell
- The Maritime Museum
- IKEA Shopping





- **Special VIP Guests from IARU & WIA**
- *'Celebrating Our Past – Exploring Our Future!*
- *Amazing Raffle Prizes To Be Won!*

Win an ICOM IC-7300 Mark 2

REGISTER NOW ~ DON'T MISS OUT!

JOIN US FOR THIS ONCE-IN-A-LIFETIME EVENT!

www.nzart100conference.nzart.org.nz

THE POTAHOLICS
MID-WINTER 30 EVENT

That sounds like a fantastic way to keep the spirit of radio alive during the colder months! Bruce (ZL1BW) and Grant (ZL1GGL) have put together a solid plan to boost activity on the ZL bands.

To make sure you're ready for the Mid-Winter 30, here's a quick "cheat sheet" of the essentials.

The Game Plan

- Date & Time: Sunday, 28 June, from 9:00 am to 9:00 pm.
- The Goal: Bank 30 voice contacts within that 12-hour window.
- Eligibility: Open to ***all ZL operators***. Focus is strictly on ZL-POTA and ZL-LOTA (**International POTA and Summits don't count** for this one).

How to Participate

- Chasers: Start by hunting activators between 7.080 – 7.095 MHz. Once you've contacted the activators, move to 7.100 MHz and above to work other chasers then check for more activators during the day and so on until you get your 30 contacts..
- Activators: Spot as usual on ontheair.nz and drop a note on potaholics.co.nz to help the new folks find you.
- The Log: Keep it simple. You just need a text list of the Call Sign and Time for each contact.

Winning Prizes

Once the clock hits 9:00 pm, you have one week to email your logs to midwinter30@potaholics.co.nz. Make sure your Call Sign and Name are in the subject line to enter the draw for prizes from ZL1BW, ZL1GGL, and The Ham Shack.

It's great to see the community coming together to support local legends like **Matt Briggs** from https://ontheair.nz, **Rob ZL2BB** for the domain, potaholics.co.nz and **Greg** from The Ham Shack.

First Timers - Thank you so much for having a go**.** Just check out potaholics.co.nz for more info… 73's Grant - ZL1GGL

DX Conditions & Events Update

Current Solar Conditions
Solar Cycle 25 Status: Declining Phase
•Current F10.7 Index: ~95-110 (moderate activity)
•Solar Maximum: Peaked in late 2024-early 2025
•Outlook: Continuing gradual decline through 2026
•Implication: Good HF propagation still available, particularly on 20m, 17m, and 15m bands

Propagation Forecast:
•10m Band: Sporadic openings, best during peak solar hours
•15m Band: Reliable openings to Europe and North America
•20m Band: Excellent conditions, most reliable band
•40m Band: Good evening and nighttime propagation
•80m Band: Excellent for regional DX and ANZAC area contacts

Band Conditions Summary			
Band	**Condition**	**Best Times (UTC)**	**Notes**
160m	Fair	2000-0600	Regional propagation, good for ANZAC
80m	Good	1800-0800	Reliable for regional work
40m	Excellent	1600-0900	Most reliable band currently
30m	Very Good	All day	Consistent propagation
20m	Excellent	0600-1800	Best all-around band
17m	Very Good	0800-1600	Reliable to Europe/NA
15m	Good	0800-1600	Sporadic to North America
10m	Fair	1000-1600	Sporadic openings
6m	Poor	Peak hours	Sporadic E possible

DX Tips for ZL/VK Operators
1 Focus on 20m: Currently the most reliable band with consistent openings to rare IOTA locations
2 Early Morning (0600-0900 UTC): Best window for working European and African stations
3 Afternoon (1200-1600 UTC): Good for North American and Caribbean DX
4 Digital Modes: FT8/FT4 providing excellent results with low power - great for QRP operations
5 TX9W Window: April 19-30 is your best opportunity - don't miss the Marquesas!

South East Radio Group
AMATEUR RADIO CLUB

JUNE 6-7th 2026

Mt Gambier SA

Australian Foxhunting Championships

Scout Hall, 3 Margaret St.

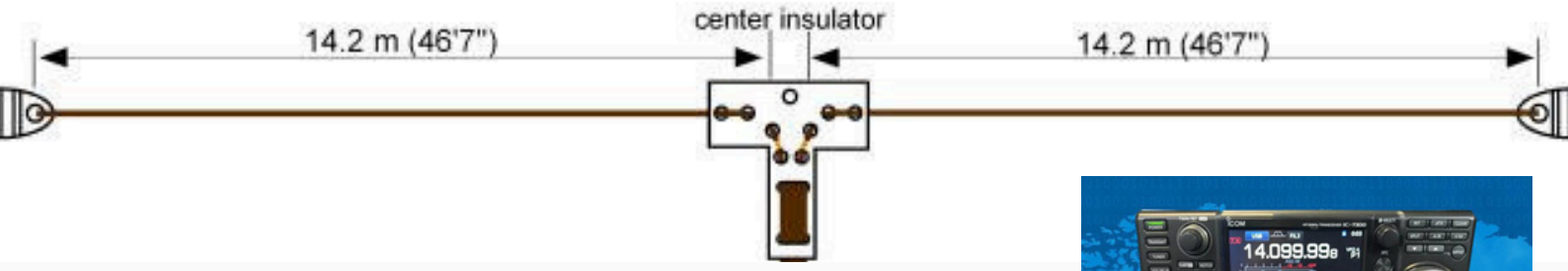
Mount Gambier, South Aust

City of Mount Gambier

In conjunction with the SERG Annual Convention & Dinner

Email : convention@serg.org.au

www.serg.org.au

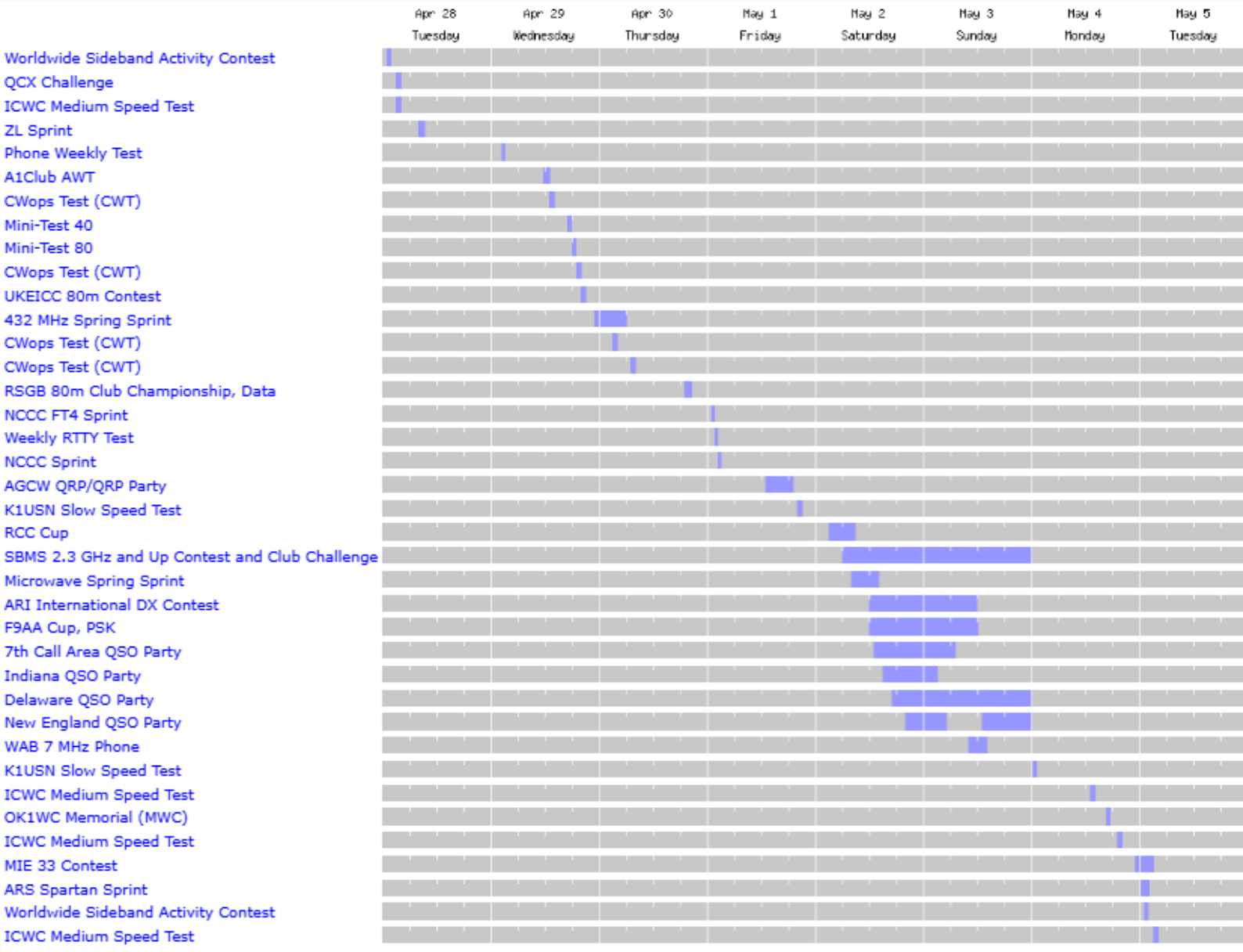


COMPETITION CALENDAR

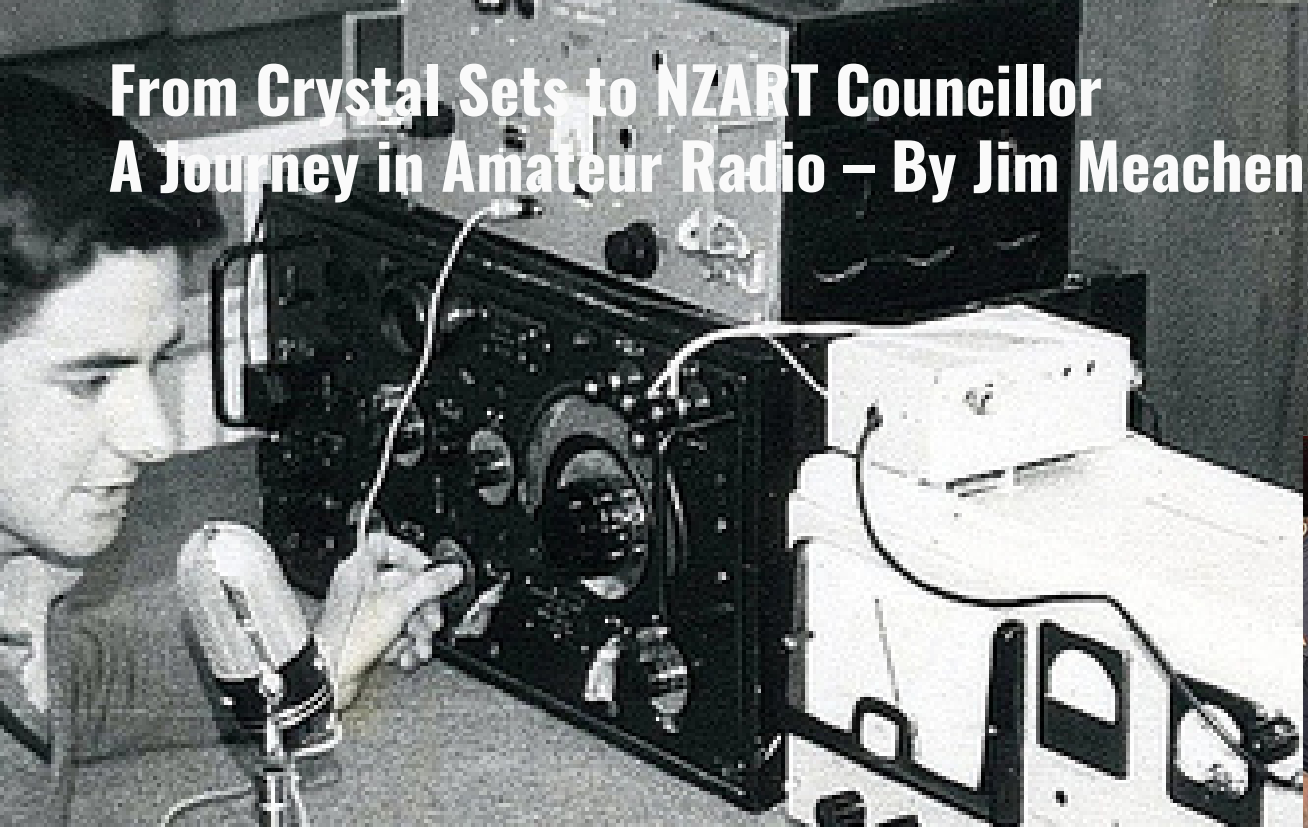
WA7BNM Contest Calendar

Powered by ICOM

Competition consol
for the Icom IC 7300
available from
www.thehamshack.co.nz



From Crystal Sets to NZART Councillor
A Journey in Amateur Radio – By Jim Meachen ZL2BHF



Heretaunga College 1968

I was thirteen years old when I first encountered what seemed, to me, a kind of magic. Behind the house of a school friend stood a modest shed, but inside it was an Aladdin's cave of radio equipment. The owner, Val Collins ZL2MV (later ZL1GB, now a silent key), had assembled a station that captivated my imagination. There were glowing valves, dials and switches, and most intriguing of all, the strange and wonderful sounds of signals arriving from New Zealand and beyond.

That moment lit a spark that has never faded.

Field Day 1970 ZL2BHF Branch 63

The First Steps to on Air - By 1966, I had resolved to become a licensed amateur radio operator. I began attending classes at my local radio club, where the learning curve was steep, but the encouragement from experienced operators made all the difference. In September 1967, I passed the written examination. But in those days, that was only part of the journey. Morse code was the final hurdle.

Eager to get on the air, I threw myself into mastering CW. On 24 November 1967, I sat and passed the 12 words-per-minute Morse examination. It remains one of the most memorable days of my life, not only because of the test itself, but because of everything else that happened around it. That morning I had sat my School Certificate biology exam; that afternoon, I passed my Morse test; and later the same day, made my very first on-air contact. It was a split-mode QSO with me on AM and Lester Price ZL2AMP (Now ZL4PO) on CW. It was an unforgettable introduction to amateur radio.
The Upper Hutt Years - My involvement with NZART Branch 63 in Upper Hutt became a cornerstone of my amateur radio life. The branch had supported me through my early learning, and I was keen to give something back.

In 1969, I was appointed Public Relations Officer, though, as I recall, the role also included duties as supper supervisor, or perhaps even "Tea Lady". Such was club life: everyone contributed where needed.

Over the following years, I served as Branch Secretary (1973-74) and later as Branch President (1975-76). I also spent seven years as the branch AREC Section Leader. These were vibrant and productive times. The branch thrived on the enthusiasm and ingenuity of its members, resulting in a number of notable technical projects, including the ZL2BDB SSB transceiver, the Climie Transceiver, the Mount Climie repeater, and the ZL2AMJ Tucker Tin transceiver. In March 1983, I was honoured to be awarded Life Membership of Upper Hutt Branch 63, which was the recognition of a period that remains particularly meaningful to me.

Doug ZL2IY & Jim ZL2BHF Nov 1985

Mentors and Milestones - Through AREC activities, I was introduced to a number of influential figures, none more so than Doug Gorman ZL2IY. Before I met him, I had been warned by Val ZL2MV that Doug was an imposing figure who demanded absolute precision in the use of on-air phonetics. Naturally, I was apprehensive. In reality, I found quite the opposite. Doug became not only a trusted colleague but also a valued mentor and friend over many years.

At the 1974 NZART Conference, he “volunteered” me to act as scribe for an AREC column in Break-In. There was, in truth, little room to refuse Doug’s request. What began as a modest writing role grew into a long-term commitment. I went on to serve as AREC Break-In column writer and later as the national secretary of AREC for some sixteen years. Those experiences broadened my horizons and gradually drew me into national-level involvement. Serving the Amateur Community - Encouraged by fellow members of the Upper Hutt Branch, I stood for election to NZART Council in 1977. At just twenty-five, I was elected as Councillor representing the ZL2 area.

NZART Council marked the beginning of a long and rewarding period of service. I remained on Council from 1977 to 1992, with a brief break between 1985 and 1987. After serving as Vice President from 1991 to 1992, I was appointed NZART President in 1992, a role I held until my retirement in June 1997.

Those Presidential years were both challenging and deeply satisfying. Of all the responsibilities the role carried, the most rewarding was visiting branches and meeting members across the country, listening to their ideas, recognising their achievements, and demonstrating, in practical ways, that their voices mattered.

Left ZL2BHF NZART Broadcast Setup 1987

Right ZL2BHF NZART President at the opening of the Whangarei Clubrooms 1995

From Morse to Modern Media - Another significant chapter began in 1980, when Doug Gorman ZL2IY invited me to help with the NZART Official Broadcast. Having developed the broadcast over several decades, Doug saw an opportunity to bring in fresh energy, supported by my background in broadcasting. It proved to be a natural partnership.

When Doug retired in 1985 after some forty years behind the microphone, I took over responsibility for the broadcast. The late 1980s were a time of considerable change. Advances in repeater networks, improvements in audio technology, and the evolving radio regulations created new opportunities for me to enhance the broadcasts production and distribution. Reflecting now on my 40 years and more than 450 broadcasts working with 11 NZART Presidents, those earlier changes certainly helped reshape the format to better match today’s amateur radio world.

Continuing Journey - From the warm glow of valves in a backyard shack to the intricacies of national representation and modern broadcast systems, the journey has been truly remarkable. Technology has advanced far beyond anything this curious thirteen-year-old could have imagined.
That same curiosity led me to join the NZBC in 1970, beginning what was to be a 42-year career in television operations that took me around the world and into many more amateur radio adventures.

Today, through my involvement in POTA, SOTA, NZART’s Broadcast, and my local NZART Branch 26 in Nelson activities, I am reminded that the heart of amateur radio remains unchanged, a community connected not just by signals, but by a shared passion for communication.

Jim Meachen
ZL2BHF, ZL2JIM

YAESU
The radio

Andrews Communications Systems
www.andrewscom.com.au

WHEN YOU WANT YAESU IN NEW ZEALAND!

My first HF rig was a Yaesu, and that was almost 40 years ago and so when I wanted a top of the line radio I considered both brands but most reviews and the Sherwood report took me back to Yaesu.

When looking around on Google I found a website that lists products that were discontinued 6 years ago and so I decided to support Andrews Communications in Sydney NSW. I had been into the store a number of times when visiting my daughter, and so contacted them for a price and availability on the Yaesu FTDX101D.

I had a response within an hour. They sent me the box dimension and weight so that I could pass it onto my courier. (they can also arrange a courier but since I have a Fedex account it was cheaper using my courier). Within 24 hours I had paid the invoice and within 36 hours the radio had been collected by Fedex and two working days later I had the radio in the shack.

There are great CASH BACK deals on Yaesu at the moment.

YAESU
The radio

New YAESU Instant Cashback!

FTDX-101MP...A$250 Cashback

FTDX-101D...A$250 Cashback

FTDX-10...A$150 Cashback

FT-710 AESS...A$150 Cashback

FT-710 Field...A$150 Cashback

FTX-1 Optima...A$150 Cashback

FTX-1 Field...A$150 Cashback

FT-5DR...A$50 Cashback

Cashback Promotion amounts apply to new sales of above radios from March 28 to June 30, 2026. Yaesu Cashback applies to Australian & NZ sales. Name & address required by Yaesu for Cashback.

Remember the following:

- You pay the retail price less the OZ tax
- You will pay courier costs
- In NZ you will pay GST and clearing fees
- You will need a customs client code.
- A radio dealer license number

Andrews Communications Systems
Established 1976 - ABN 58 001 968 752

New shop location...
ANDREWS COMMUNICATIONS SYSTEMS,
SITE 701,
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N.S.W., 2570.
(Located opposite Hangar 58)

Phone numbers...
02 9636 9060, 02 9688 4301 and 02 9896 8972.

Trading Hours...
Monday to Friday; 9:00am-4:00pm.
Please call us if you expect to arrive after 3:30pm as we must leave by 3:30pm on rare occasions.

Saturdays, Sundays and applicable public holidays; closed.

Mailing address;
P.O. Box 10,
Camden,
N.S.W., 2570.

Speak to Luke or Lee for amazing service

Official Program for the

OXLEY REGION AMATEUR RADIO CLUB INC.

50th ANNUAL FIELD DAY

Saturday and Sunday

6th & 7th JUNE 2026

In the Wauchope Showground Hall
High Street, Wauchope NSW

Oxley Region Amateur Radio Club Inc.
PO Box 712, Port Macquarie NSW 2444
www.orarc.org | Club Station VK2BOR

Find us on Facebook
@oxleyregionarc

Redfest 26
Digital Communications

On Saturday 11th April, the Queensland-based Redcliffe and Districts Radio Club held their annual hamfest, known locally as Redfest. What a day it was! Redfest has now become one of the larger hamfests in Australia and attracts participation from across eastern Australia. The theme this year was “Digital Communications” focussing on this emerging aspect of our hobby and aligning with the theme saw the development of an event-specific website and on-line methods for bookings and ticket sales.

Despite the challenging economic conditions of late, approximately 350-400 people attended Redfest 26 with the largest number of commercial and private sellers and exhibitors in the event’s history. Sellers came from as far away as Sydney and Melbourne and the organisers were very pleased to welcome ICOM Australia for the first time.

But Redfest is not just about buying and selling new and used radio equipment. The organisers like to cater for the ladies – more often than not the spouses. Redfest always have a good range of speciality (non-radio) interest tables for the ladies. Additionally, Redfest has a range of technical lectures to help build the knowledge base of the hobby. In line with the digital theme this year, a range of Tech Talks attracted the attention of patrons on topics such as Free-DV, All Star, DMR, Fusion and D-Star and the latest developments in Amateur Radio presented by ICOM.

In an event going for much of the day there are always hungry hams to feed, and the café, BBQ and the coffee van were kept busy. Of course, there were amazing raffle prizes on offer including the latest ICOM IC-7300 MK2, a Xeigu HF transceiver and an AnyTone DRM capable handheld. Raffle ticket sales were fast and furious. Lucky door prizes were a feature throughout the day, with special prizes for the ladies and children in attendance.

Redfest 26 was a great success and demonstrates that with a bit of effort and resilience this great hobby of ours is actually still on a sound footing with increasing interest across a range of ages and interests. The organising team is now taking a well-earned rest!

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Introduction to Licence-Free UHF PRS Radios

Whether you're heading into the rugged bush, coordinating a multi-car road trip, looking for a reliable way to keep the kids in contact at a campsite or creating a local community support network with radios to communicate during natural disasters, UHF PRS Radios are your best friend.

In a world dominated by smartphones, these "walkie-talkies" might seem a bit retro, but they offer something cell phones can't: instant, subscription-free communication that works even when the bars on your phone disappear. Here is a brief introduction to getting started with the Personal Radio Service (PRS).

What exactly is UHF PRS?
PRS stands for Personal Radio Service. It operates on the Ultra High Frequency (UHF) band—specifically around the 476–477 MHz range. In New Zealand and Australia, this is a "licence-free" band, meaning you don't need to pass an exam or pay a yearly fee to the government to use it. As long as your equipment is NZ or Australia-approved (certified for the PRS band), you're free to chat!

Why use UHF?
UHF waves are shorter and punchier than the older "CB" radios of the 70s and 80s. This makes them particularly good at:
* Penetrating Obstacles: They bounce around buildings and through trees much better than other frequencies.
* Compact Size: Because the waves are short, the antennas can be short too. This means your radio is usually small enough to clip to a pocket.
* Clarity: Modern PRS radios provide crystal-clear audio, often filtering out the "static" hiss common in older tech.

Understanding Channels and Power
In New Zealand and Australia, there are 80 designated channels on the PRS band. While most are for general chatting, a few have special rules:
* Channel 11: The designated "Call Channel".
* Channels 22 & 23: Strictly for data and telemetry (no talking!).
* Channels 1–8 & 41–48: These are often used for Repeaters—special stations usually sitting on mountain tops that "repeat" your signal to help it travel much further.
The transmit power of your radio is measured in Watts. Most handheld units are either 0.5 Watts (good for short distances like a warehouse or a backyard) or 5 Watts (the legal limit, providing the best possible range for UHF PRS communication arounds towns, rural environments and even cities).

Tips for Beginners
* Line of Sight is King: No matter how powerful your radio is, radio waves love a clear path. If there's a giant mountain between you and your friend, the signal won't make it.
* Radio Etiquette: Since it's a shared public space, wait for a gap in the conversation before you speak. Say "Over" when you're done talking so the other person knows it's their turn!
Whether you're a hobbyist or just want a safety backup, a UHF PRS radio is a fantastic, reliable tool that keeps you connected for free. Happy chatting!

Next Month
Good Antennas Make All The Difference - Comparing Options.

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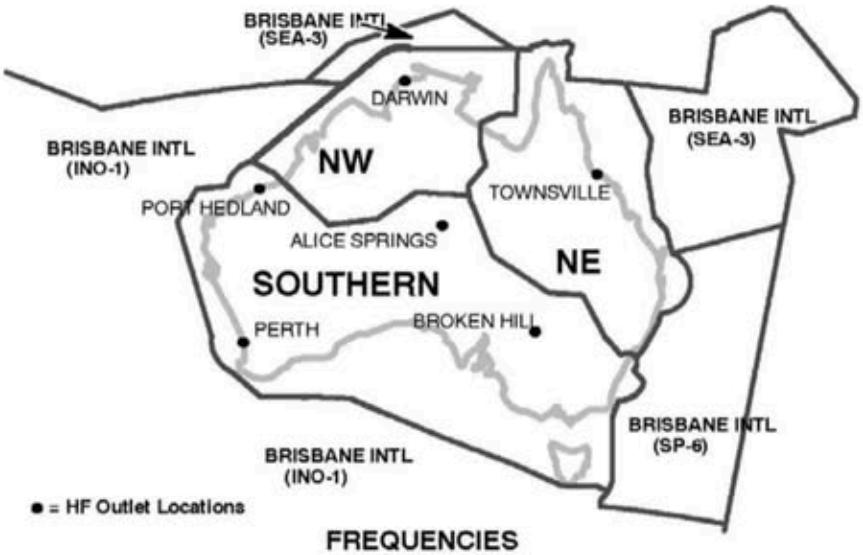
REGULAR COLUMN

The Shortwave Listener

Aviation Stations
This was on 10084KHz (usb) today at around 0100 UTC.
Distances are impressive and at night I'm getting ground stations and aircraft on the other side of the world!

9. FLIGHTWATCH HF ORGANISATION



FREQUENCIES

NORTH WESTERN	3452	6541	6843	SP-6	BRISBANE INTL	3467	5643	8867	13261	17904 (KHZ)
NORTH EASTERN	3452	6610	6831	SEA-3	BRISBANE INTL	3470	6556	11396	13318	17907 (KHZ)
SOUTHERN	3461	6565	6822	INO-1	BRISBANE INTL	3476	5634	8879	13306	17961 (KHZ)

9.1 Australia is divided into six HF Network Areas known as Regional Domestic Air Route Areas (RDARA). Details of the HF FREQ organisation is shown on PCA. All FREQ quote are suppressed carrier FREQ, and the upper sideband mode is used. These HF FREQ are operated from Brisbane.

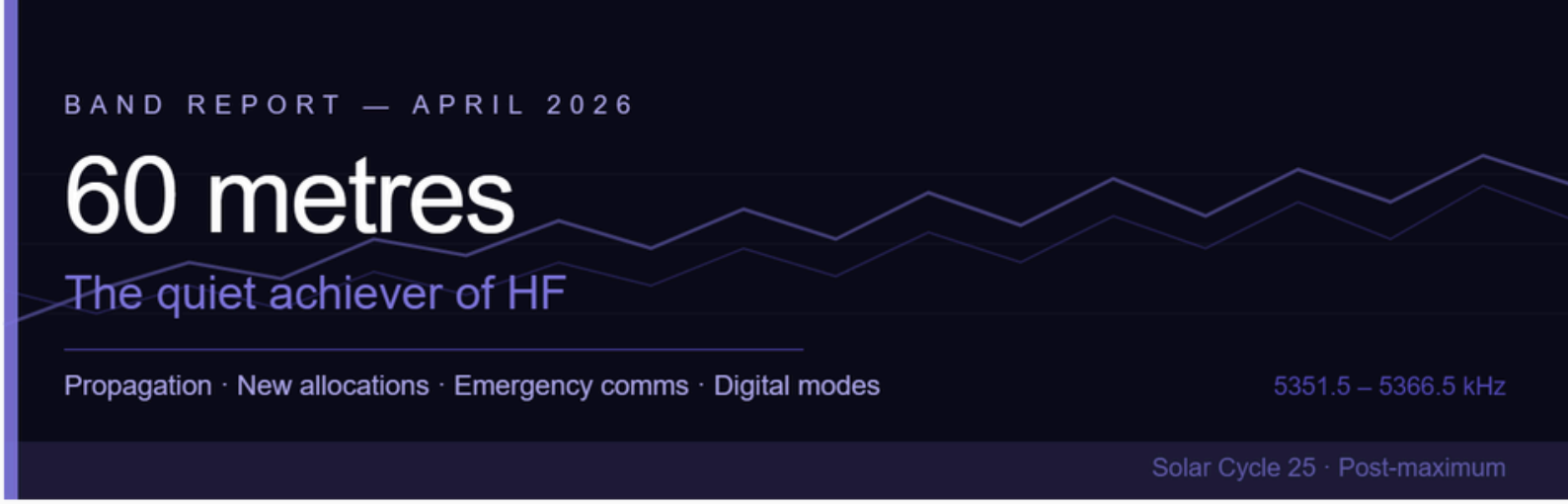
9.2 Depending on HF propagation conditions, the best useable RDARA/MWARA frequencie for reception will vary. Pilots can access up to date primary and secondary frequencies f all Domestic and International HF through the Airservices website. Access is made through Pilot Briefing Services, Location Briefing. Each HF area has been allocated a unique code and once entered into Location Briefing will provide an up to date primary and secondary HF frequency for that selected area. Enter the code that represents the area required in the following table.

RDARA	LOCATION CODE
Southern	165
North Western	170
North Eastern	175
MWARA	
SP-6 Brisbane INTL	150
INO-1 Brisbane INTL	155
SEA-3 Brisbane INTL	160

10. ATS AREA FREQUENCIES AT UNCONTROLLED AERODROMES

10.1 These are shown on en route and terminal charts.

10.2 HF facilities are remotely operated; proximity to these may affect frequency selection. Th location of HF outlets and the frequencies operated from each outlets are shown above.



60 Metres — The Quiet Achiever of HF

Band Report — April 2026

If you haven't spent much time on 60 metres lately, now is an excellent moment to tune in. This understated band is having something of a renaissance in 2026, driven by a combination of favourable propagation, significant regulatory changes, and growing operator interest worldwide.

A brand new allocation
The most significant news on 60m is the expansion of the band itself. As of 13 February 2026, FCC-licensed amateur operators holding General Class or higher licences may operate on a secondary basis anywhere between 5351.5 and 5366.5 kHz, subject to a maximum bandwidth of 2.8 kHz and a maximum transmit power of 9.15 watts ERP. This new 15 kHz wide segment joins the existing four channels centred on 5330.5, 5346.5, 5371.5, and 5403.5 kHz, which retain their secondary status with 100 watts ERP. The new worldwide allocation — a decade in the making since WRC-15 — is a major win for the amateur community globally.

Propagation in 2026
We are currently in the post-maximum phase of Solar Cycle 25, which exceeded all predictions. In spring 2026 we are in the declining phase after the maximum, but conditions remain excellent, with the Solar Flux Index typically sitting between 140 and 160. OERadio For 60 metres specifically, this is actually good news. The D-layer of the ionosphere normally absorbs frequencies of the 30-metre band and lower — including 60m — during daylight hours, making the band most productive around dawn, dusk, and overnight. Ham Radio School As solar activity gradually eases, D-layer absorption softens and 60m night-time paths become increasingly reliable and predictable.

Why 60m deserves your attention
The band sits in a sweet propagation spot — it offers regional near-vertical incidence skywave (NVIS) coverage during the day, and reliable medium to long-distance paths after dark. It is also a cornerstone of emergency communications networks worldwide, trusted when other bands fail. Add the new digital-friendly segment and 60m is busier, more accessible, and more useful than it has ever been.

Get on and explore

Comment
We had a QSO at 8pm NZT on Wednesday 22nd April 760km with great signal reports. ZL1KLF was running one watt. This band is amazing.

MORSE CODE - STORIES
CARYN KD2GUT

"Squirrels are the best thing to grow on trees."

If you are driving and don't know to look for it, you will miss it: a small building that once housed a wireless station that looked out on the vast ocean – and into history. It is considered the first telegraph station to operate in the US.

In 1902, the building stood on the south shore of Long Island, communicating with ships moving in and out of New York Harbor, an hour or so to its west. Wireless pioneer Guglielmo Marconi built it in the shorefront New York community of Babylon where he also used it to train new radio operators. Marconi, of course, has been on our minds especially at this time of the year, as we mark his April birthday. We hams are quick to remember him -- but the building itself was almost lost to time and the elements.

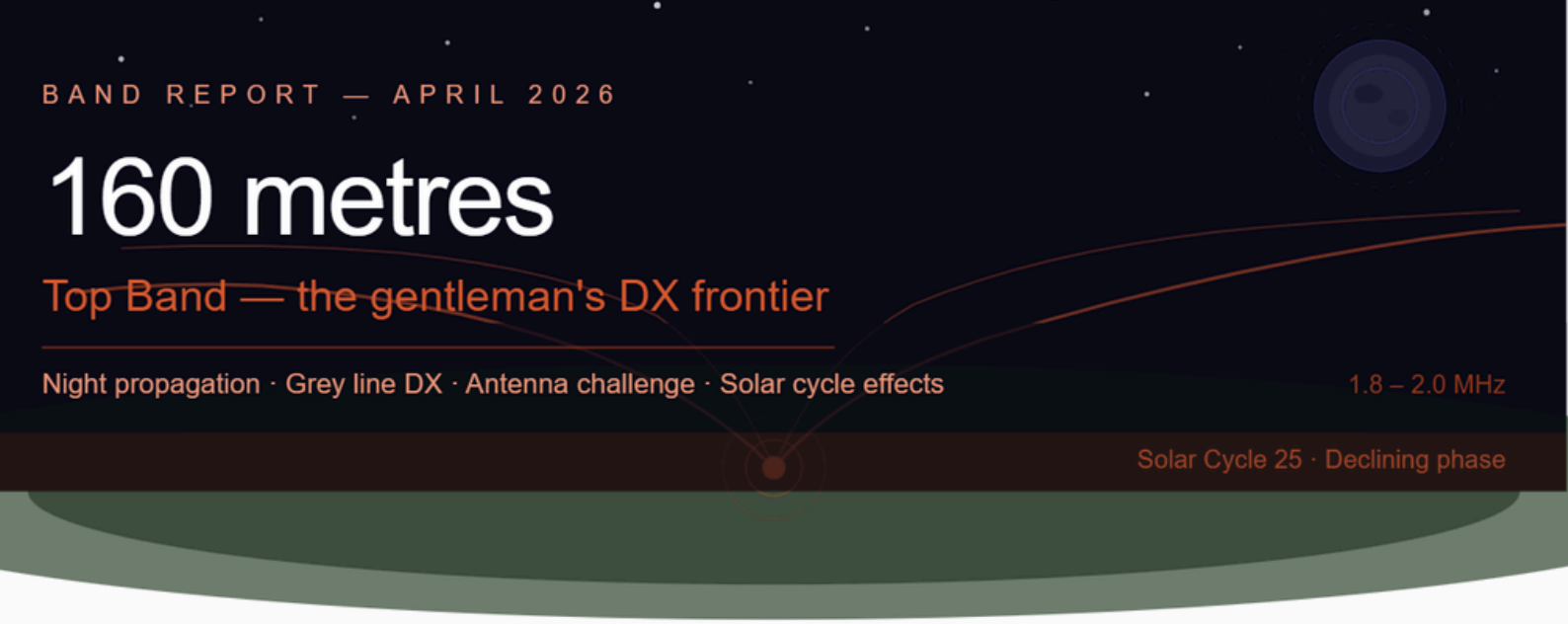
The Marconi shack was closed after five years of operation and the years that followed were no kinder to it than the weather had been. It fell into disrepair. It took the actions of another radio pioneer, Edwin Armstrong, the developer of FM radio, to restore the spark within. He purchased the small building in 1930 as a gift to the Radio Corporation of America to be near its transmitting station farther east on Long Island. That station was itself a touchstone in history: It was considered the world's largest at the time.

The shack was moved one more time – in the mid-1970s – after RCA closed its massive transmitter. Its final home is outside a nearby school building where it stands as a historic landmark.

So yes, blink your eyes and you may miss the physical building altogether. Those of us who enjoy the still-wondrous world of Marconi – especially the CW operators among us – know this to be true, that even in the quiet of its long history, it is still transmitting its story.

CARYN
KD2GUT

The Marconi Shack



160 Metres — Top Band, the Gentleman's DX Frontier

Band Report — April 2026
There is no band in amateur radio quite like 160 metres. Known affectionately as "Top Band" — and equally as the "Gentleman's Band" — 160m is populated by many dedicated experimenters, as it is a proving ground for ingenuity in antenna design and operating technique. Wikipedia In 2026, with Solar Cycle 25 beginning its gradual decline from a surprisingly powerful maximum, the timing to explore Top Band has rarely been better.

Why the solar cycle matters on 160m
Counter-intuitively, 160 metres actually benefits as solar activity eases. During the day, the D-layer forms and absorbs low-band signals on 160m, 80m, and 40m, making them largely unusable for long-distance communication. At night, in the absence of solar radiation, the D-layer completely disappears, removing the absorber and allowing signals to travel up to the F-layer and reflect back to Earth. With Solar Cycle 25 now in its declining phase, D-layer absorption is softening — and low absorption means Pacific and African stations are regularly workable from Europe and North America on 160m.

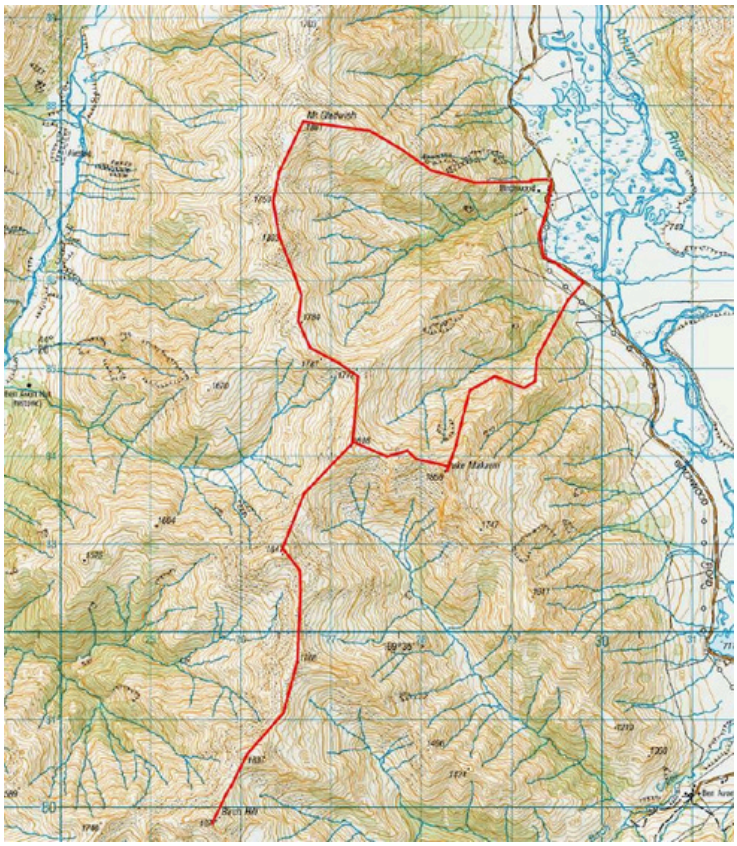
When to operate
Timing is everything on Top Band. The absolute best time for extreme long-distance DX is during the grey line period — the brief window at sunrise or sunset when you are on the transition between day and night. Signals can travel along the terminator line with very low loss, often peaking in strength for about 30 to 60 minutes. Winter months remain the prime season, when thunderstorm activity drops off, reducing atmospheric noise and allowing good 160m operating conditions.

The antenna challenge
Top Band's great equaliser is the antenna. A 160m vertical is huge at 123 feet tall; an inverted V or dipole is massive at 246 feet long. Creative solutions such as the inverted-L with a good radial system make the band accessible even on modest blocks — and the reward for getting it right is a band with a character, community, and magic all of its own.

Get on Top Band after dark and discover what the fuss is about.

Work commitments called for a trip to Christchurch, giving a good excuse for a day of tramping and SOTA on the way up. And if one day trip is a good thing – surely two will be better.

I've been keen to explore the ridgelines between the Ahuriri and Dingle, and the Ohau and Maitland for some time, and the need for 104 more points to reach SOTA Mountain Goat status by the end of the year gave the excuse to nose around these 8-point ridgelines.



Ahuriri

The Longslip Station NZMCA site provided a wonderful spot for the night and a base to explore up the Ahuriri sans-caravan. The road is deteriorating with each year that passes, maintained only as far as the last ratepayer at Lindis Lodge, but is still viable for 2WD with care if the fords are low.

Parking just past the former Birchwood station a tussock spur climbing to Mt Gladwish gives good access to the tops. It's a 1000m climb with the first 500m very steep on grass and tussock and the remaining 500m quite steep on rock and scree. Amazingly, Birchwood Station have run a post and standard fence up the spur back in the early 1900s. 1 standard every 3m. That's a lot of standards to lug up a 1000m hill – and I think I'm doing it hard!

Visibility is lost at the tussockline as we enter cloud, but not before a wonderful view of the scroll-plains and wetlands of the lower Ahuriri – something I'd never appreciated from the valley floor.

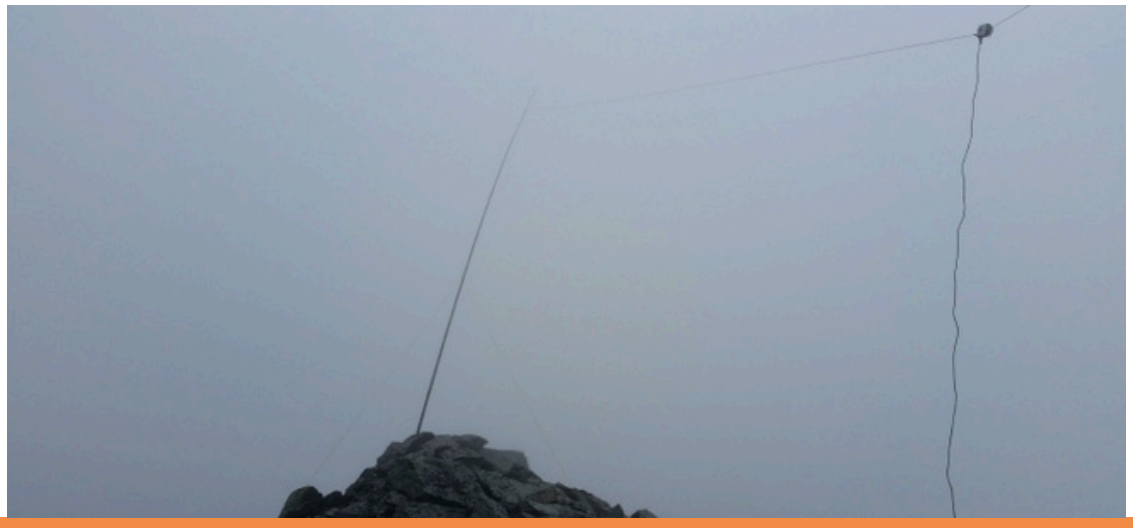
Ahuriri Valley from flanks of Mt Gladwish – downstream

The 'scree' of Mt Gladwish is a chaos of platey slabs. Not the traditional walkable, runnable fine scree we're used to, but a chaos of skittering, shifting slabs and platelets rendered even more treacherous by a drenching, drifting drizzle that floats, soaks, but does not fall. It is a rain with no sense of direction, no urgency to be anywhere, just drifting & soaking all that happen to pass through it. Smirr – the Scots would call it – but to us, merely mist.

The activation of Gladwish – ZL3/OT-216 (8 points) is a terse affair – 4 quick contacts and 'outa here' before the moisture penetrates the dry-bag housing the radio and gear.

From Gladwish the scree ridgeline runs south over a sequence of lower peaks, dropping occasionally to grass-and-lichen saddles before climbing again to the next peak. It's 12km to the next peak on the main ridgeline – Birch Hill - is reasonable tramping all the way with a few rock outcrops and gendarmes to bypass on one side or other.

In contrast to the mobile platelets of Gladwish, Birch Hill – ZL/OT-208 (8 points) – is a stable mass of angular boulders the size of refrigerators which we can still only call scree. The soaking smirr has been replaced by a fine true-mist that dries as fast as it settles in the summer warmth. A straight forward and almost pleasant activation without the need to try and run a radio from inside a dry-bag or use a rain-soaked touch-screen for logging. Almost a pile-up with rapid-fire 10 contacts in six minutes.



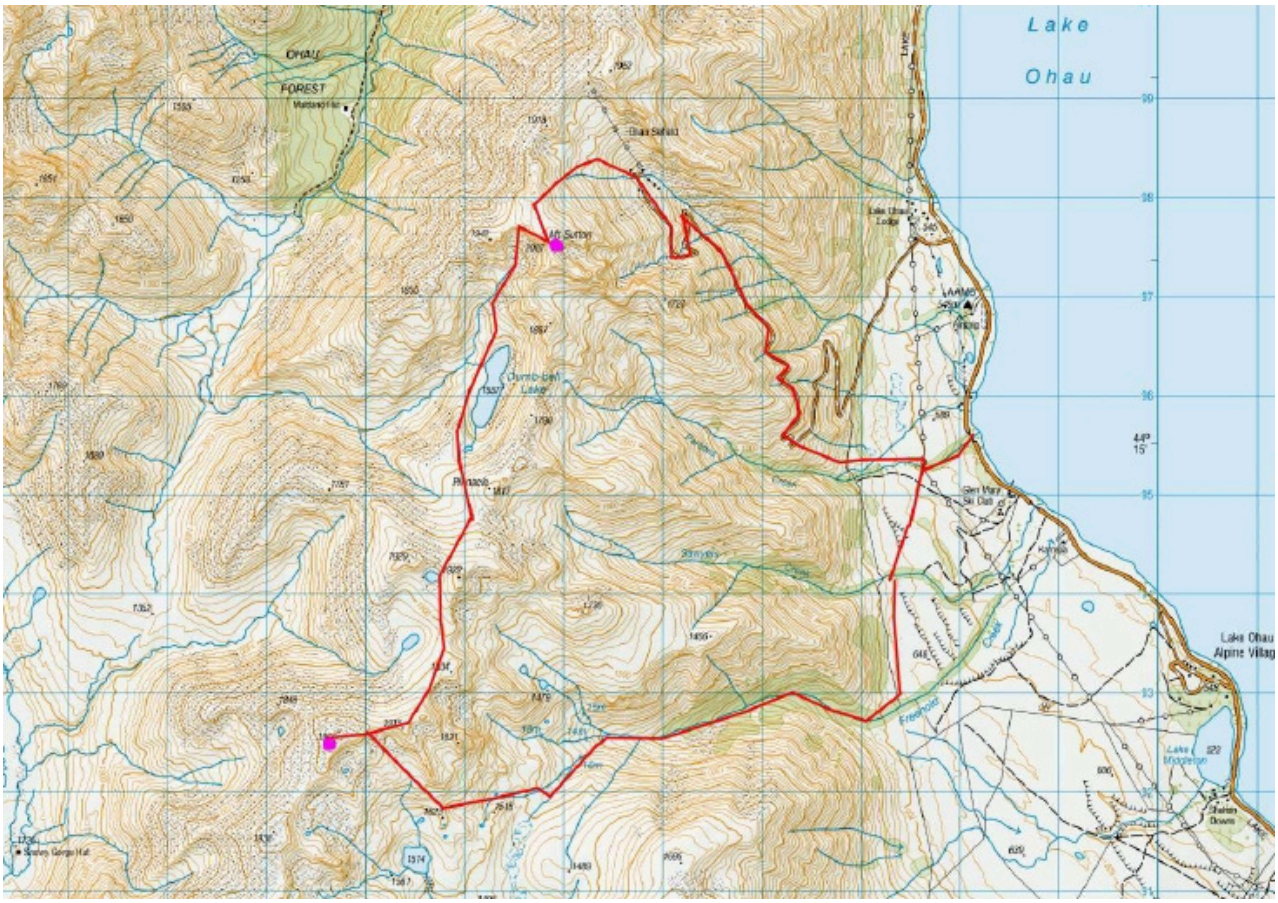
From Birch Hill we retrace our steps 6km back north to drop off the range back to Birchwood Station via the outlying summit of Puke Makariri. Though the lowest of the three peaks, this proves the most challenging, guarded on all sides by sharp ridgelines dominated by sheer rock outcrops. The approach from the main range involves sidling below the impassable ridge on a fine, mobile angular scree that gives and moves and shifts underfoot so that each stride forward slides back almost as far as it had gained. Then scrambling through a maze of scree chutes to regain the summit. The mist has thinned now to that light grey haze – the halo of the sun turning all into a dazzling grey glare.

Puke Makariri – ZL3/OT-220 (8 points) proves another easy activation with 10 easy contacts.

A steep spur drops north-east from Puke Makariri back to Birchwood Station. This proves impassable higher up with rocky outcrops and sheep sides, but we are able to drop into the tussock valley to its north and then sidle back to the spur about 500m above the main valley floor.

Ohau
A basic but pleasant DOC campground on the shore of Lake Middleton at Ohau Village makes for another handy base for the night, and to leave the caravan and explore the ranges west of Lake Ohau. The lake is shallow, a warm bathtemperature swim even at the end of this clouded day.

The key to the locked-road up to Ohau Ski Field is supposedly available for $5 plus a $10 deposit from the Lake Ohau Lodge between 8am and 9pm. However, on arrival the lodge is closed for the day and not due to open in the morning until 10:30am – so it's well worth confirming the exact day and time to collect the key before planning a trip.



So instead of an easy drive up to the skifield at 1500m, we make the 9km, vertical 1000m climb on foot – shortening it slightly by cutting up the spur from the Parsons Creek track.

Mist again covers the upper half of the range, obscuring the skifield and approach but lifting as we climb. The road is a good gradient and easy walking. From the skifield, good maintenance tracks zigzag up to a terrace at 1800m below Mt Sutton – leaving just a 200m climb up mostly a mostly stable scree of vivid red rock to the summit flats.

There are two summits on the 8-point Mt Sutton, ZL3/CB-237, either of which is probably in the activation zone. We choose the higher, westernmost, of the two – though this has more limited phone coverage and thus more awkward spotting.

The cloud has lifted and an easy, dry activation results on 40m – 10 contacts in 7 minutes netting both the summit and the POTA park.

On the map it looks as if the walk to ZL3/CB-251 to the south should be an easy ridgeline traverse. However the section south of Mt Sutton is a knife-edge of crumbling rock, so instead we sacrifice 200m and descent the gully SW off the summit to the sheltered basin of Dumb-bell Lake. The landslip-lake is a lovely spot, with good, if exposed, camping on the natural dam to its west.

Dumb-bell Lake

A poled route starts at the cleared camp-spot and climb gentle back to the ridgeline south of the lake, between Pinnacle and pt1817.

Well-locked, stable, scree-field covers the tops from Pinnacle south making for easy travel. We climb and sidle west of the divide, past a couple of small tarns still partially frozen from winter before swinging west of pt1915 to the summit of the unnamed 8-point ZL3/CB-251.

The clag that hugged the ranges has now lifted to a ceiling of high cloud, and started to descend again as rain as I activate the peak. Initially a few spots of drizzle as I set out the gear, but soon thudding pellets of heavy rain. I'm paranoid about destroying my radio with the end of the year so close and the 1000 point target within reach, but we manage an uneventful activation netting another 10 contacts on 40m, including a park-to-park with VK2BYF on VKFF- 0425.

The gear gets bundled, rather than packed into the safe confines of the dry-bag lined pack in the intensifying rain, and I make a rapid exit off the summit before the easy-travel rock-scree turns to a wet, slippery skating-rink. We descend SSW into Freehold Creek, and pick up the Te Araroa Trail back down to Lake Ohau and the truck at Parson's Creek.

The route from CB-251 down Freehold Creek is excellent. After a brief section of scree off the summit, a grassy terrace leads gently down to the track at pt1374. From there the good poled route is well used and meanders down to the bushedge at 1200m – from where a good marked track runs through mature beach forest to Lake Ohau. All very enjoyable!

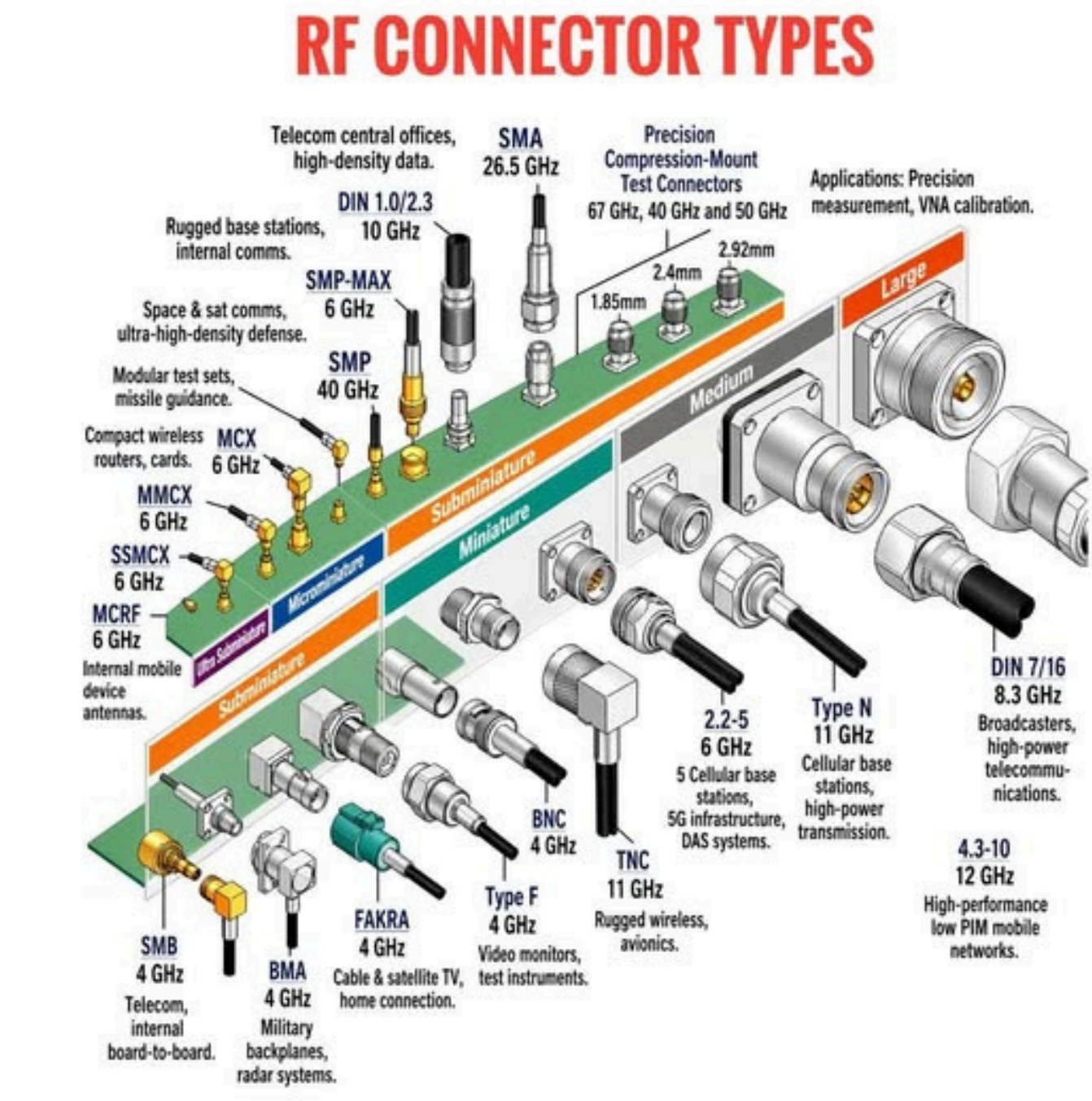
Five 8-point summits - 40 points over two days with just a day pack. And successful activations of two new POTA-parks to boot.

• Day 1: 30km, 2500m cumulative altitude-gain, 3x8 points

• Day 2: 28Km 1900m cumulative altitude-gain, 2x8 points

About typical for a 40-point South Island trip. But with the luxury of not carrying overnight gear – it made for an easy-feeling trip for a body used to full packs in the mountains.

We make Christchurch by 8pm that night – feeling just about fit & ready for the week of work ahead.



ZR1AAH - Africa Correspondent

ALLEN WOOD

CONSTANTIABERG PEAK.... SOTA ZS/WC-047

SOTA ACTVATION OF CONSTANTIABERG PEAK 928M

Constantiaberg peak is the second highest peak in the Table Mountain chain, Maclear's Beacon on Table Mountain being the highest. Dennis, Grant and I hiked up here to activate ZS/WC-047 in May, 2008.

We started at the dam in the Silvermine nature reserve, hiking up to Elephant's Eye,then further up to the peak itself, passing the transmitting mast on the way up. Our route down was via the steep South Western slope to the view point above Blackburn ravine and then onwards back to the parking lot at the dam.

Dennis, ZS1TC, and Grant dressed against the bitterly cold wind on top of the Constantiaberg.
In the background are three SOTA peaks (Upper Steenberg, Muizenberg and Kalkbay peaks)

Looking Eastwards over the Cape Flats and False Bay with the Hottentotsholand Mountain chain and Cape Hangklip in the distant background. In the center foreground is the "Sentek" TV and FM transmitting station. Out of site, just to the left of the camera, is the weather service's radar site.

A portrait shot of myself on the North Western slopes of Constantiaberg with Houtbay fishing village and the Sentinel Peak in the background.

The three of us taking a well earned rest on the way down from the peak. (taken from the same location as the previous pic)

Today we're tipping our headsets to the "Father of Wireless," Guglielmo Marconi.

While he was focused on commercial transatlantic communication, Marconi essentially became the world's first "home-brewer." He started in his attic with copper wire and a dream, proving that long-distance communication wasn't just possible—it was the future.

For the Ham Radio community, Marconi's legacy is everywhere:

- The Spirit of Experimentation: Building something from nothing and seeing how far the signal can go.
- Emergency Service: From the Titanic to modern disaster relief, radio saves lives.
- Global Connection: Bridging the gap between continents and cultures, one QSO at a time.

Whether you're operating QRP, chasing DX, or just checking into the local repeater, we all owe a bit of our hobby to that first "S" sent across the ocean.

73 to the pioneer who paved the way!

CLASSIFIED

WANTED

Wanted Ten Tec 538 Jupiter with ATU or 588 Omni -VII with ATU
Must be in good working order
Contact John zl3trr@gmail.com

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