

February 2026

INTERFACE

MONTHLY BULLETIN

MARLBOROUGH AMATEUR RADIO CLUB INC. P.O. BOX 432 BLENHEIM NZ

CLUB CALENDAR

General Meeting:.... 12 Feb. 7.30pm, EOC, Wither Rd
Social Group; 19 Feb. Dodson St Beer Garden
Committee Meeting; 26 Feb. 7.30pm, via Zoom



VHF Mondays 1930 hrs
146.950MHz,
145.600MHz, 147.225MHz
Net Controller;
Rob Carter, ZL2IW

BRANCH 22 NOTICES

- 1. Wine & Food Festival..... 14 Feb
- 2. Jock White Field Day 28 Feb
- 3. **AGM, EOC** 12 Mar
- 4. Carluke Combined BBQ with Nelson..... 14 Mar

HF Net Tuesdays
2030 hrs 3876kHz

Website
www.zl2ks.org.nz

Editor: Caryl Simpson caryl.grant@gmail.com **MARC Contact:** marcbranch22@gmail.com

Daughter looked at the January Interface heading and said "N looks dodgy, what is the 1st person doing to the second??" Now you will have to go back and look for yourself to see what she was talking about!

We all know that, as well as February being Wine & Food Festival month, it is also Valentine's Day on the 14th.



Left: Winner of the Onamalutu VHF Fox Hunt was Tony ZL2RKL who, I have it on good authority, said "Well if this is what you call a fox, it hasn't got much of a tail!"

Thanks to Dave ZL2WDR for hiding the foxes, taking his life in his hands as he moved through the trees which were swaying a lot in high winds. We almost cancelled the BBQ due to the orange wind warning but decided to take our chances. Most of us set up directly under the only branch that looked like it might snap at any moment!



Right: Adam ZL2AXK found the UHF fox on what I believe was only his second Fox Hunt. He won't be able to help our team at the combined BBQ with Nelson at Carluke though as he is heading off to university to study Physics (with a potential minor in mathematics and/or astronomy) and Engineering (majoring in either Electrical or Mechatronics).

He is considering joining the Christchurch Radio Club, Branch 05, while there as several people have already suggested he do so. Good luck with your studies Adam.

Thanks to Greg ZLGBX for these two photos. Report and more photos P.3 & 4

Colleen & Roger Lawson's Memorial Gathering will be held in Blenheim on 28th February 2026 at 2pm in St Mary's Community Centre, Maxwell Rd.
This will be informal and you are welcome to attend.
Open floor for anyone wishing to pay tribute's (keep it short please).
For catering purposes, please RSVP to Margaret (ph 021 070 6701) before 21st February.



NZART PORTABLE DAY 2026: Gary Lodge ZL1GA

What an epic way to see in 2026! We committed to activating Ferny Gair NZ-0387 early in the week when I put out an alert on the ZL On the Air website. The weather forecast didn't look promising but we thought, "Surely it won't be any windier than up the Hooker Valley. It can't be any wetter than that really wet weekend in Kaikoura and it won't be any colder than Mt. Roberts on last New Year's day." Wrong on all counts.

We left the sunshine and the real world behind in the Awatere Valley and headed up into the mist that was the Black Birch Range south of Blenheim. The DOC sign at the gate told us to Act Responsibly. We always act responsibly but today we had probably left sensibly at home. During the three quarters of an hour drive to the summit via a gnarly 4x4, hair pin bend track the weather became darker, a thick fog had descended and the temperature dropped noticeably. By the time we reached the summit the rain had turned to sleet, the temperature was 5°C and wind was gusting at 90kmh.



Black Birch Range as seen from Awatere Valley

The original plan had been to set up several antenna, switch between bands and activate Ferny Gair, Black Birch Conservation Area NZ-0387 and, time permitting, the summit Altimarloch ZL3/MB-093 before rollover on NZST. We would activate all three again after rollover on UTC time. That plan was quickly discarded. (Sorry Greg ZL1GUD, this was not the time or place to put up our new 10 m Spiderbeam pole).



Going up

The set up was done with military precision. Face truck into wind. Park truck onto pole stand. Hi-vis on. Eye contact to be maintained at all times. Stay close to truck. Collect and place boulders for tying antenna wires and guy ropes to. Assemble sections of aluminium pole. Use carabiner to fix antenna wire to top of pole. I only went to 6 metres as we were already 1673 metres above sea level (1500m of that was an almost vertical drop to the left of the truck). Raise pole. Fix guy ropes and antenna wire to the rocks we had prepared earlier. Sounds simple doesn't it? Luckily we only needed to shift sites twice today and then not very far. That was far enough. The temptation to just pack up and go home was huge.

The wind was now gusting to 100kph and visibility had dropped to only 30 metres. That done we retired to the safety of truck and reminded ourselves that this was summer. The truck was rocking like one of the boats in the Sydney to Hobart boat race and the wind was howling like a banshee around the communications tower in front of us.



Amazingly our setup stayed up and held together. During the course of the day we worked radio stations the length and breadth of the country at both NZST time and UTC time. A massive thank you to everyone out there who answered my CQ's whether you were on summits, in parks or at your home QTH, your enthusiasm, perseverance and humour make it all worthwhile. Everyone kept telling us to have fun.



The trip back down the mountain was about as hairy as the trip up. At the bottom the sun was still shining as we enjoyed a very welcome cuppa, mince pies and a debrief. Nothing broke. Neither of us got blown away. We made 95 contacts as well as some NZ100 special call signs and, yes, we had fun!

More pics next page

WINE & FOOD FESTIVAL — 14th Feb 2026

Have you volunteered yet?

Contact Stuart; 027 687 7764
clareandstuart@xtra.co.nz

Standby volunteers may still needed in case of last minute illness!

Thanks to those who have volunteered so far





ZL1GA at NZ-0089
Ferny Gair Conservation Area

SOs			
7:120	ZL4AT	Ben ...	59 56
7:120	ZL2KJT	Ken ...	55 57
7:120	ZL2GD	Gran...	35 33
7:120	ZL3LR		56 59
7:120	ZL1DL	Dave...	59 57
7:120	ZL1HIM	Ian ...	57 55
7:120	ZL3CK	Mart...	57 57
7:120	ZL4AH	Matc...	59 58
7:120	ZL4DE	Dani...	59 59
7:120	ZL2MH	Mike...	58 58
7:120	ZL4ROB	Robe...	55 55

7.120 MHz - SSB + 10W

Self-Spotting More

27m 6s
Sent 59
Rcvd 59





It's another world up here



Sunshine in the Awatere Valley

WANTED: Good power supply, 20A or so.
Please contact Eric Sears ZL2BMI
sears@xtra.co.nz

Available FREE for a good home is a working 50cm PC monitor with VGA port AND a similar 60cm with HDMI port that are surplus to requirements.



Reluctant to trash perfectly good operating equipment.

If interested, please contact Don Laing

Email: dnl0949@gmail.com

WESTFEST HOSTING

We are hosting WESTFEST September next year. Stuart will need assistance with this. If you are keen to help, let him know.

clareandstuart@xtra.co.nz or 027 687 7764



Onamalutu BBQ Pics.

More pics, & report, next page



Above: On the left of the table is John's coffee machine, which he plugs into his electric car.

BRAYSHAW REMOTE TRANSCEIVER SOLE OPERATOR RESERVATIONS

Reservations for the sole operation of the Brayshaw remote transceiver by Branch 22 members for occasional short duration special events, such as contests, will be considered upon application to Branch 22 email address marcbranch22@gmail.com.

These applications need to be submitted a minimum of 2 weeks before the event to enable adjudication and acceptance or otherwise.

For the availability calendar and further information about the Remote HF Station at Brayshaw Park, visit the Branch 22 website: <https://zl2ks.org.nz/wp/remote-hf-station/>

ONAMALUTU BBQ 11 JAN 2026

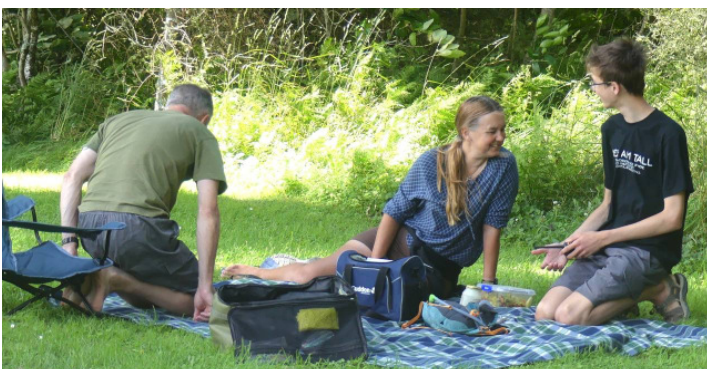
After 3 reminders, we finally had 28 attend our annual BBQ at the Onamalutu Domain. It was almost moved to the Vintage Car Club rooms as the weather report was for gale force winds but we decided to go ahead and hope we were sheltered enough out there. Two good things about the wind - no mosquitoes, and it kept the temperature cooler than the 28°C they had in town. It was certainly gusty but didn't cause any problems. Nobody got conked on the head by a falling branch either.

It was good to see long time members Ron and Helen Harris able to attend. After being diagnosed with acute myeloid leukaemia on 6th January, hopefully Ron will have started chemo (at Wairau Hospital thankfully so no travel) by the time you read this. Our thoughts are with you, and other members going through ill health at the moment.

I was too busy talking to remember to photograph the array of salads made to share, or the desserts, but there was the usual wide and interesting selection enjoyed by all. We had plenty of volunteers to man the BBQ, kindly loaned to us by the Vintage Car Club.

After lunch the Fox Hunt was started. At least they didn't take as long to find them this year as they did last time! As you saw on the front page, Adam ZL2AXK found the UHF Fox and Tony ZL2RKL discovered the VHF one nearby a few minutes later.

Former club members, now in Feilding, Gavin and Chris Piercy, sent an email to say hi and wishing everyone a wonderful BBQ, saying they had always enjoyed the company and food.



YOUR COMMITTEE NEEDS YOU!

This year I reach my term limit as President, and I will not be standing for the committee.

At least 3 others have also given notice they are likely to leave the committee.

By necessity there will be a new team on the committee this year, and now is the very best time to get involved. Don't forget, this year there will not be a separate election for President. The President will be chosen by the committee from among the committee members.

This type of change is good. No organisation can thrive and grow if the officers never change and all they do is the same old thing, for ever.

The metrics for the club are good. We are in good financial shape, and our membership is strong. Amateur Radio is a broad church. We have members involved in all aspects of the hobby, working with everything from the newest technologies through to legacy systems. We were able to field a strong team for the recent AREC CDEM exercise, much better than other parts of the country.

The club is not run by the members. The club is run by the committee for the members. This is an important difference, and if you want input into the running of the club, join the committee.

If you are interested, call me at the number below, or any of the other committee members.

- **John Errington, ZL3TIL**

President, Marlborough Amateur Radio Club, ph 021 330 956.



MARLBOROUGH / NELSON AMATEUR RADIO CLUBS' COMBINED BBQ AND FOX HUNT

WHEN: Saturday 14th March, 2025 **TIME:** 11am onwards **WHERE:** Carluke Hall, Rai Valley

Bring: Salad and/or dessert to share, drink, plates & eating utensils, chair, sun hat, sun screen, handheld for Fox Hunt (and a spare if you have one to lend to someone who hasn't), Mystery Object (if you have one), something for the sales table (if you have some radio gear you wish to sell).

Both clubs will be providing meats, bread, onions, sauce.

Hall kitchen has an oven, hot water, plus cups, plates and cutlery if you forget yours.

If the weather is inclement we can use the hall, it is huge with plenty of space.

You might need an umbrella or raincoat if it's raining for the Fox Hunt or Toss the Tait.

Directions: From SH6, go through Rai Valley township then take the first turn on your right into Opouri Rd - the way to French Pass etc. Turn first right where the road splits, drive over the bridge and the hall is on your right just past the bridge. Access to grounds is through a gate at the far end of the hall. Look for Ham vehicles.

Nelson won the trophy last year so we need plenty of members (especially fit and strong ones who can toss a Tait a long way!) to attend to win it back!

You may take the opportunity to arrive there the night before and/or night after if you wish. The toilets will be open on the Friday night for those who wish to stay overnight. There is plenty of space for campervans and tents also. It costs \$15 for a powered site or free if you don't require power. Mention you are with the radio club, if asked, so they don't think you are a freedom camper and kick you out! Freedom campers have to park out on the roadside.

We will be having the usual variety of fun challenges at which to beat Nelson, the Fox Hunt being the only specifically radio related competition, so the whole family can participate.

Toss the Tait has people throw an old Tait radio case as far as they can. An equal number of people from each club takes turns and measurements of each distance thrown is noted. Total is added up and most distance wins.

Come along for the day or stay overnight, it is a fun day out with lots of laughs.

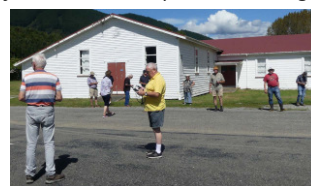
If there is anyone who would like to attend but needs transport, let me know and I am sure something can be arranged.

**RSVP to caryl.grant@gmail.com ASAP if you haven't already
for catering purposes please!**

GUESS THIS MESS: Members are being asked to bring items, not necessarily radio related, for members to guess what it is. Remember not everyone is a radio Ham so will not recognise radio parts, be they obscure or more common!

SALES/FREE TABLE: Bring items you think might interest others and gain space in your shack/garage/house! All remaining items, not sold or given away, must be taken back home by the person who brought them.

CORN HOLE GAME: The aim is to throw beanbags through a hole in a board.



ZL2KS RMS HISTORY AND PROFILE – JANUARY 2026

The Marlborough Amateur Radio Club operate a Winlink RMS (Radio Mail Server) under the club callsign ZL2KS. You can find out more about Winlink at <https://winlink.org/>.

In March 2024 the club RMS started operating as ZL2GBX from a site in urban Blenheim.

In September 2024 the equipment was relocated to a permanent site owned by a club member on a hill near Picton. This site is electrically very quiet and has power and internet available. The club SDR is co-located on the same site.

When first installed, the station operated with a small, borrowed laptop, an HF transceiver, two VHF/UHF simplex channels, and temporary antennas.

When the station was relocated additional VHF/UHF capacity was added to interface with the club's repeater network.

A new fan dipole for HF bands was built, as were antennas for the VHF/UHF channels. A high spec ICOM 9100 transceiver has been lent to the club to allow full audio bandwidth on HF bands.

The original laptop did not have the capacity to carry traffic on all channels at the same time and occasionally proved to be unreliable on hot days.

In March 2025 funding was obtained from Pub Charities for a major upgrade.

The upgrade facilitated:

- 1) Installation of high-grade lightning protection. Lightning is a hazard on any elevated site, and this was an essential upgrade.
- 2) Upgrading the processors. The system now runs with dual processors. In normal use one processor processes VHF/UHF traffic and the other processes HF traffic and message routing. Either processor can be configured to carry the entire load of the station.
- 3) Installation of remote processor control and telemetry. The processors operate with remote control software installed. Separate controllers allow remote condition monitoring of the processors, and power cycling if required.
- 4) Dual, high current battery chargers. The station operates with a split 12V DC bus supported by batteries that can carry the station for up to 4 days. Each side of the bus is charged by a high-capacity charger allowing quick recovery when mains power is available. This helps support the station during times of intermittent power supply.
- 5) Dual fuel generator. The station is in a valley that is prone to cloud. The cloud can last for 5 days or more in this location, making solar support uneconomic. To support the batteries, we have installed a dual fuel generator that will run on both petrol and LPG. Sufficient fuel is available to keep the station running for at least 10 days beyond the autonomy time of the batteries.

The station can now carry HF traffic on 80, 40 and 20M, VHF and UHF simplex traffic on 2M and 70cm, and it interfaces to the club's repeater network on 2M and 70cm, making a total of up to 5 concurrent channels.

The VHF/UHF simplex channels and the repeater interfaces provide high speed radio mail services to most of Marlborough including the Marlborough Sounds.

The HF capacity extends the coverage to most of the rest of New Zealand, including the earthquake prone areas of the lower North Island.

Most of the time a station like this does not do very much. What matters is the availability when called on in an emergency. Since the upgrade in March the station has been continuously available apart from short, planned outages to upgrade software or to test equipment.

On two occasions the antennas suffered wind damage that reduced performance until repairs were completed but this did not take the station off air.

Rebuilding and strengthening the antennas is planned, when funding allows.

Some pictures follow. The first picture shows Winlink traffic during the AREC CDEM exercise in November 2025. Not only did ZL2KS carry traffic for Marlborough, but we carried traffic for southern parts of New Zealand. As an aside, there is a good case for a Winlink RMS in the centre of the South Island.



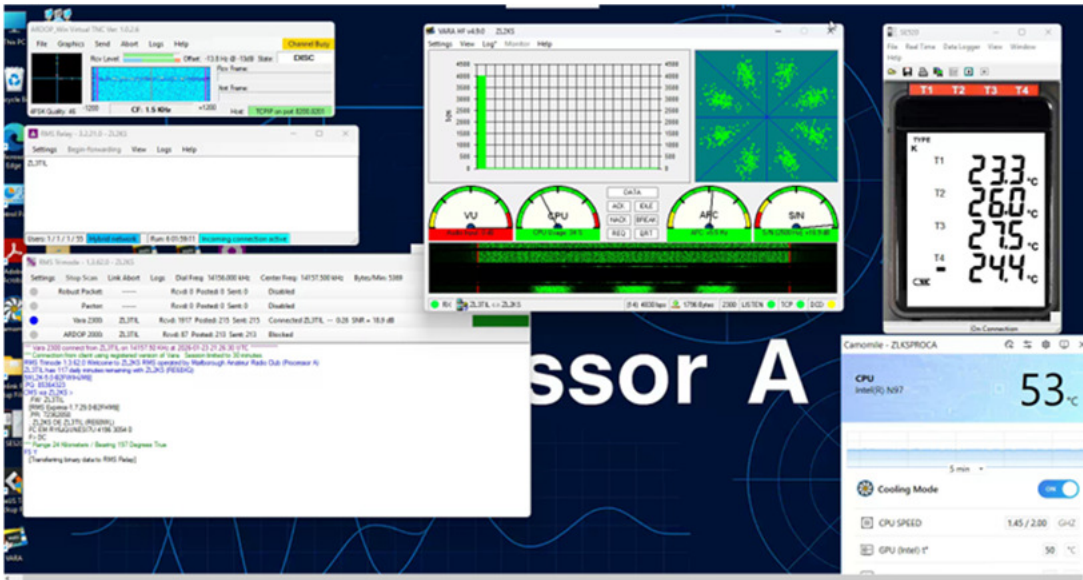


Figure 1, HF traffic on Processor A

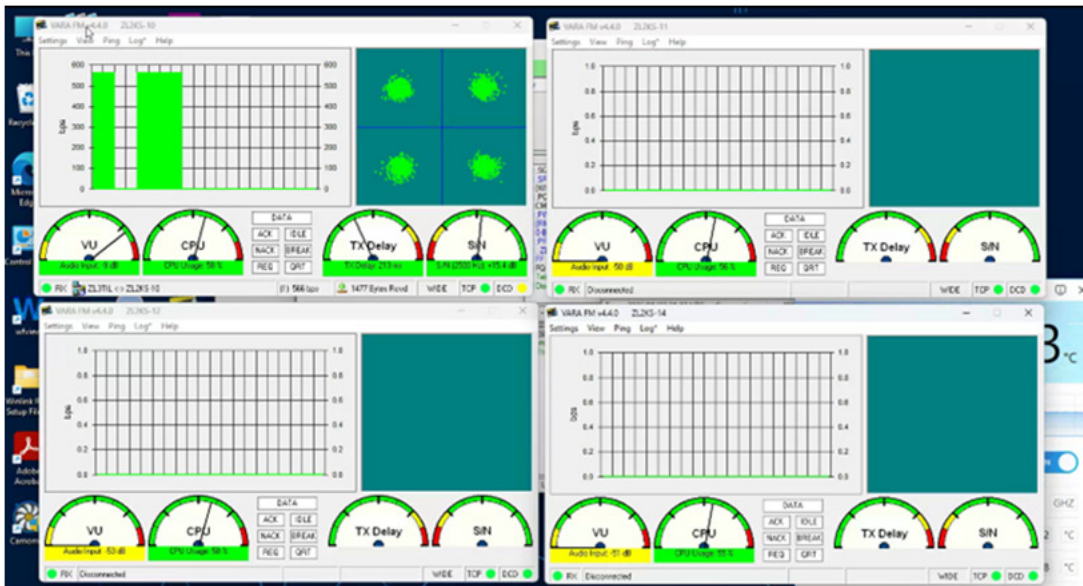


Figure 2, VHF Traffic on Processor B



Figure 3, Remote Control of Processor B.
The external temperature is the transceiver heatsink temperature

DID YOU KNOW?

Nick ZL2NEB has a YouTube channel with helpful guides and videos.

He says "I'm an amateur radio operator based in Marlborough in NZ. Join me while I operate POTA, SOTA and various other ham radio activities. We might even look at some gear, how to get started, where to go, and things that we can build ourselves. I'm not taking any of this too seriously and I'm keen on actually trying things instead of just reading about them."

Go to <https://www.youtube.com/@zl2neb> (sorry Publisher does not do 'click or tap to follow link' like Word lets you do), click on the link in the email this newsletter was attached to, or just go to YouTube and put zl2neb in the search bar.



Figure 4, Station Power



Figure 5, Processors under test



Figure 6, Hut and antenna array



Figure 7, Looking towards Blenheim

IMPORTANT NOTICE

Our March meeting will include a slide show to acknowledge the almost 100 years of service given by Ron and Helen Harris to AREC.

Ron's health is fragile, and we ask that you stay away if you have a sniffle or are otherwise unwell.



One of the items found while cleaning out Grant's stuff was this NZART badge, made for mounting on the car grill, or somewhere. Weighing in at 244g it is 140cm high and 75cm at the widest point. I have no idea whether it was his, or his dad's, or where/when he got it as I don't remember having seen it before. Considering all the aerials he stuck all over the vehicles, I don't know why this wasn't on any of the grills, especially the 1928 Chrysler! It could have been mounted beside the AA badge, which is numbered Nelson 18. I know that came from his dad ZL2BO (formerly ZL2BGV) but I think Bill bought it from someone, it wasn't issued to him.

I know there is one of these in the Ashburton Museum, which belonged to ZL3AAN, Leonard Colville, 1903 - 1987 but have not found reference to any others.

You know you're old when you bend down to tie your shoelace and think "What else can I do while I'm down here?"

BIKO MALAGKIT

Biko Malagkit is a classic Filipino dessert made with glutinous or sticky rice and coconut milk.

The reason the recipe is in Interface is because several people, who ate this delicious dessert at the Onamalutu BBQ, asked that I put the recipe here. Many thanks to David ZL2WDR for providing the recipe and photos to go with it.

If you object to such off-topic items in the newsletter, then please provide the editor with content more to your liking!

2 C glutinous sticky rice (from Asian shops like Malisa in Redwoodtown)

4 cans coconut milk (need to be organic, not with emulsifier added)

The cans need to sit on a shelf, undisturbed, for a long time (6 months is good) so it has time to separate. I have 8 cans in stock so there is always some aging (like me)

57g butter

1 egg, lightly beaten

1 Tbs Vanilla bean extract (the real stuff)



Wash rice & put in a large frypan.

Carefully open the cans of coconut milk, don't shake or mix, & gently remove the solid coconut meat.

Put the coconut meat aside in a bowl to use later for the topping.

Add the coconut water left in the can to the rice in the frypan.

Simmer slowly on medium heat, stirring continuously to stop it sticking to the bottom of the pan.

Keep cooking until the rice goes kind of soft & all the water is absorbed & sticky.

Add butter & stir until well mixed.

Add egg & mix it in quickly before it cooks.

Add vanilla bean extract & stir it in.

Put it in a greased dish & flatten out the rice, spreading it flat using the back of a large spoon.

Topping

Put the coconut meat, saved earlier, in a sieve to drain off a little bit more water. You need about $\frac{1}{2}$ C of the water.

If you don't get enough water to mix with the cornflour, then just use a bit of milk.

Mix coconut water with 1 heaped Tbs of cornflour.

Add 1Tbs condensed milk.

(Cover the leftover opened can of condensed milk with Gladwrap or tinfoil & leave it in the freezer for next time)

Mix together the coconut meat, cornflour & water, & condensed milk then spread it on top of the rice.

Cook at 180°C 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ hours.

