

Ragchew

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CLUB CONTACT DETAILS:

Email the Secretary for all correspondence please:

Anne Bareham, can be reached on Cell: 072-268 1207 or by email: zs1ct@ctarc.org.za

Banking Details: Name: The Cape Town Amateur Radio Centre.

Standard Bank: Claremont, Cape Town. Branch Code: 025-109 Current





Chairman's chat :



The year is already one month old, I hope it will be a productive one for all of us.

We had an interesting and enlightening "show and tell" meeting, very well attended, especially with three members of the 3Y0K Bouvet Island expedition and a half dozen of young people who came to see what we do in amateur radio, some of whom have signed up for the RAE with Charl.

There are developments with the clubhouse, in the physical and administrative sense.

I arranged a meeting with Graeme Cann, manager of the WPCC, Rob, our clubhouse manager and Anne, our Secretary/Treasurer attended also.

The salient points discussed were our security of tenure, the physical security, the building plans and the matter of the prepaid electricity.

Our honorary legal advisor is looking through a formal document to be agreed to by both parties.

WPCC has a lease with the CoCT for a further eight years with the possible extension of a period of ten years.

WPCC have already spent a considerable amount of money on the Centre, getting architectural plans drawn up, reinstating a lot of the electrical reticulation and enhancing the overall security.

There are heritage issues associated with the Centre which determine what can or cannot be done without extensive consultation.

We were told that a brick wall would be built by WPCC appointed contractors, behind our drywall sections, from floor to ceiling, not affecting our side. The holes in the ceilings would be repaired and painted by WPCC contractors.

A security beam system will be installed in the roof, linked to the existing WPCC security as a separate zone.



All of these changes will enable us to reinstall our radios and equipment which have been stored offsite and we can progress with the setting up of our proposed repeaters.

Tens of thousands of radio amateurs around the world are watching the progress of the 3Y0K expedition which is now expected to depart from Cape Town about two weeks later than originally planned, we wish them well in this challenging voyage. Visit the website 3Y0K.com

Our next meeting at the clubhouse will be the Mega Flea Market on 28th February, the fourth Saturday, different from previous years in order to avoid a clash with rallies. The anticipated start time is 1030 onwards.

Some food and liquid refreshment will be on sale.

Bring your own table and chairs and umbrellas, set up on the grass and have fun.

73 de ZS1S

Secretary and Treasurer's report :

Happy New Year to you all. (Just about in time to still wish you).

A New Year, and lots of great events and happenings will be organised for 2026. Keep your eye on Ragchews and emails for details.

The first major event this year is our Flea Market and in 2026 and in the future, this event will be held now each year on the 4th Saturday in February. There will be the usual delicious boerie rolls and refreshments available, and hopefully even a little sweet treat as well!!

Further details will go out, beginning next week by email.

Don't forget to keep me informed of any changes with your contact details.

Here's wishing you all a great 2026 and look forward to seeing you soon at the Biggest, Better, Bestest Ever, Flea Market on the 28th February.

Chat again next time

Anne

WHAT'S ON THE CALENDAR



February 28th: Mega flea market

March: Foxhunt date to be announced

March 28th: TBA

April 25th: TBA



Bulletin readers

If you would like to become a Sunday morning bulletin reader, please contact

Paul ZS1S on 082 555 0872.

The bulletin is done in two parts. First is the SARL bulletin that THE SARL will email to you to read, the second is the CTARC bulletin that you compile yourself.

Even if you would just like to begin by reading only the SARL bulletin and one of the regular bulletin readers comes on and reads the CTARC bulletin, assistance will be most appreciated.

1 February	Hylton ZR1HPC
8 February	Hylton ZR1HPC
15 February	Charl ZS1ZZ
22 February	Tony ZS1TK
1 March	Rob ZS1SA



Your Committee:

Paul Johnson ZS1S , (Chairman / Bulletin Manager)

Anne Bareham , (Secretary / Treasurer/events coordinator)

Rob Bareham ZS1SA , (Clubhouse manager)

Paul Kennedy ZS1PXK , (Meeting Logistics/QSL manager)

Peter Cloete ZS1PC , (Assets Manager)

John Ward ZS1EQ , (Technical Advisor)

James Dudgeon , ZS1ZKZ (Assistant to Club House Manager)

James Venmore, ZS1RBT (Webmaster / Blog spot Manager)

Charl Marais, ZS1ZZ (Ragchew editor /RAE/Field day/Youth)

Ian Bradley , ZS1BR (Clubhouse IT manager/WCRWG Rep / Lighthouse manager)

Michael Taylor , ZS1MJT (Emergency Preparedness)





You are invited to the CTARC Mega Fleamarket at Belvedere Community Centre, Chess Rd, Rondebosch! Join us from 10:30 for incredible bargains and hidden treasures.

Sellers welcome – R15 per table (please bring your own table) and you'll receive a ticket to the lucky draw prize!

Bargain hunters: bring a camping chair as seating is limited. Boerie rolls will be on sale as well as ice cold refreshments.

Warning:

May cause extreme bargain-hunting behavior, spontaneous purchases of things you never knew you needed, and the sudden urge to haggle over everything.

Everybody welcome, see you there!





CTARC is now on CLUBLOG

ClubLog is an online database with a suite of powerful tools supporting active DXers. Once you have registered on ClubLog and uploaded your log, you will be able to:

Generate personal reports, showing which DXCC countries you have worked and/or confirmed, when you first worked them, which ones you still need, and which are the most likely to QSL; See how you stand relative to your peers in various league tables and challenges; analyse your log for possible/likely errors in the DXCC allocations; Predict the bands and times on which you are most likely to work almost any DX station, based on actual QSOs in the logs uploaded to Club Log, and draw great circle maps; Set up a personal DX Cluster feed that filters out the DXCCs you have already worked, leaving just the ones you still need.

Once you have registered with Clublog, under settings and club you will see CTARC. Please join our league table to encourage HF activity and promote some healthy competition between our members.

Additionally our club group can be ranked amongst other clubs around the world.

Chris, ZS1CDG

The screenshot shows the ClubLog website interface. At the top, there is a navigation bar with links for Home, Settings, Upload, QORS, Donate, Expeditions, and Help. Below this is a secondary navigation bar with buttons for Settings, Callsigns, Locators, Clubs, Call A, Admin, App. Passwords, Access Log, and Live Stream. The main content area is titled 'Main Account Settings' and contains a 'Personal details' section with fields for Name (Chris Gozzard), Email (chris.gozzard@1.com), and Photo. A green box highlights the 'Settings' button in the secondary navigation bar with the text 'Click on Settings'. A red arrow points from this button to the 'Clubs' button in the secondary navigation bar. Another green box highlights the 'Clubs' button with the text 'Then clubs'. A second red arrow points from the 'Clubs' button to the 'Settings' button in the secondary navigation bar.

**A list of clubs will pop up.
Find CTARC in the list and select our club.
Finally click “Join Club”**



WE WANT YOU!



See latest **CLUBLOG** table for CTARC's latest standing :

Rank	Callsign	160	80	60	40	30	20	17	15	12	10	DXCC ▼	Slots	Range
1	ZS1J	110	141	31	273	182	327	248	296	222	290	340	2120	45 yrs
2	ZS6P	63	141	0	272	104	329	241	295	214	289	340	1948	44 yrs
3	ZS1A+1	137	208	102	278	249	322	304	314	295	293	337	2502	46 yrs
4	ZS1LS	178	260	172	305	311	323	321	323	310	299	326	2802	17 yrs
5	ZS2Y	20	140	27	201	237	274	254	289	243	266	323	1951	20 yrs
6	ZS10PB	0	1	0	34	0	196	161	120	44	132	245	688	8 yrs
7	DF1KW	0	68	0	153	70	213	86	89	62	104	217	845	6 yrs
8	ZS1TT+1	1	17	0	126	43	134	78	147	121	116	211	783	24 yrs
9	ZS1PT	0	5	0	48	45	104	28	81	7	137	181	455	31 yrs
10	ZS1SA	0	2	1	28	22	88	74	128	83	135	176	561	16 yrs
		160	80	60	40	30	20	17	15	12	10			
11	ZS1WH	0	2	0	20	5	139	56	109	48	108	167	487	1 yrs
12	ZS1JDM	1	1	1	16	12	58	50	43	40	88	114	310	3 yrs
13	ZS1ZZ	0	0	0	23	15	31	0	30	32	81	104	212	5 yrs
14	ZS1CO	0	0	0	1	0	3	0	81	0	11	82	96	3 yrs
15	ZS1GAK+1	0	3	0	17	0	38	2	46	19	31	68	156	15 yrs

RAE information

Do YOU want to become an Amateur radio operator ?

Be part of a Progressive, Friendly , Balanced and Considerate community ?

Why not partake in the RAE exam and become a registered Amateur radio operator which will give you the opportunity to:

- Make long distance communications across the globe
- Work satellites and possibly even make contact with an astronaut
- Radio sport such as Foxhunts and SOTA is within your grasp
- Acquire new technological skills and widen your knowledge base
- Acquire emergency communication preparedness skills
- Obtain the internationally recognised HAREC certificate
- Practice an amazing hobby and form friendships around the globe

Please email: zs1ct@ctarc.org.za for information

CONTEST CORNER NR 142

International contests

- Feb 1st North America SSB sprint
- Feb 7th LABRE RS Digi contest
- Feb 8th North America CW sprint
- Feb 14th RSGB 1.8 MHz
- Feb 14th CQ WW WPX RTTY contest
- Feb 15th CQ WW WPX RTTY contest
- Feb 15th Balkan HF contest
- Feb 28th North America QSO party

ZS COUNTRY CONTESTS

- Feb 1st AWWA CW activity day
- Feb 8th AMSAT SA QO100 QSO party
- Feb 18th SARL 80m Wednesday club contest

The 2026 SARL contest manual is now available on the SARL website , please download it for your perusal.

<https://mysarl.org.za/contest-resources/>

Why we participate in contests

- **Sharpen Your Skills.** Contests push you to optimize your antenna, refine your operating technique, and master propagation — all under the pressure of a ticking clock.
- **Build Community.** Club contest teams foster camaraderie and mentorship. Whether you're a seasoned contester or a first-timer, you'll find a welcoming group eager to help you improve.
- **Expand Your Reach.** Chasing multipliers in new zones, countries, and grid squares gives you a structured reason to work stations you'd never contact on a casual basis.
- **Support the Hobby.** Millions of contest contacts generate valuable propagation and ionospheric data, and demonstrate to regulators that amateur radio is an active, technically sophisticated service.
- **Stay Engaged.** Contests give newcomers a fun, goal-driven reason to keep getting on the air — one of the best ways to avoid the dreaded "shiny new radio gathering dust" fate.



January show and tell



24 January 14:00, a sweltering summer day and the meeting got under way. With the opening procedures and absentee apologies done, the real matters were dealt with. The club was graced with no less than three of the Bouvet island Dxpedition members. These intrepid gentlemen came from various parts of the globe which included Iceland.

Show n tell was next on the agenda. Show n tell is a general brag session whereby various items or projects are exhibited, whether complete or not. Many an exhibit has proven to be an item worthy of any brag.



First off was Charl ZS1ZZ with his cannon. This device employing pneumatics. Once pressurised this device could hurl a guide line for an antenna over a very high tree. Thus enabling setting a field day antenna to a phenomenal height. Absolutely amazing. Greg ZS1IX produced a capacitance measuring instrument. Something no shack should be without, especially the builders and those that salvage components, a truly brilliant build.

Mike ZS1FP presented two very nifty devices that verified the precise connectivity of an AC connection. That is neutral, live and earth, definitely a handy addition to your shack or any place in the QTH.

Stephan ZS1SKL brought a battery substitute that replaces some difficult to obtain batteries with over the counter 18650 batteries, pure genius.

Hylton ZR1HPC. Brought up a discussion of an antenna system to be used in the instance of a HOA.

In total 37 members made their presence felt, 6 visitors graced our presence and then of course our esteemed guests from the Bouvet island expedition.

A most enjoyable meeting closed at 16:00 with many discussions and debates still on the go.

Looking forward to the next meet which is in the form of a Flea Market on the 28 February.

NOT TO BE MISSED!!!!!!!

Tony Kahn
ZS1TK

From left to right :
Donato IK2EGL, Paul ZS1S,
Vlad OK2WX, Gudmi TF3SG



CTARC Foxhunt 13 December 2025



The morning of the 13th of December came with the excitement that only prevails at the onslaught of the holiday season, the excitement was however a result of the Foxhunt .

As the hunters gathered at the CTARC clubhouse , the salted and those that had no idea what was about to happen, except for Tony ZS1TK, as always Tony opened RF café with flair, coffee, tea and snacks were awaiting any visitors and hunters.

As the clock struck the magical time the fox awoke with its morse code filling the ether , the hunters hungry for fox, started following the transmission with direction finding antenna pointing in every direction. Hunters with vehicles resembling porcupines, numerous antenna atop started their slow crawl through the adjacent suburbs of Rondebosch.

Although the fox was relatively close to the Clubhouse , within two kilometers, the struggle was real. With roadworks and one way streets aggravating and prolonging the hunt. The hunters however slowly but surely encircled the prey .

Colin ZS1RS who brought some friends along, was at the fox first , beaming smiles as the children found the fox . Thereafter Andrew ZS1BAT made his appearance with ZS1NOS Marais hot on his heels.

Some of the park goers eying the hunters suspiciously asking whether we are looking for exploding devices , with some calming explanation that notion was quickly laid to rest. As everyone gathered at the clubhouse for some coffee or something more refreshing.



To those that participated , many thanks also a huge thanks to Tony ZS1TK for opening RF Café.

Keep an eye on the communication channels for the next Foxhunt .



Charl ZS1ZZ

Has NASA become an “Old Boys” Amateur Radio organisation?

I once heard a group of hams discussing over the air, if NASA was in fact a radio Amateur “Old Boys” club. “You won’t get far in that organisation without a ham license” they implied. To find out how true this statement was I conducted some online research of events and NASA’s involvement with Amateur radio.

The earliest involvement between Amateur radio and NASA that I could find was the launch of Orbital Satellite Carrying Amateur Radio (OSCAR 1) on December 12 1961, followed by successively more ham satellites ever since. 1961 was an important year in space!

In early 1961, it was discovered that the Soviets were planning to put the first man into space. NASA made a yeoman’s effort to launch a man into space also. Before they could put the first human in orbit, Project Mercury, needed to test their life-support systems and assess how a primate’s body and cognitive function would be affected by the stresses of space flight.

A three year old chimpanzee was trained to push levers in response to flashing blue lights to receive a banana pellet reward and avoid a mild electric shock. In January, 1961 he was launched into space aboard a Mercury rocket. His performance in space was only a fraction of a second slower than on Earth, demonstrating that complex tasks could be performed during flight. More about this important chimp and his relationship to our hobby follows.

On April 12, 1961, Yuri Gagarin, a Soviet cosmonaut, became the first human to make a successful space flight. This immediately caused the race for space to be intensified.

As a side note, at one time it was believed that Yuri Gagarin, the first human in space, was an amateur radio operator with the call sign UA1LO. However, this proved to be false. The call sign UA1LO actually belonged to Yuri Babkov from St. Petersburg and the confusion originated when Yuri the ham sent a government supplied QSL card with a photo of Yuri the cosmonaut on one side and simply signed Yuri UA1LO with the QSO details on the other side. During the cold war, Soviet hams could only post government issued QSL cards which always depicted a Soviet success picture on one side.

The first radio Amateur to operate from space was Owen Garriott, W5LFL in 1983. Your author, is very proud to have received a QSL card from that historical event.

Many more members of NASA including ground crews and support engineers are also licensed radio Amateurs giving NASA an unusually high percentage of licensed radio Amateurs among its employees and contributors.

In October 2000, amateur radio equipment launched inside the space station along with its first crew members, who deployed it on Nov. 13, 2000.

W5RRR  USA

JOHN J MACA III
JSC AMATEUR RADIO CLUB
2101 NASA Road 1 M/C AW7
Houston, TX 77058
USA

<https://www.qrz.com/db/W5RRR>



The Amateur Radio on the International Space Station (ARISS) program and the American Radio Relay League (ARRL) have documented many licensed crew members, but not all participants or past hams are formally listed. Ham radio operations on the Shuttle, Mir and ISS have taken place regularly.

According to ARISS.org, approximately 260 astronauts have been radio Amateurs, many of these flying in several different missions. We do not have a list of how many cosmonauts held Amateur licenses as the details of these are difficult to obtain compared to the readily available information provided by NASA and AMSAT organisations.

NASA Encouraging Youth To Become Scientists, Engineers, Mathematicians and Most Importantly From Our Standpoint, Radio Amateurs

Students have been talking to astronauts in space for over 40 years.

In 1983, the Shuttle Columbia, STS-9 mission marked the genesis of an official NASA program, the [Shuttle Amateur Radio Experiment, SAREX](#). In 1988, a permanent Amateur Radio station was installed on the Russian MIR Space Station.

In the years that followed, Amateur Radio played a part in almost every U.S. and Russian space mission. Dozens of U.S. Astronauts, Russian Cosmonauts and astronauts from several other countries have picked up the microphone and called CQ from Space, initiating radio contacts with classroom students and amateur radio operators around the world. SAREX was replaced in 1996 by [ARISS](#),

Most crew members on the International Space Station (ISS) have obtained their amateur radio license in preparation for their mission. This is part of the ARISS program, which uses amateur radio to connect students with astronauts.

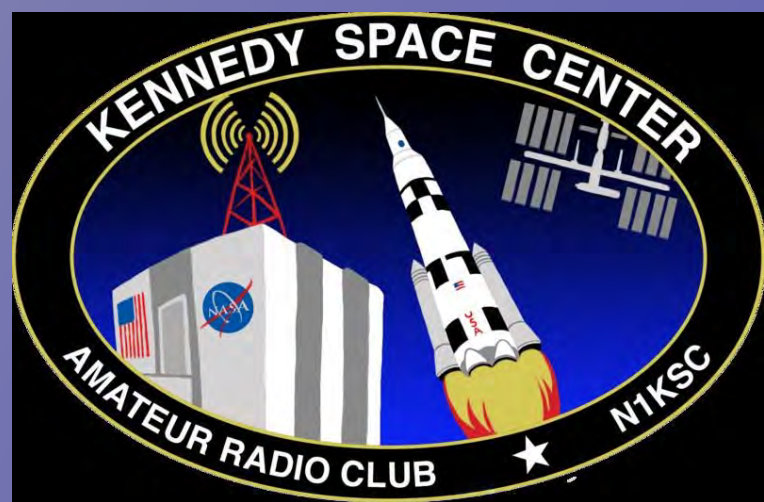
ISS Ham Radio, also known as Amateur Radio on the International Space Station (ARISS), has operated continuously since its launch. Each year, the program hosts about a hundred contacts. It has now directly connected over 100 crew members with more than 1 million student participants from 49 U.S. states, 63 countries, and every continent. These experiences encourage interest in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) education and help inspire the next generation to also become members of the Amateur radio fraternity.

NOTA - NASA On The Air

And not all of NASA's ham events take place in space. I am sure you have heard of POTA and other similar operations, well, NASA has NOTA and it involves working as many of their 12 research centers, scattered throughout the USA. as possible, and is a year long event. Each of NASA's research centers has its own NASA sponsored Amateur radio club.

N1KSC  USA

Kevin J Zari
Kennedy Space Center Amateur Radio Club
NASA Mail Code EXC-KARC
Kennedy Space Center, FL 32899
USA



Growing interest: Recent commercial space missions have seen a continued interest in ham radio. The entire NASA crew on the SpaceX Crew-6 mission, which launched in 2023, were hams.

In a document published by Frank H. Bauer, KA3HDO AMSAT V.P. for Human Spaceflight, Members of the Johnson Space Center Radio Club initiated a successful amateur radio licensing program which has resulted in a large influx of astronauts obtaining their amateur radio licenses. The Crew Training Plan was formalised and made more efficient; generic lessons and educational material were developed by ARRL that could be used for every flight. In addition, a concerted effort was initiated to license NASA's astronauts. About half of the U.S. astronauts currently have ham radio licenses.

AstroChimp

And before we finish, back to that three year old chimpanzee launched into space from Cape Canaveral, way back in 1961.

The chimp performed all of his tasks properly while in orbit, landed safely and lived to an old age. When I researched the details about this little hero, I shouldn't have been surprised by what I found.

What was this fellow's name? His name was **Ham**.



73

Rob Bareham ZS1SA

CTARC work party 20 December 2025

Saturday the 20th December arrived and a number of club members negotiated their way to the clubhouse through the traffic for the long anticipated work party, the 145.700Mhz repeater buzzing with a number of club members having a good old ragchew on route. Upon arrival the myriad of antenna in storage was unpacked and the lawn in front of the clubhouse turned into a display of antenna bits and pieces.

The elmers in the club were fully prepared with printed diagrams and measurements, tape measures which enable both metric and imperial measurements made their appearance, this was a crucial part of the planning as all the diagrams were imperial. With traps and aluminum surrounding us we started the process of sorting the antenna bits and laying them out on the lawn ensuring mounting brackets etc were all bundled together.



This went faster than anticipated (I am sure most of those present built puzzles as children). Missing or damaged sections were carefully measured and notes made to procure their replacements.

And then a pleasant surprise as a visitor made their appearance, Jens Nolte HB9EKO from Switzerland was in ZS country to partake



in some SOTA fun. I trust many of you managed to get Jens in the log, he was planning on activating a number of SOTA points which has never been activated previously.



Under a watchful eye of Paul ZS1S (Chairman) and Rob ZS1SA (clubhouse manager) the antenna was bundled, some earmarked for the February Mega flea market and other were allocated to our Lighthouse kit or as backup for our current antenna array.

As the repacking of the bundled and labelled antenna came to an end the customary ragchew started where those present discussed many topics around amateur radio.

Many thanks to those who made the day, your assistance as always is priceless and a true reflection of Amateur radio camaraderie.



ZS1ZZ Charl



SOTA in Cape Town (ZS/WC Western Cape)

In December, I was in Cape Town on a family vacation, and wanted to activate at least one summit in ZS. In the end, I managed three. After that, the family program was so full that I saved a few summits for my next visit.

I started preparations before the holidays and contacted association managers Sid ZS5AYC and Adele ZS5APT, and as Phil ZS1WW, the ZS/WC (Western Cape) regional manager, and all other ZS activators who helped me with planning and provided valuable advice. I would also like to thank a long-time friend of my XYL, who helped me with detective work regarding access to summits on private property, as well as my father-in-law, who accompanied me during the activations.

The first important step was that Sid and Adele enabled me to join the ZS SOTA/WWFF/POTA WhatsApp group. The outdoor radio operators in ZS are in contact with each other in this way, and they mainly use WhatsApp for spotting, rather than SOTAwatch.

There is a reason for this: the usual distances at which we reach lots of chasers in the EU are, in ZS, just connections to other parts of the country or to Namibia. Everything else is DX.

The majority of SOTA connections therefore take place on 40m or 20m. 30m is also used. It is remarkable that 30m can also be used for SSB connections in ZS. During my activations, DX to the EU was only possible on 10m. In 2 out of 3 activations, I had the majority of my QSOs to the EU, although unfortunately the proportion of HB9 stations was quite low. According to VOACAP, conditions to HB9 would have been better later in the afternoon.

The activations therefore had a conflict of objectives. As temperatures rise quite quickly in summer and the sun is quite strong, it is advisable to ascend as early as possible in the morning. Sun protection and plenty of water are very important. In the early afternoon, it usually gets very windy, so EU QSOs should take place in the time window between when the 10m band opens up towards the EU and the wind picks up.

For my activations, I used the FT-891 with the mAT-30 tuner and my 12Ah Eremit battery. I carried my 10m DX-Wire fibreglass mast for a vertical antenna. For 2m, I used my FT-2D with an RH770.

ZS/WC-965 Vasco Dagamapiek

This summit is located in Cape Point National Park. We started the activation a bit late in the afternoon. From the car park which most visitors use to visit Cape Point, there is a hiking trail in the opposite direction to the summit, where there are buildings from an old radar station from the Second World War. The hiking trail corresponds roughly to SAC class T2-T3, there are a few places where you have to climb over rocks. The exposed areas





have the advantage that there is quite a lot of bushes growing on the steep slopes, so that you would have had a certain 'fallback level' in case of missteps.

After about 2/3 of the altitude, the wind became so strong that I had my doubts whether it would still be possible to activate the summit under these conditions. However, we did not want to turn back, and when I was sure that we were within the activation zone, I found a spot between two rocks just below the summit that was somewhat sheltered from the wind and where I could secure the mast with the vertical antenna so that it was reasonably stable in the wind. The conditions were a bit unpleasant. After I had completed four QSOs with ZS chasers, and the 10m band did not appear to be open to the EU, we quickly packed up and descended again.

ZS/WC-062 Hoer Steenbergpiek

This summit is also located in a national park. From the car park, a fairly easy T2 hiking trail leads to the summit. In the activation zone, there are rocks and bushes where you can find a comfortable sitting position and mast attachment. After working a few ZS chasers, I made a QSY to 10m. The band was open to Europe, and after Chris F4WBN was, unsurprisingly, my first chaser from Europe, I made a lot of QSOs in SSB and CW. I wanted to stay longer, but the activation on the HF bands ended when the battery was depleted. On 2m, I had a few more QSOs to make it to 50, then we started our descent and were glad to have extra water in the boot of the car.



ZS/WC-935 Kanonkop

This was a first activation. The path leads through a vineyard, and there is a private road to the radio towers on the summit, which unfortunately cannot be used. However, there are trails for mountain bikes and trail runners, one of which leads directly through the activation zone past the fence of the radio towers. I activated at a viewing platform.

Here, too, the 10m band was open to the EU.



However, as this was one of the hottest days during our stay, it became very uncomfortable in the sun after a while. Not only did we get a little hot, but so did the

battery: after I accidentally left it in the sun, the overheating protection kicked in. I was able to fix the problem by covering it and reducing the power to 50W.



On this summit, I had a large number of chasers from the Cape Town area. This was no coincidence: the previous weekend, I paid a quick visit to CTARC, the local amateur

radio club to say hello to the Chairman, Paul, ZS1S. Some club members were checking and sorting equipment, I had some nice conversations, and Paul mentioned my first activation the following day in the news bulletin on the local repeater.

I have a few more summits on my radar for my next stay in Cape Town, although I would plan that for a season with more pleasant temperatures and less wind.

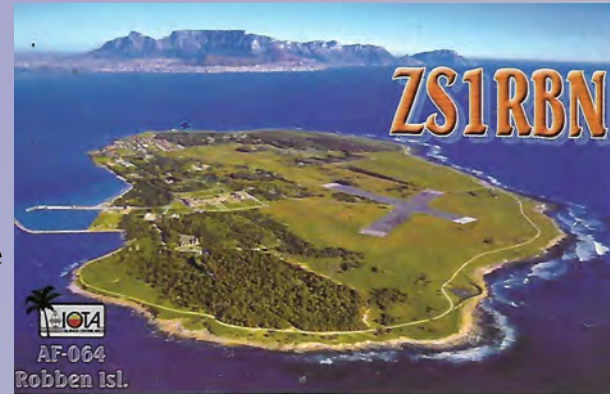


73 Jens
ZS1/
HB9EKO

ROBBEN ISLAND, 2003

The idea for an IOTA expedition to Robben Island evolved from last year's ill-fated holiday to Cape Town. When I got home, I checked my IOTA Directory and was surprised to find its Group (Western Cape Province South West – AF-064) to be one of the most wanted IOTAs in Africa, and in the top 500 worldwide, there having been only five previous operations, mainly on an SSB only basis. Although there are other islands in the Group, Robben Island is so easy to get to that I was surprised that it was not activated seriously on at least an annual basis.

I knew from talking to Al, ZS1AAX that he had been on one of the previous expeditions as he had complained that the SSB station had kept stealing the beam from the CW station. Thus, in mid June 2002 I floated the idea to Vidi; ZS1EL, Al; ZS1AAX and Jim; G3RTE for an all FOC expedition. Unfortunately, Al was not able to join us but Jim and Vidi were most enthusiastic and we started making plans for an April 2003 operation with two similarly equipped stations – one for CW and the other for SSB.



Robben Island is some 2 km wide by 4 km long and lies in Table Bay, about 12 km off Cape Town and is probably best known as having been Nelson Mandela's prison between 1964 and 1982. In 1996 it became a National Museum and National Monument and in 1999 was declared a World Heritage Site by UNESCO. It is well served by several passenger ferries a day for visitors who want to see the prison and the slate quarries where the prisoners worked. There are also many species of birds, including ostriches, African penguins, black oystercatchers, and several species of deer that roam unrestricted, as well as rabbits by the million

Vidi made contact with Esther Henderson, the Museum's Media and Film Liaison Officer, Marketing and Communications in June 2002 and briefly explained what we had in mind. I was elected team leader at this point and it fell to me to fill in the lengthy questionnaire about our activities. Aimed principally at film crews and journalists it included such questions as "Describe your media company" and "What is the approximate envisaged time-length or word and page size of the product". I filled it in to the best of my ability and described in less than 300 words what amateur radio in general, and an IOTA expedition in particular, is all about. Whatever I said, it must have worked because we very quickly received the green light, including the offer of the use of the guesthouse on the island with electrical power and sleeping facilities at a very reasonable cost. The only provisos were the usual one about interference to the port or other radio services and a request not to seat our temporary antenna masts in concrete!

Vidi contacted the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) and arranged for the special event call sign of ZS1RBN to be issued for the period of the planned operation. We also kept in touch by e-mail and radio and decided that we needed at least one if not two other operators if we were to run two stations on a 24 hours a day basis. It was obviously sensible if we could involve some other South Africans, and Vidi very swiftly recruited Malcolm; ZS1MC and Kosie; ZS1SR, both very keen but relatively inexperienced SSB-only types. In August, there was a small flurry of activity from Robben and Dassen Islands for the Lighthouse Weekend, but there were no big QSO numbers, so our plans were unaffected.



The team tuning the vertical



In December, Jim; G3RTE was forced to withdraw for medical reasons, so in early January 2003 I co-opted David; G3UNA who had been with us on the Wasini Island, 5Z4WI expedition in March 2000. David is a “techie” and a good CW operator. However, Vidi thought that we needed another operator to bring the team to six, and approached Andrew; ZS1AN who is relatively newly licensed and a keen CW operator. It was he who had activated Dassen Island with his girlfriend, Stacey; ZR1SC for the Lighthouse Weekend and he very promptly accepted the invitation.

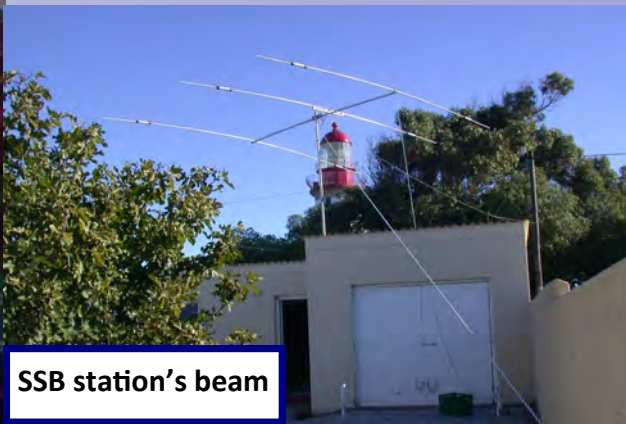


Then the bombshell landed. Vidi contacted the Robben Island Museum to firm up dates and final details, only to be told that Esther Henderson was on maternity leave, the guest-house was undergoing refurbishment and that the whole matter would have to be reconsidered in view of the “current security situation”. Vidi obtained an official letter of support from the South African Radio League (SARL) which stated that amateur radio was in no way any sort of security threat, but there were a couple of weeks when there was a big question mark over the expedition, and we started to look at the possibilities of going to Dassen Island instead. Vidi also contacted Bernie Germishuys of the National Ports Authority (NPA) who operate the lighthouses on the two islands, who was only too happy to help, but stated that we would still need permission from the Robben Island Museum authorities. After much nail biting, common sense prevailed and the necessary permissions for Robben Island were confirmed in late January for an operation over the extended weekend of 3rd/7th April 2003.

Vidi, Malcolm and Kosie made a reconnaissance visit to the island in late February and met Cyril Mkhulise, the lighthouse keeper. The lighthouse is located on the highest point of the island, about 24 metres above sea level on Minto’s Hill, named after a nineteenth-century Surgeon-Superintendent of the island’s General Infirmary. About 150 meters north of the lighthouse is an empty three-bedroom house owned by the NPA, which can sleep six complete with beds and mattresses, a bathroom and a kitchen with a fridge/freezer, stove and a few utensils. An external laundry room fitted with an electrical outlet, chairs and a table would serve as operating position for one station.

Cyril made his office at the lighthouse available for the second station, with electrical outlets and plenty of table space. The lighthouse itself is about 20 meters high and one can climb all the way to the top via a spiral stairway on the inside. About 50 meters to the east of the lighthouse is a vertical antenna of about 22 meters made of heavy aluminum tube and insulated at the base. This antenna is presently redundant but was once used for a high power LF navigational beacon and was available for us to use. There appeared to be a ground system under the surface of the surrounding terrain, but we had no idea of how far it extended.

The South African members of the team provided most of the equipment and antennas, and thanks to Andrew, a second amplifier was borrowed from the Cape Town Amateur Radio Centre. All that David and I had to bring were our keys, headphones, laptops and Dunestar filters kindly loaned by Neville; G3NUG and Don; G3XTT. The plan was for David and I to fly from our regional airports via Amsterdam, Schiphol with KLM and then overnight to Cape Town via Johannesburg, arriving late on the morning of 4th April. Andrew would meet us and drive us to the Nelson Mandela Gateway at the V & A Waterfront to catch the 1 p.m. personnel ferry to the island. I checked my bag through to Cape



Town from Bristol and asked the check-in clerk to sit me next to David on the main flight, but she was unable to give me a seat as she “couldn’t access the flight”. A few minutes after checking my bag there was a PA announcement for “passenger Whitchurch travelling to Amsterdam” to report to the check in desk again. The security people had X-rayed my bag and didn’t like the look of all the cables and other electronic apparatus, so I was asked to open it and explain. Having done so, the bag went back onto the conveyor. It’s always comforting when you think that someone is actually awake and looking at the contents of the hold baggage!

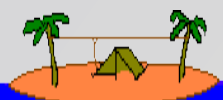


On arrival at Amsterdam, I reported to the transfer desk, to be told that I was “on standby” and to report to the departure gate an hour before departure. There were a number of other passengers in the same situation and I admit to being fairly assertive in getting to the front of the queue to obtain a seat and a boarding pass, but David and I were not seated together.

The flight was otherwise uneventful except that the meal was served with steel cutlery. Most unusual post 9/11! I slept for most of it, despite Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets being shown. We arrived at Cape Town on time, cleared immigration and waited for the bags to arrive. David’s was quick off the carousel, but mine didn’t arrive at all. This is the third time I have lost baggage at Schiphol Airport! After completing the usual Property Irregularity Report, I was presented with a superb KLM badged and branded “First Needs Kit (Male)”. Given that the office in the reclaim area deals with lost baggage from every airline, to be so equipped only serves to confirm that KLM loses an awful lot of baggage! We finally cleared Customs and set out to look for Andrew who had positioned himself directly opposite the arrivals area doors with a large ZS1RBN banner rigged between two baggage trolleys, yet we both missed him first time round!

The journey from the airport to the Waterfront was via a supermarket to top up with food for the weekend and a shop to buy at least a clean shirt and some shorts (unsuccessfully). Andrew also contacted Budd, ZS1B by cell phone and arranged to borrow a 1950s vintage “Speed-X model 501” bug key for me to use, to be delivered to the Waterfront in time for us to board the ferry, my own trusty Vibroplex being in the missing bag. We arrived just in time to see our ferry, *mv Susan Kruger*, casting off. Andrew rushed down the jetty shouting “Please wait!” and we were all very surprised when they did. Even then, in our rush to get everything on board, one of the drink containers fell into the dock and was retrieved by one of the crew with a boat hook.

On the island, Cyril was waiting on the dock with his 4WD, known locally as a *bakkie*, and drove us the mile or so to the lighthouse where Vidi, Malcolm and Kosie were ensconced. They had traveled over to the island the day before and had all the antennas up, one station operational and had actually made over 300 SSB QSOs by the time we arrived using a TA33 Senior beam and a G5RV from the laundry room. No time was lost in getting the CW station on the air from the lighthouse itself using an inverted V doublet with the apex suspended from the lighthouse itself. The Dunestar filters were also in the missing bag, but we found that both stations could operate on 10 meters with minimal mutual interference, apart from some weird signals that we concluded were coming from the navigational radar in an adjacent building. The pile-ups were steady and we settled down to handing out QSOs with AF-064 to the Deserving. Andrew also set up a third station on the kitchen table running a barefoot transceiver into the G5RV but his QSO rate was much slower than the other two stations.



The Speed-X bug had some very different characteristics to my Vibroplex and apologies are in order for the awful Morse that I sent before getting used to it! One of the first UK stations that I worked was Nigel; G3TXF who very kindly passed a message to Jan that I had arrived safely, but without luggage. Some time later, Neville; G3NUG worked the SSB station and, on learning the news, was most concerned about the possible fate of his filters.

That evening we closed down all stations for an hour or so in order to celebrate Malcolm's birthday with champagne and an excellent meal that he had prepared at home and brought frozen to the island. Propagation overnight was not kind to us and we were only able to operate one CW station on 30 and 40 meters – and even that was hard work.

With my changes of clothes in the missing bag, I was offered several changes of shirt but Andrew excelled himself by offering a change of underwear. It's at times like these that you discover whom your true friends are! Thanks Andrew!!

Late the following morning the airport called to say that my bag had arrived on that day's flight and agreed to send it by courier to the Nelson Mandela Gateway to be placed aboard the next available ferry. Unfortunately, it being Saturday, the museum office there was closed and the airport could not contact anyone with whom to liaise. Fortunately, Esther Henderson lives on the island and Vidi took me to her house where she made some phone calls and finally persuaded someone on the mainland to assist. The weather was hot and I didn't feel like the long walk down to the dock, let alone the long walk back carrying my bag, so Cyril agreed to drive David and I down in his *bakkie*. Whilst waiting for the boat to arrive we took a stroll around the penguin colony, which has a boardwalk and a beach viewing station. The bag arrived as planned and was loaded into the *bakkie* but Cyril then insisted in driving us completely round the island to see the wildlife, views of Table Bay, Second World War fortifications and the several shipwrecks.

On returning to the lighthouse, the Dunestar filters and my Vibroplex were quickly pressed into service. The quality of my Morse increased dramatically! A QSO with Jim; G3RTE enabled me to pass messages to Jan and to Neville; G3NUG to allay his fears about his filters.

That evening, we invited Cyril and his wife Dolly for a real Afrikaans *braai* (barbecue) with *boerewors* (sausages), *broodjies* (toasted sandwiches) and lots of *dop* (alcohol), during which we presented Cyril with a large bottle of Scotch whisky in recognition of the help he was giving us.

Both stations had been busy all day but once again the higher bands closed overnight. We planned to use the redundant vertical antenna for 80 meters and spent some time tuning it with apparently good results, but the band was closed that night and we only made three QSOs. 30 and 40 meters were both hard going again and at one stage we almost closed down and went to bed!

The bands opened again during daylight hours with some good QSO rates on both CW and SSB but propagation was variable with the bands fading in and out suddenly with an interesting effect where the SSB station in particular was receiving very weak signals but being given apparently genuine 57 to 59 reports. Rigs were swapped in case there was a problem with the receiver, but the same effect was present with the new one.



Esther Henderson



Andrew ZS1AN

Phil & Barnie

Our original plan was for us to dismantle the two stations in time to catch the 10.00 a.m. Monday ferry back to Cape Town. We had actually taken down the beam and the SSB station when we received word that we were now scheduled to travel on the 4.00 p.m. ferry, so we kept the CW station in operation for a few extra hours and I had the pleasure of a large and unexpected pile up of JA stations on 12 metres.

Kosie ZS1SR



Cyril needed two trips in his *bakkie* to transport all the gear back to the dock where we loaded it aboard the *mv Susan Kruger* again. We also presented him with a framed copy of a great circle map centered on Robben Island, which we had all signed. Bernie from the NPA was waiting for us at the Nelson Mandela gateway and we also presented him with a large bottle of scotch for his trouble.

Malcolm's wife, Terry Ann was also waiting with a Landrover and trailer for the heavy gear. David was staying in the area for several extra days and we said our goodbyes at the Waterfront before Andrew and I set off to his house for a much needed shower prior to dinner with his girlfriend Stacey and Barry; ZS1FJ at Nelson's Eye, a restaurant that I had liked last year and which Barry describes as the best steakhouse in Cape Town. Barry had been a member of the ZS64RI expedition to Robben Island in January 1996, which made some 5,000 QSOs so it was interesting to compare notes and talk about DX-ing in general.

Malcolm ZS1MC

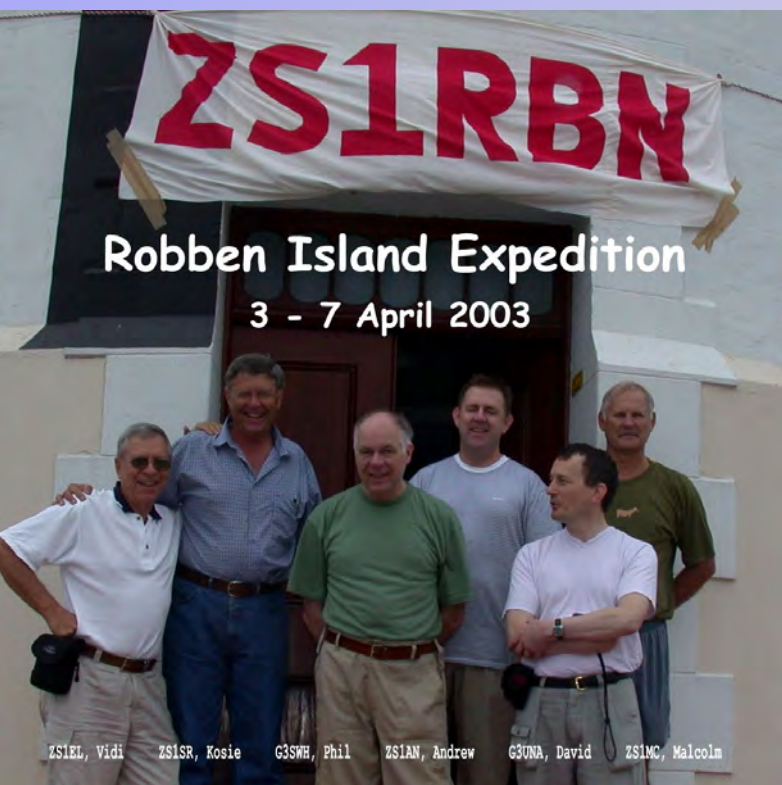


Next morning was taken up with some shopping and sightseeing before Andrew dropped me at the airport for the flight home via Amsterdam to Bristol. I am pleased to report that there were no problems this time and my bag arrived with me.

We had set ourselves a target of 8,000 QSOs over the weekend, but with the poor propagation and other factors, we actually only managed just over 6,500 with 107 DXCC entities.

Our particular thanks go to our wives and girlfriends for letting us go, the Robben Island Museum authorities for allowing us to operate from the island, to Bernie Germishuys and Cyril Mkhulise of the National Port Authorities for making lighthouse and accommodation facilities available to us, to G3NUG, G3XTT and the Cape Town Amateur Radio Centre for the loan of equipment and IREF for help with the QSLs, without whose help and understanding this operation would not have been possible.

PHIL WHITCHURCH,
G3SWH



SOTA holiday in South Africa-Neil Hutton, M0NJH

In November 2025 I activated 15 SOTA summits across South Africa and concluded my trip in Cape Town with 3 activations.

My relationship with South Africa started in 1996 when I arrived at Johannesburg International Airport (not yet renamed) as a young sales manager for Cadbury. I was very fortunate to be on their 'accelerated development program' and was given a challenging role looking after the petrol forecourt shops of Shell, BP, Engen and the like. Most of my customers were based in Cape Town which required a monthly flight and a day or two's meetings persuading my buyers to take Cadbury's, Astros or promote Lunch Bar.

I was given a mobile phone and I remember climbing Table Mountain one weekend and making calls back to the UK from the top; I think SOTA was already in my blood, 5 years before the SOTA program started and 20 years before I got my radio license!

I returned to South Africa with my young family for a year in 2011 thanks to my wife's work placement, this time to Cape Town, and, staying in Rondebosch, was completely unaware that the CTARC clubhouse was a stone's throw away. I gained my UK license (M0NJH) in 2016 and first saw the country through a SOTA lens in 2022, activating Maclear's Beacon (2m), Lion's Head (2m) and Vasco Da Gama peak at Cape Point (HF).

We visited again in November 2025 and I made SOTA a bigger part of the holiday, activating 9 summits in Gauteng/Northern Province, 3 near Underberg KZN whilst in the Drakensberg and 3 in Cape Town.

License

Full UK License holders and others in countries covered by the CEPT agreement can operate within South Africa for up to 90 days under the TR61-01 agreement. This arrangement is reciprocated for full South African license holders (excluding Novice ZU license holders) in CEPT countries. Visiting hams need to observe the regional prefix (so I operated as ZS1/M0NJH while operating in the Western Cape) but I was advised NOT to use the /P suffix when operating portable as it is not necessary and can cause confusion with logging and QSLing.



Activations

We spent our first week in the Magaliesberg, initially activating Krugersdorp Tailings, ZS/GP-016, which proved a uniquely South African experience. This summit (worth 8 SOTA points, on a scale of 1-10) is in fact a man-made summit, comprising a huge pile of gold mine spoil. Climbing was just like scaling a sand dune.

Security was an issue here, with a potential threat from illegal miners operating nearby, keen to protect their interests. Graham ZS6GL, a previous activator, had advised me of the dangers, but kindly offered to accompany me for the activation, suggesting a secure parking spot and showing me the best route up.



I got to the summit first and called Graham on 2m FM while he was still outside the activation zone (at least 25m below the summit), so he achieved a 'complete' for this summit (Activating + Chasing). I then enjoyed seven SSB QSOs on 20m, followed by three on 40m, after which Graham took the mike to activate the summit himself with six QSOs on 40m (a minimum four QSOs are required to score points on a SOTA summit).

The other memorable activation in Gauteng was ZS/GP-015 Magaliesberg with Brandon, ZS6LZ. This summit is on private land with the farmer unsympathetic to allowing access. However, Brandon knew the farmer and gained permission himself, offering to accompany me on the activation and indeed driving us to the summit in his "bakkie" with heavy equipment, linear amplifier, batteries, table and chairs!

Brandon was keen to try out his QRO set-up with future contesting opportunities in mind, so I happily tagged along and we dual-operated all QSOs to fill our log books with twenty seven ZS plus twenty five European QSOs over the course of a couple of hours. All DX was on 10m SSB, using up to 1000W into Brandon's homebrew inverted V. I was delighted when our first call from Europe was Christian, F4WBN, who is my top SOTA chaser in Europe!

When packing away, Brandon produced 2 chilled cans from the bakkie's fridge; the icing on the cake should surely be renamed the 'Beer on the Summit'!

Cape Town

My wife and I climbed Lion's Head (ZS/WC-058), a very accessible and busy peak (albeit some technical challenges with ladders and chains) but this time I only managed three QSOs on 2m before we ran out of time, so failed to score any SOTA points.

I activated the most southerly 1 point summit at Cape Point (Vasco Dagamapiek ZS/WC-965) and found that 2m and 70cm were more effective this time compared with HF that I had used in 2022. Most of the summits around Cape Town have clear lines of sight to the city center and large population areas, so these summits can be activated with a 5W FM handy. This peak is an easy 40 minute walk from the Cape Point visitor car park.



My only other activation in The Cape was Constantiaberg (ZS/WC-047, 2 SOTA points). When living here in 2011 we often took the kids to the Silvermine nature reserve, and climbing up to Elephant's Eye was a family favourite. I was pleased to read that the easiest route to the summit was via Elephant's Eye, so I followed this well trodden route for the first part of the hike, with a further 45 minute climb to reach Constantiaberg. The hike was straightforward and safe, and the 20°C with a gentle breeze made it a perfect ascent. The alternative suggested route is from Chapman's Peak Drive, slightly shorter but a steeper climb.



Just below the summit is a huge domestic VHF/UHF mast and I was concerned that I might suffer QRM. The actual summit and trig point marker are 30 or so meters away, so fortunately there was no interference or noise on HF or 2m.

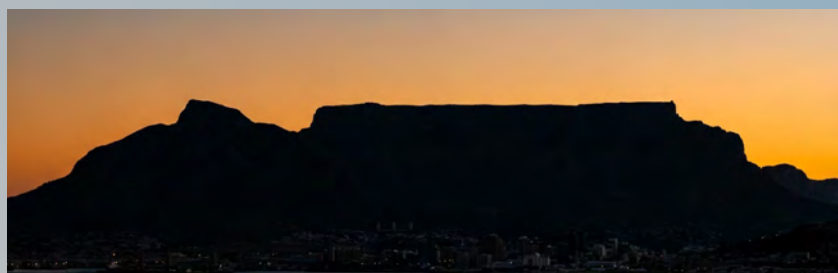
I was hoping for a pleasant hour on HF working stations up and down the country, but despite orienting my inverted V to provide gain towards Jo'burg, I only got three unique call signs in the log in an hour (ZS1OB on two bands, ZS1PIG on three bands and ZS4CGR on 40m). Having been so well supported in Gauteng and KZN by ZS1/2/3/4/5&6 chasers, I wanted to allow as many of them as possible to get this summit in their logs. Constantiaberg had only been activated twice, in 2024 and 2008.

I had been in Whatsapp contact with Phil ZS1WW who was unfortunately tied up with work, but he kindly mentioned me on his Club's Whatsapp Group and I was able to add a further 13

2m FM QSOs to the log. Thanks Phil! I think my key learning around Cape Town is to stick to 2m and 70cm, although this is a shame for chasers outside Cape Town. At home my passion is HF DXing, so I am not a natural 2m Handy operator!

My portable station

My HF setup consisted of an Elecraft KX2 using its internal battery (10W) into a Sotabeams 'bandhopper' inverted V linked dipole (resonant on 20, 30, 40 and 15m[3rd harmonic of 40m elements]). This was supported at the center with a 7m fiberglass Sotapole. For VHF/UHF I have a Yaesu FT-65 (5W FM) just using its stock rubber duck antenna.



ZS Chasers

Adele ZS5APT kindly added me to the SOTA/POTA Whatsapp group before the holiday which made announcing and self-spotting really easy. 4G and 5G mobile coverage was good wherever I went, better than on UK summits, and I gained a useful picture of HF propagation when chasers in a particular region reported that they could not copy. Chasers occasionally used Whatsapp to request QSY to another band which helped get more QSOs in the log.

Differences noted versus the UK

I needed to do plenty of research and preparation to ensure I could access SOTA summits in South Africa. I am used to having good maps showing public access footpaths in Europe, but most summits I activated were on private land, often beyond locked gates, electric fences or security barriers. Adele ZS5APT was enormously helpful providing advice and I also contacted previous activators to ask about access and the hiking route that they took.

I had to keep remembering that I was in Africa, home to the Big 5! Brandon told me that leopards roam all over the Magaliesberg, but tend to be only seen at night. The only potential hazard I was warned about was from snakes, so wore long trousers and sturdy boots on grassy and rocky hikes.

It was nice using SSB on 30m; in Europe we can only use CW or digital modes, 30m is the sweet spot between 40m local coverage and 20m's longer skip distance, and I noted getting some 30m QSOs with parts of the country that failed on 20m and 40m

I noticed that some ZS hams were less familiar with the Zero in my call sign, returning my call sign as ...MIKE OSCAR NOVEMBER...so I occasionally needed to clarify my call sign before completing the QSO.

HF propagation was more challenging than I expected. I am used to being able to work 10-25 contacts quickly from summits in Western Europe, but I often had to work hard to reach the required four, despite changing band and plenty of Whatsapp spotting messages. I guess the lower density of chasers in South Africa plus very few hams in adjacent countries restricts the potential QSO count. Some chasers did mention high local noise levels so it seems South Africa has also been invaded by cheap electrical transformers and LED lights as we have in the UK.

Apart from my high power activation with Brandon I had no other DX contacts. However I would recommend activators consider 10m to contact Europe and the Americas to supplement local QSOs. In fact since returning to the UK I have successfully chased three South African summits on 10m, with the activators using as little as 20W SSB.

Sign off

So thanks to all the chasers and tips/advice from hams in South Africa. I have written up all my activations in my 'blog [<https://radio-hut.blogspot.com/2025/11/activating-zsgp-016-krugersdorp.html>]. I am spreading the word in Europe, so expect plenty more SOTA/POTA tourists to arrive to enjoy your fantastic summits and hospitality – I will certainly be back!



NEIL HUTTON MONJH

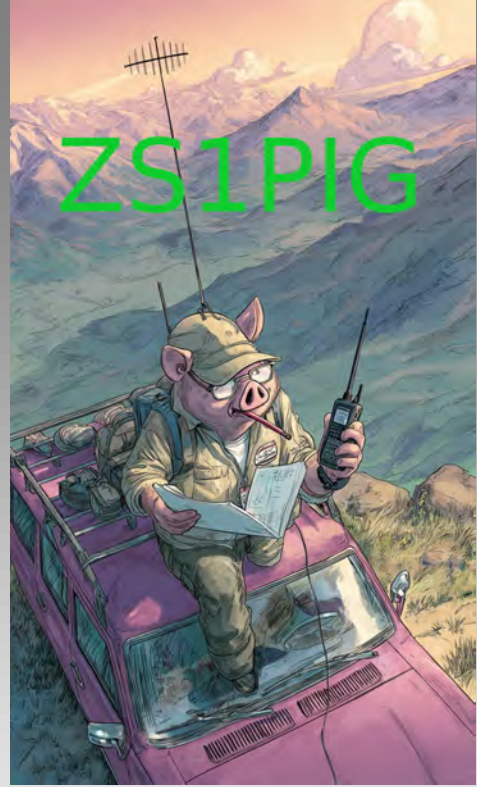
Going Rover:

A Weekend in the PEARS VHF/UHF

Contest Overview

The annual VHF/UHF contest hosted by the Port Elizabeth Amateur Radio Club ran from Friday evening 9 January through to Sunday afternoon 11 January, split into two operating sessions. One of the great features of this contest format is that contacts can be repeated in each session, which makes it especially attractive for Rover operations and portable stations.

This year, I decided to take part in a fairly informal way - and it turned into a far more rewarding experience than I expected.



A Slow Start on Friday

Friday evening was a low-key affair for me. I made a few contacts using the Morning Star station, which has 2-metre capability. It was enough to get on the air and into the contest, but nothing too serious. At that point, I hadn't yet committed to doing a full Rover activation over the weekend.

Saturday: Plans vs Reality

Saturday was meant to be my warm-up Rover day. I packed my handheld and planned to operate portable while out and about. Unfortunately, real life intervened. I had commitments, no real stopping time, and despite carrying the radio with me, I never actually managed to get on the air.

Lesson number one of the weekend: portable operating needs *time*, not just equipment.

Sunday: Full Rover Mode

By Sunday morning, I had made up my mind - this was going to be my proper Rover day.

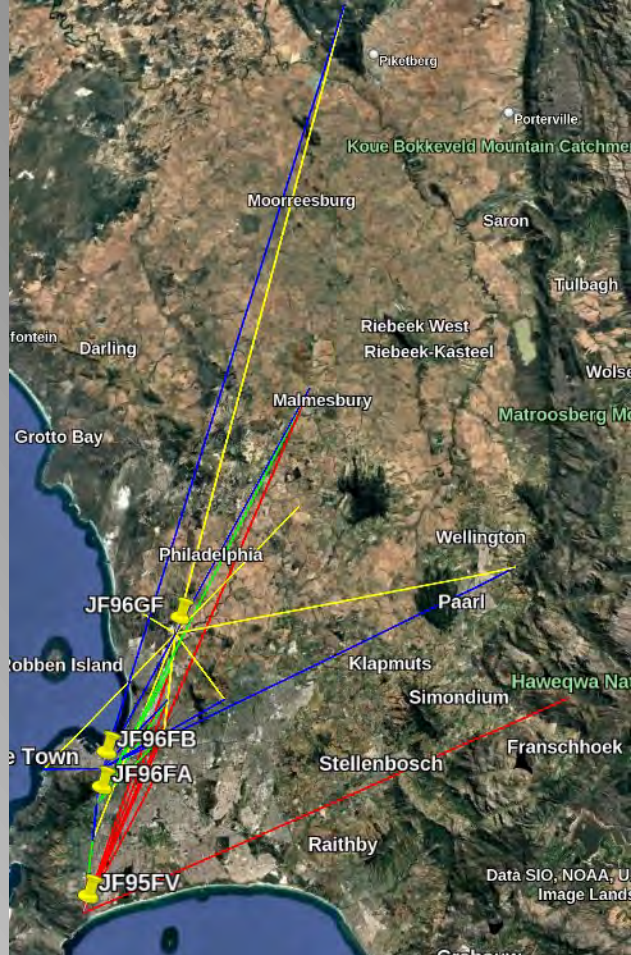
I packed the handheld, grabbed my battery, and set off with a plan to activate multiple grid squares. My first stop was on top of Oak Caves, located in a good grid square with a clear view and decent elevation. Once on the air, I made a number of contacts on both VHF and UHF.

That first stop also delivered lesson number two: get a tripod. Trying to hold the radio, the antenna, and a pen for logging - all while the wind blew my pages around - was entertaining but far from efficient. Despite the chaos, I managed around ten contacts before moving on.

Chasing Multipliers

The next leg of the journey was all about grid square multipliers. I had my eye on finishing near my home QTH at Rhodes Memorial, but there was still time to activate another square first.

I stopped at Bishop's Court, which offered a fantastic view over the city. From there, I made a solid run of contacts. Being a Rover meant I could work many of the same stations again, and everyone was happy to hand out points. I also picked up a few new call signs along the way, which always adds to the fun.



The Final Push

With only about 40 minutes left before the contest closed, I headed to my final location: Rose Memorial. Once again, the height and open view paid off. I worked many familiar stations for the last time, added a few new contacts, and made my final QSO in the closing minutes of the contest.

After signing off, I logged everything, packed up, and reflected on just how much I'd learned in one afternoon.

Results and Reflections

To my surprise, the final results placed me within the top six entrants, thanks largely to Rover multipliers and consistent activity. I genuinely didn't expect that outcome, especially operating with just a handheld.

More importantly, the contest highlighted how much potential there is to grow. Next year, I'll be better prepared - ideally with a mobile radio installed in the car, proper antennas for VHF and UHF, and maybe even some SSB and 6-metre operation if conditions allow.



Why You Should Get Involved

One of the biggest takeaways from the weekend is how inclusive these contests really are. You don't need to be a hardcore competitor or a full Rover to take part. Even leaving your radio on, listening for activators, and handing out points makes a real difference.

In fact, many of the stations I worked weren't actively contesting - they were simply helping out, and that support is what makes events like this enjoyable for everyone.



Equipment

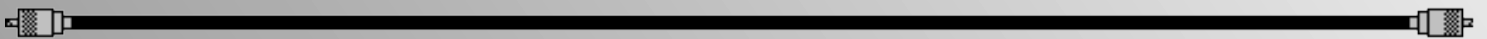
Finally here is the equipment I used. My trusty tape measure Yagi and Baofeng UV5R. Thus the barrier to entry and participation is very low. Of course I use my amazing Jimny to get around so you would need a car too! Apart from this a book and pencil with which to log all the QSOs.

Thanks

A big thank you to the Port Elizabeth Amateur Radio Club for hosting the contest, and to everyone who came on air to activate, chase, or simply give away points. It was a fantastic weekend on the bands, and I'm already looking forward to next year.

By: ZS1PIG

Trevor Hughes



Please also remember the UHF net which Tony Kahn, ZS1TK facilitates every Monday evening from 20:30 CAT on the ever popular CTARC UHF repeater . For those who do not know, the input frequency is 433.025MHz and the receiving frequency is 434.625MHz with no CTCSS tone required.

Building a DIY RF tap :

Some time ago I obtained an oscilloscope in my test equipment arsenal, with this comes a number of accessories such as a RF tap. After reading and having a number of discussions with John ZS1EQ the holidays arrived and I found the time to start with the build, miraculously Communicas was open and all or most of the components were available.

The build is based on an article by Wes Hayward W7ZOI and Bob Larkin W7PUA published in the June 2001 QST magazine.



The component list is relatively short , firstly an aluminium project case was needed , the Hammond 1590A was obtained, resistors, SO239 connectors and a BNC connector (the original article uses N type connectors)

Very important in this build is the measurements , as the old saying goes measure twice cut once . The center on the aluminium box was carefully marked using a vernier , the panel mount SO239 connectors fits very tight . I found that by keeping the edge of the SO239 connector parallel with the edge of the casing the center pin falls nearly dead center, if no measuring equipment is available, a stepped drill bit is also a huge assistance when doing projects like this , the SO239 connectors requires a 16mm hole with four 4mm holes .

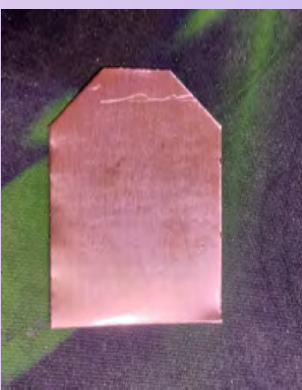


The best is for the SO239 connectors to be fitted in such a way that the flat section on the center pin faces upwards in the build , this provides a seating area for the brass/copper plate installation.

With the SO239 and BNC connectors in place I noted that the lid will not fit as it has a lip which slides in to the bottom section , I had to machine small notches to accommodate the nuts . The dremel tool made a quick job of this , these aluminum housings are very easy to work with when it comes to drilling and grinding.



Next up was adding the copper or brass plate (a pc board can also be used I found out afterwards). After running around locally I could not find anything , it was after all the holiday season. As always the club members were eager to assist as to where I could obtain such a plate , Greg ZS1IX however had a piece of brass plate which he gifted. This is where the largest tool for the project was used , tinsnips.



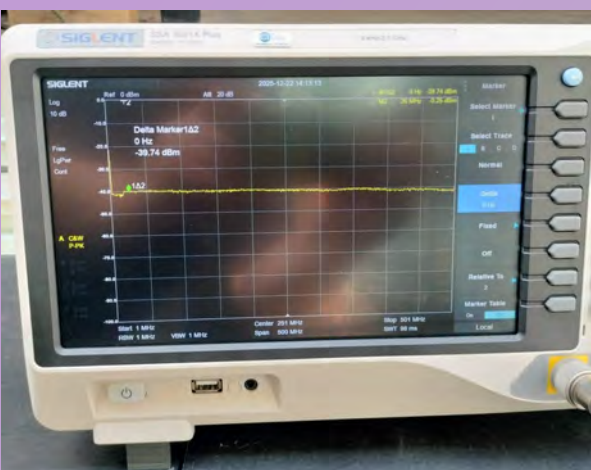
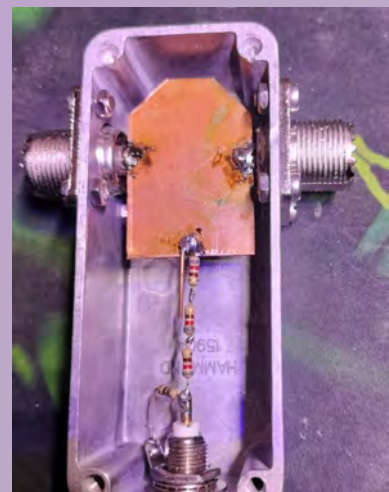
The plate needs to fit snugly in the housing without actually touching, 26mm x 38mm, the size of the plate was cut that it nestles on to the center pins of the SO239 connectors and the corners on the one long side was cut at 45 degrees.

With the plate in place the resistors could follow with a piece of wire acting as a capacitor adjacent to the resistors, I used .7mm wire as opposed to .64mm (this proved to make no difference in the results) and 15.25 mm long ,the capacitor needs to be insulated and I used a bit of heat shrink.

The specification for the build is a RF tap that can be operated up to a 100 w with a -40dB attenuation and usable from 1MHz through 500MHz covering HF,VHF and UHF or 70cm through to 160m bands (what more could I ask) . The -40dB attenuation would result in a 100w being reduced to 0.01w.

The calculation is : $P_{out} = P_{in} \times 10^{(dB/10)}$

$P_{out} = 100W \times 10^{(-40/10)} = 100W \times 10^{(-4)} = 100W \times 0.0001 = 0.01W$



Once again Greg came to the rescue and assisted me in testing the new weapon in the ever growing arsenal of test equipment. The results left me smiling from ear to ear with a relatively flat graph from 1MHz through 501MHz.

The end result a solid bit of kit which will last many years and can be used for many applications : Observing transmitter output waveform on an oscilloscope without disrupting the signal path. Measuring power output with a power meter while transmitting into your antenna. Checking for harmonic content and spurious emissions to name but a few .

The component list can be found below :

Hammond aluminium case 1590A (very important to use this case due to the dimensions)

SO239 connectors x 2

BNC panel mount x 1

820 Ohm 1/2 watt carbon resistors x 3

51 Ohm 1/4 watt carbon resistor x 1

Brass, copper plate or PC board , your nearest non ferrous supplier or electronics shop

8 x 4mm screws & nuts, your local hardware store

Off cut piece of wire from the spares bin

The final cost was less than R500 , thanks to Greg ZS1IX and John ZS1EQ for sharing their knowledge, components and assisting with final testing during this build.





CTARC RF CAFÉ



So what exactly is RF CAFE??

RF CAFE is another facility and feature of Cape Town Amateur Radio Centre.

So what is the function and purpose??

The clubhouse will be open and available for any interested party to meet and greet informally and sociably. To this end, members are encouraged to invite any interested associate they want to. This invitation will be extended to a passer by should the occasion arise. The whole purpose being to rake up interest in amateur radio and the workings thereof. Another purpose is that the facility could be utilised as a meeting spot to discuss any aspect of radio or even as a work party or workshop.

An important aspect of the CAFE is that a fully functional radio shack will be in place for good use. This will cover all bands that may be open at the time of access.

The CAFE part of it comes in with a FREE BOTTOMLESS CUP OF COFFEE.

Weekly repeater schedule

USE	USER	AFFECTED REPEATERS		FROM	TO	ON	NOTES
Net	CTARC	145.750	Kanonkop	20.00	21.00	Mondays	Cape Town Amateur Radio Centre - Net
Bulletin	HWC	145.700	Constantiaberg	19.30	20.30	Wednesdays	Hamnet Western Cape - Except the first Wednesday of each month
Bulletin	CTARC	145.750	Kanonkop	08.30	09.30	Sundays	SARL bulletin followed by Cape Town Amateur Radio Centre bulletin
Bulletin	BARK	145.700	Constantiaberg	09.30	10.30	Sundays	SARL bulletin followed by Boland Amateur Radio club bulletin
Bulletin	SARL	145.700	Constantiaberg	10.30	11.30	Sundays	SARL bulletin followed by Amateur Radio Today bulletin

SWAP

SHOP

Tjerk ZS1J has an Linkqnet UPS-INV E180VA up for grabs with 100A 1.28Kw LiFePo4 battery for sale for a mere R3000(original price is R9850), this is an opportunity not to be missed. Tjerk is contactable on 083 976 4387

I.R. POPE & SONS

2 WAY RADIO



This is a once in a lifetime opportunity: IR Pope and Sons are looking for a technician with RF and IT experience, they are located in Durbanville and any prospective applicants may send their CV's to Kevin ZS1U at kevin@itecape.com

RADIOSMART SOLUTIONS



Amateur Radio Equipment & Accessories



Cell: 084 552 8573 - Email: dirk@radiosmart.co.za

Web: radiosmart.co.za

CTARC Regalia

CLUB CAPS R120

CLUB GOLFING SHIRTS R199

T SHIRTS R160



STAINLESS STEEL BOTTLE OPENER @R75



Whisky glasses @ R299 for 6 and wine glasses @R350 for 6

Personalise your regalia by adding your call sign for an additional R50

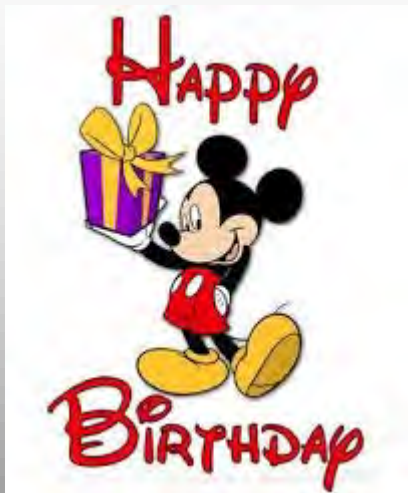


CLUB ANNOUNCEMENTS

ZS1JVT	Johan Van Tonder	2 Feb
ZS1FH	Dominic Plastow	3 Feb
ZS1XN	James Bestbier	4 Feb
ZS1IH	Ian Houston	6 Feb
ZS1FJ	Barry Fletcher	7 Feb
ZS1SPC	Shafick Cornelius	7 Feb
ZS1ISS	Kiara McLean	10 Feb
ZS1KO	Pieter Kapp	11 Feb
ZS1COG	Claire O’Gorman	12 Feb
ZS1ZZ	Charl Marais	12 Feb
ZS1JRP	Ronald Prins	15 Feb
ZS1PJB	Peter Burgess	22 Feb
ZS1AEW	Gary Butler	24 Feb
ZS1AKW	Werner Kritzer	28 Feb



**May all the birthday boys
and girls have an
amazing year filled with
RF and DX contacts**



A ham radio operator walks into a bar and says "CQ, CQ, anyone there?" — the bartender sighs and says "Sir, this is the third time this week. We have a phone like everyone else."

Disclaimer:

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AMATEURS
ABSOLUTELY FREE AT EVERY
MEETING, SCINTILLATING,
CONVIVIAL INTERLOCUTIONS**