

August 2026

INTERFACE

MONTHLY BULLETIN

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

CLUB CALENDAR

General Meeting:.... 13 Aug 7.30pm, EOC, Wither Rd
Social Group; 20 Aug Dodson St Beer Garden
Committee Meeting; 27 Aug 7.30pm, via Zoom

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

BRANCH 22 NOTICES

1. Pick-over/sale/swap night 13 Aug
2. CONSTRUCTORS' AWARD 10 Sept
3. TOPFEST 19/20 Sept
4. JOTA (Jamboree Of The Air) @ EOC..... 16 - 18 Oct

HF Net Tuesdays
1930 hrs 3876kHz
*Reverts to 2030 when
Daylight Saving starts.*

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www.zl2ks.org.nz

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In August we have Daffodil Day, the Cancer Society's biggest fund raiser.



A reminder that this year's Murchison Westfest, is now known as Topfest!

Date: September 19/ 20
Venue: Vintage Car Club,
Brayshaw Park.



Programme details, including topics & speakers, will be released shortly.

Registration:

- **Time;** From 8.30am Saturday
- **Cost;** \$20 cash only

This event is expected to begin **9am Saturday** and conclude approximately **2.30pm Sunday**.

If you plan to attend, please email Nick Nick@zl2neb.nz with 'Topfest' in the subject line.

We look forward to seeing you there!

Pick-over Night: August 12

If you have anything you would like to sell, swap, or give away please arrive at 1900 to set up.

We will have a normal general meeting starting at 1930 then have the sale immediately after.

Note: If your stuff did not sell, it is your responsibility to take it away at the end of the meeting.

SHACK CRAWL - Oct 10th

So far, Herrie has 4 shacks on his list to visit. Anyone interested in this (either to add their shack, visit the others, or both), please contact Herrie; 0212380516 or grens360@gmail.com



Again, I have had a response to something in last month's newsletter. I send a complimentary copy of *Interface* to a couple of members who have since moved out of the region and they appreciate feeling involved, in a small way. John Neal ZL3LI, who now lives in Palmerston North with his wife Pam, enjoyed seeing the photos from our mid winter lunch and made the comment, "Seeing Bernard and Brenda made me realise ZL2AZK is the only member of Branch 22 surviving who was there when I joined around 1958. In those days he drove a small station wagon (a Hillman Husky) with a whip antenna on the back with a huge loading coil in the middle. I think he worked at Rabone's Radio in Market Square back in those days. Ah, how the time flies!"

John also noted his wife Pam, prior to their marriage, and her mum were the previous owners of the house Harry Stephens ZL4HES lived in for many years. Small world eh? I noted too that John joined the club before I was born!

SILENT KEY: Harry Stephens ZL2HES



Many of our members will not have met Harry, as ill health prevented him from attending things for many years, but those who have been around a long time will remember him well for his gruff manner, dirty jokes (his family mentioned these at the funeral), and willingness to give a hand, or expertise, whenever it was required. The photo on the right was taken at the Dip Flat SAREX in 2017. He loved doing comms for the 24hr horse treks and laughed at the difficulties on the last one when Harry and Herrie's names got confused when it came to who was supposed to be where.



Harry was the go-to man if you needed plumbing or welding help and he made, or extended, the solar panel brackets on several repeaters. Back in 2007 and 2009, his weight came in handy as anchorman for our Tug O' Wars with Nelson. Whenever I went to take his photo he would say "You'll need your wide angled lens for this!" Looking at the Tug O' War photo, I note all but one of the 'tuggers' in it are now deceased.



Ian ZL2BGL first met Harry in the 70's before they both became Hams. They were in the Awatere Gun Club, shooting clay targets competitively. He says Harry was a keen hunter and outdoorsman with an extensive firearms knowledge and collection. Ian went on to say; *Harry accompanied me on one of the week long Silver Fern Rallies that the club had a major part in. We had a ball, occasionally losing our way, necessitating a scramble to get into position, ready for the next stage. He officiated at several*



large cook-ups using his double burner gas stove on the deck of the ute, sausages, tomatoes, eggs, bacon, you name, we had it. Just what you needed to keep body and soul together! Long days with plenty to do. I recall driving from Dunedin to Harry's camp at the Hurunui river, all in one long drawn out stint, followed by more stages first thing the next morning! Thankfully that was the last day. Another recollection is standing on a ladder, doing one's best to follow Harry's instructions while endeavouring to install solar panels at more than one site. He was a patient taskmaster! Always had time for a yarn, especially to sort out the local news. You will be sorely missed Harry.

I saw Harry regularly as he was the only club member who didn't have a computer so I would print off a copy of the newsletter and deliver it to his door. If he was out, or had visitors, I would leave it in the letterbox. When he was home, I was always invited in for a cup of tea then Harry would tell me who was doing what, either at club, NZ or world-wide level and why whatever it was they were doing was wrong. Everyone else was always wrong and he was always right, especially when it came to measuring and placement of the solar panels! He loved a good yarn and it was always hard to get away as he could talk the hind leg off a donkey, as they say, but he was always interesting and funny. I will miss our visits. I think Rob ZL2IW summed him up well by saying Harry was a big man in every way.



My daughter, Kelly, and I recently sorted through hundreds (nay, thousands) of slides taken either by Grant, mostly in the early 70's, or his dad, in the 50's and 60's. I thought some of you might be interested in these ones. The one on the left I had turned into a photo by Top Shots. It is Grant, aged 10 - 12 by the looks of it. The radio would have been his dad's and the picture was taken at their house in Motueka. His dad, Bill ZL2BO, was a radio operator flying around the Pacific during the war.

The yellow car, back view while doing comms for a car rally, and front view parked up at the original Motueka microwave tower, is his beloved Jensen Healey. He owned it, one of only 11 imported into NZ, when I first met him in 1977 but it was sold to buy a new Honda Civic (a serious downgrade!) and pay for the section on which we built our house, the one in which I am still living.

Thanks to Rob Carter for finding out the location of the tower. Both slides were also run through AI to get the original colours back.



The Proposal:

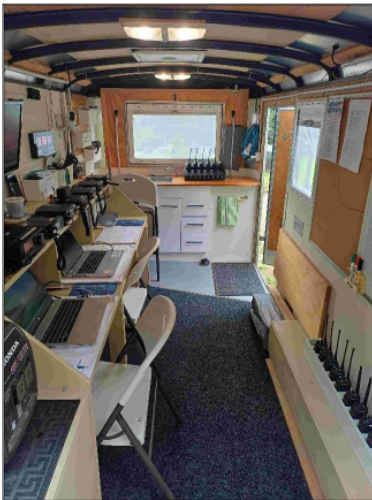
A Communications Trailer Project: that Branch 22 fundraise for the acquisition of a suitable trailer then members can be involved in the equipping and fitting out.

It will be a Branch asset which can be used for field days, event support, publicity events, support for EOC, and be used by AREC to support Police, Landsar and Coastguard for any SAROP or SAREX.

The Civil Defence CCV will still be used in major disaster events but, as it has very restricted access for the Club, a trailer will be more flexible and customisable to Club needs.

Currently FENZ/CD has first call on the truck and insurance conditions limit access to named drivers only, so its availability for the Branch is very restricted. Because of its size and weight and lack of 4WD its deployment capabilities are also limited.

A trailer can be towed into areas where the CCV cannot go and be customised to our requirements. At present some emergency comms equipment is held in the truck but most is stored on benches or shelves around the truck shed and moved to site as required often on open trailers or ute trays. This is not ideal or safe.



Having the equipment permanently mounted in a secure trailer will ensure its security and also ensure that all components are delivered together (no "oh we forgot one cord on the shelf!")

As an example of the type of unit I am proposing, the attached photos are from Keith Baldwin ZL1URZ from Ruatoria, who has built and equipped their club's trailer within the club on a budget of \$15000.

The ongoing expense for a trailer will be WOF, Registration, and Insurance. NO running costs as there would be with a vehicle as we have learnt in previous years. The Red Cross, and other NZART Branches are in the process of setting up trailers. Clubs which have utilised motorised vehicles for comms have found operational costs and restrictions have made them unsustainable.

It would be preferable to fund the base trailer project independently to clarify ownership. The trailer can be located, outdoors along with the LandSAR trailer at Base Woodbourne for security and easy access.

- Paul Rennie ZL2RE



6-5-12

Some of our members are warmer than others. While we are having -2.8°C frosts, Herrie ZL2HTO and Julie, photo below, are sunning themselves and snorkelling in 29°C in Lovena, Bali. At the opposite end of the temperatures, check out P.6 for Lodges' adventures in the snow!



Left; Maybe one of our members?



Have you started on your entry for the September Constructors Award yet? It's not too late! See P5 for details.



Chris & Gavin ZL4IY Piercy (now in Feilding) celebrate 55 years of wedded bliss 23rd Aug. They are settled in their new home and love being so close to the dialysis Gavin needs.

D'URVILLE ISLAND TRIP JULY '26 — CAROL & GARY, ZL1GA, LODGE

We recently had the opportunity to visit D'Urville Island on a Pelorus Mail Boat trip. As newbies to the South Island we had never been that far up the Sounds other than coming through on a ferry. Too good a chance to miss especially as Gary realised he could take a radio and activate D'Urville Island ZLI/MB-056. We left Havelock on a cold, foggy, morning but the sun came out as we headed up the Sounds. Calm with no wind and an excellent commentary, great. Once on the island we had 2 hours in which to have lunch which was included in the trip and put up an antenna.



Catherine Cove, where we had landed opposite D'Urville Island Wilderness Resort, has a short narrow beach the ends of which were in our activation as shown by the pink dot in our map (by satellite on Gary's phone). Putting up the antenna created quite a bit of interest amongst the boat crew and fellow passengers.

A successful QRP activation followed including contacts into Australia which was pretty pleasing on only 10 watts of power. D'Urville Island just kept on giving not only ZLI/MB-056 but also compres ZLFF-0115, NZ-0121, ZLP/MB-0010, ZLB/084, ZLB/034 and ZLB/033 the POTA equivalent of LOTTO! A great day out thanks to the Pelorus Mail Boat Company.



Did you know? D'Urville Island, Māori name Rangitoto ki te Tonga, is the largest island in the Marlborough Sounds.



JAMBOREE OF THE AIR

Volunteers required to assist with the **2026 JOTA (Jamboree Of The Air)**.

This is a good opportunity to interest young people in amateur radio!

www.jotajoti.info

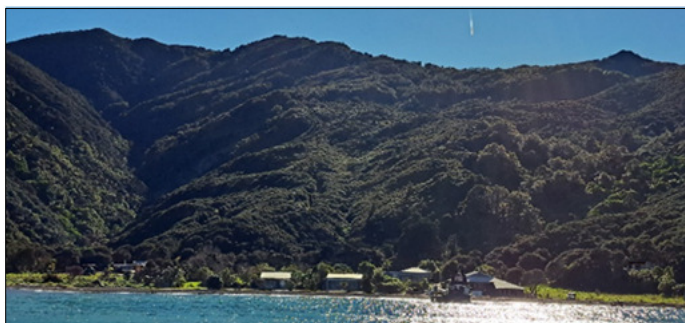
Volunteers will be called for at the next meeting.

You will be helping keas, cubs, scouts, venturers, rovers, pippins, brownies, guides and/or rangers contact others around the world.

Thanks to Paul ZL2RE for reinstalling the club safe in my water cylinder cupboard.

Mid July, I had an equipment malfunction and all the hot water fell out of my 32yr old cylinder and it had to be replaced. The club safe (with all the repeater site keys etc in it) was underneath. Luckily it wasn't affected but had to be removed while they replaced the old cylinder and it was a 2 person job getting it screwed back into place.

Got an entry for the Sept Constructors Award yet?
See P5 for details.



BRAYSHAW PARK REMOTE HF REPAIR UPDATE (OR NOT)

I'd tell you what the problem was and how it was finally sorted but, despite asking several times, I am yet to receive any article with specifics.

So, here are more pics from the original day of tower lowering and, I guess we'll never know what went wrong and how they got it going again.



I put the following into AI... *write a humorous article, about 100 - 200 words, asking club members to write something for the club newsletter. Subject amateur radio. Here is the result:*



Calling All Keyboard Operators!

We've all heard the saying that the microphone is mightier than the keyboard... actually, nobody has ever said that. But if they did, they'd be wrong.

Our newsletter doesn't write itself (despite rumours that it runs on a secret AI-powered 1000-watt linear). It relies on members sharing stories, tips, projects, disasters, triumphs, and those mysterious moments when everything worked perfectly... for nearly three whole minutes.

Built a new antenna? Tell us. Restored an ancient rig? We'd love to hear about it. Finally tracked down that annoying RF interference, only to discover it was your neighbour's electric fence? That's newsletter gold!

Don't worry if you don't think you're a writer. If you can explain why your SWR suddenly became "interesting," you can write an article. It doesn't have to be long, polished, or literary. A couple of paragraphs, a photo, or even a humorous tale from the shack is enough.

So, before you call "CQ" again, call on your keyboard instead. Give our newsletter editor something to publish besides reminders about tea duty and lost coax connectors. Your fellow amateurs will thank you - and the editor might even stop looking quite so desperate.

I have, on occasion, been sent some really good articles by the same two or three members (thank you very much) but it occurs to me we also have a committee of six. If each committee member wrote just one article during a single term of office, that would go a long way to helping with newsletter content and might encourage others to give it a go.

I believe I am the only amateur radio club newsletter editor in NZ who is not actually a Ham (and no, I don't want to become one, I find the subject extremely boring) so am unable to write technical content. This is YOUR newsletter, do you even read it? I know a lot of the spouses do but have my doubts about some of you.



WRITE SOMETHING DAMMIT!!! (please)

CONSTRUCTORS AWARD - 10th September

This is held every September on the General Meeting night and is open to all club members. Now is the time to start thinking about your entry, with plenty of time to build and refine it. The idea is to show other members what can be done and to perhaps start them thinking what else they could do. Amateur radio opens up a whole world of possibilities!

CONSTRUCTORS AWARD RULES

You must have made your construction yourself. It can be anything you like, either from scratch or from a kit.

Most construct something amateur radio related but we also get a few electronic devices or computer related constructs. We've even had sculptures made from electronic/radio parts!

If you are unsure, contact a committee member and ask.

On the night, everyone brings their entries which are lined up on a table. After the meeting, each entrant is asked to briefly describe their entry. The judges (sucked into it on the night and, as a result, are open to bribery - choccy biscuits might work) then judge the entries whilst everyone else enjoys a cuppa.

The winner is then announced and presented with the trophy (pictured right), which they get to keep proudly on prominent display in their home, or radio shack, until next year.



SNOW TIME POTA TIME! — CAROL & GARY, ZL1GA, LODGE

This POTA (Parks On The Air) trip started tamely enough with a NZMCA caravan and motor home rally held at Brayshaw Park over the weekend of 18/19 June. From there we proceeded to Christchurch for scheduled truck and caravan services. After that, let adventures begin...

The Ashburton Lakes area had been on our to do list for a while. We had been up to Lake Coleridge in summer and thought how amazing it would be in winter so stocked up on groceries and, with batteries charged, we left the city behind us and headed for Lake Coleridge. We parked up for 4 nights in a paddock close to Lake Coleridge Village a NZMCA POP (New Zealand Motor Caravan Assoc. Park Over Property). Our camp fees here supported the Windwhistle School. There was much excitement on our first morning as we woke up to snow on the hills all around us.



Gary's "activation plan" focused on lakes, of which there are many, and we started with Lake Coleridge, following up over the next few days with Lakes Evelyn, Selfe, Henrietta, Georgina and Ida. Our days started with stunning sunrises that turned the tips of the mountains pink and purple, frosts to -7°C and ice on some of the smaller lakes. Actually that's not quite true, our days generally start with porridge, the making of which Gary is an expert, a pot of good strong coffee, then thermos filling for the day ahead. No cafes where we're going!



On one of our days, at Lake Henrietta, we had a flat tyre which we blew up with our on-board compressor, enough to get us to Lake Selfe. From Lake Selfe we hiked an hour and a half on the Ryton Valley track to Lake Ida - the Glenthorpe Station road to Lake Ida being locked. Poaching and rustling of stock is a big problem up here. Lake Ida was frozen so we activated the lake and the associated Wildlife Reserve before a rather hurried hike back to our truck as we wanted to get our tyre changed before dark. The road then became surprisingly busy with fishermen heading up to the lakes to fish on a night of a full moon. It's interesting what other people do for fun, makes ham radio look quite normal. *(keep telling yourself that Carol! - Ed)*

On the way to lake Heron

From Lake Coleridge we stayed a couple of nights at Hororata Domain where our camp fees went towards the Hororata Hall reno fund. This hall, like many other small halls of a similar vintage, looks like it needs quite a bit of love. Here we participated in the Potaholics Crew *midwinter 30* activity, the object being to get a minimum of 30 contacts. For that we activated reserves at Hororata, Glentunnel and Coalgate. The towns around here reflect a long history of mining for coal, clay and lime. FYI the Hororata Café makes a mean hot chocolate and their caramel slices are huge!



Our next campsite was Mt. Somers Domain where we stayed for 10 days. Mt. Somers made a perfect base for our activation trips to Lakes Heron, Camp, Clearwater, Emma, Roundabout and Lambies Lagoon. Mt. Somers is a nice little town, with lots of history, a store and a service station where we got our tyre repaired. Methven, just 15 minutes away, has fuel, groceries, laundromat etc. all the things you need when you are living on the road. Methven is also where you will find Ōpuke Thermal Pools. Bliss on a winter's day. Their bank of solar panels is very impressive. At night, during winter, the community run the Staveley ice rink just up the road from Mt. Somers. By coincidence, Grahame ZL2BDS and Heather, who have also been on the road lately, chose to activate the Mt. Somers Domain on a day when we were activating elsewhere. If we'd known they were coming we'd have put the kettle on.

Lake Heron activation, the day started with another great sunrise and not a cloud in the sky. As we got closer to Lake Heron the sky got darker and darker. Where did that wind come from? At the lake the wind became a tussock flattening, wave whipping icy gale. Getting the antenna up was a mission and involved a pulley, guy ropes and quite a bit of marital disharmony. Was it worth it? Gary thought so, his gear was tested under extreme conditions. Nothing broke and we were still talking to each other. Not a trip for the faint hearted but we were well equipped in terms of vehicle, clothing and food plus some would think a dash of foolhardiness. The lake is picture post card when the sun is shining but we admire those who live and farm in that country on days like that.

Halfway through our stay at Mt. Somers we thought it would be nice to camp at Lake Camp so, after parking up there early on another beautiful sunny day, we proceeded to activate the lake and then go a bit further up the road and activated Lake Clearwater, still sunny but clouding over a bit. Afternoon tea - time back at the



Lake Emma



caravan it started to snow! Little fluffy flakes at first and then bigger ones and before we knew it, the ground was white. On checking the mountain weather forecast, Gary was concerned that if the roads froze over we could be iced in for several days. Much as the idea of being snowed in was quite romantic, reality made us make the sensible decision to return to Mt. Somers Domain. It was a fairly hairy drive back, snowing with poor visibility and we were towing a caravan on roads that were already freezing. The next day as we hunkered down the rain was torrential, Kaikoura and Blenheim were flooded and roads were closed. The day after that we followed a snow plough back up to Lake Clearwater where it was truly a magical winter wonderland. Snow as far as we could see.

Radio activation in the snow. Why not? Māori Lakes. Just us. Not a soul in sight and so quiet. QRP, using less than 10 watts of power, Greg ZL1GBX thinks QRP stands for Quite Raving Potty in this case he's probably quite correct. Incidentally, some types of coax cable become quite brittle at -7°C and can break, however we still made contacts throughout NZ and into Australia - and of course we built a snowman, ZL1SNO.



ZL1SNO at Maori Lakes

A couple of days later Matariki dawned clear and calm as we drove up to Mt. Potts on the Hakatere Potts Road. The truck's outside temperature read -7°C. Some enthusiastic photographers on the Potts River bridge assured us it was -8°C. We weren't going to disagree. Whatever, it was cold. We had a really good day, made some contacts and soaked up the view, that's what it's all about.

Our time in the snow had come to an end and we returned to Christchurch via Ashburton where we met up with Kim ZL3BO who had been following us on air and was a fount of local knowledge.



Maori Lakes- QRP Keeping an eye on the sky

The day after that in Kaipo we had coffee which then turned into lunch with Rik ZL3 RIK, Kevin ZL3 ABY and Nick ZL3 NLA. Boy can those guys talk! Later in the car park, Kevin used Gary's aluminium poles to demonstrate his prowess as a pole vaulter, just in time for the Commonwealth games.

Coming home SH1 was still closed at Cheviot and Kaikoura due to flooding so it was back over the Lewis pass and thru' Murchison. Another fantastic POTA trip, we realise how very lucky we are to be able to do these things, and experience some very remote places. Thanks to everyone who has chased and followed us.

Stats: 31 activations over 15 days giving 711 contacts.



Staveley Lime Kiln



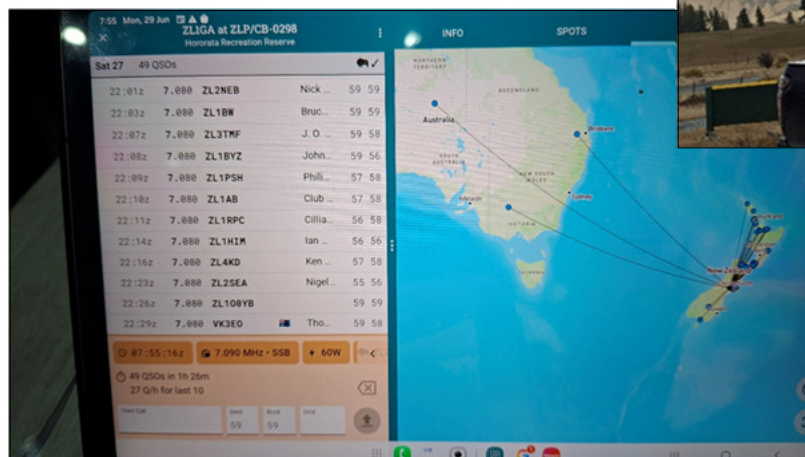
Lake Heron in a gale



Lake Heron very windy



Mt. Potts Matariki



Hororata Activation this was a very good day

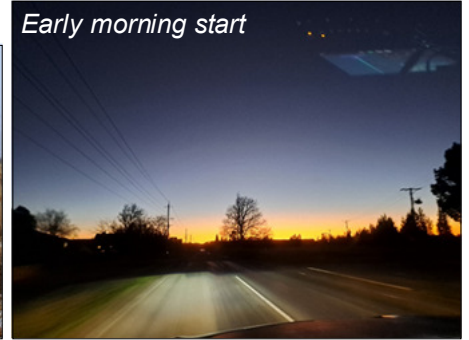


Alford Scenic Reserve pics above and below at 12 o'clock

Lake Roundabout



Early morning start



ZL3ABY, ZL1GA, ZL1RIK, ZL1NLA



Two days later



This is all the gear I take when going QRP or on a hike



Camp at Lake Camp



Hakatere Conservation Area



Ashburton Gorge 6 hours later



Māori Lakes

Many thanks to Carol and Gary for their informative articles and wonderful photos. I hope some of you feel inspired to get out and do some activating yourself, or to write an article! Here's hoping their travels continue and they keep showing us where they've been. How lucky are we to live in such a beautiful country?

Have you started on your entry for the September Constructors Award yet?
It's not too late! See P5 for details.



THE POTAHOLICS CREW

COME JOIN THE CREW

POTA/SOTA Fun in the sun with a Great group of people!

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See you on the air!

Calling all members of **The Potaholics Crew!**
Help expand our community and bring more radio enthusiasts into the fold across New Zealand.

Connect with us & share.

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- **Facebook:** The Potaholics Crew

Thanks team, and see you on the air!

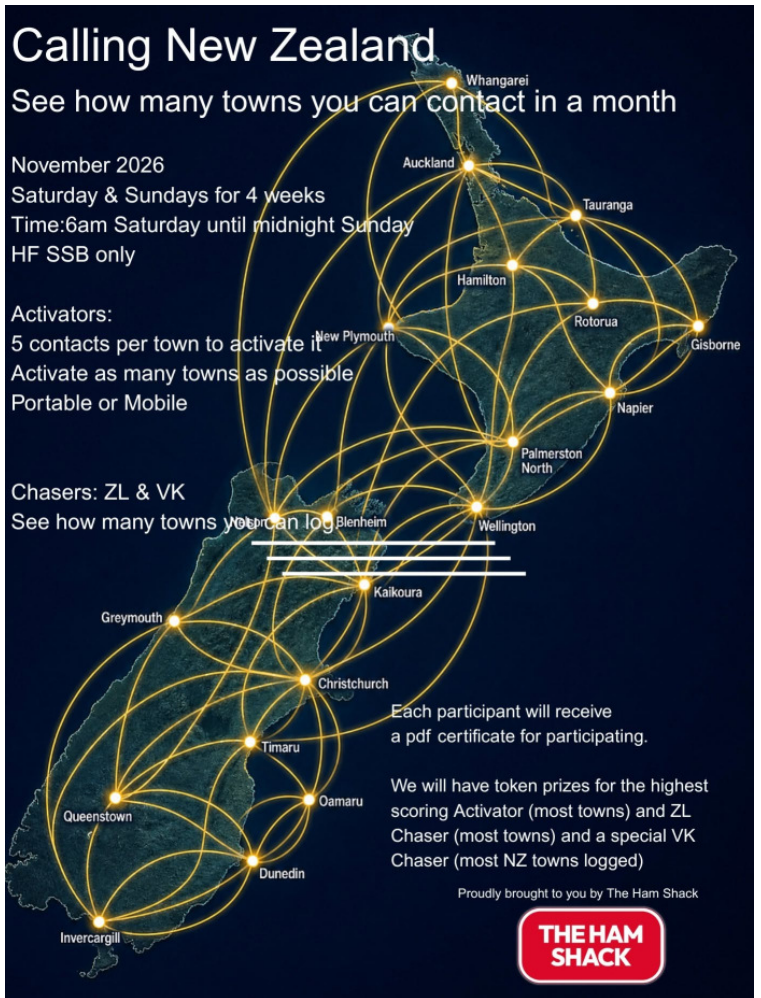
Calling New Zealand

See how many towns you can contact in a month

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

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

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



Each participant will receive a pdf certificate for participating.

We will have token prizes for the highest scoring Activator (most towns) and ZL Chaser (most towns) and a special VK Chaser (most NZ towns logged)

Proudly brought to you by The Ham Shack

THE HAM SHACK

Here's something you might be able to participate in next November from the comfort of your own home, if you are unable, or unwilling, to head out into the wopwops.
Note it is HF SSB only

Get those airwaves busy!

CQ

CQ

CQ

Have I mentioned the September Constructors Award yet?
Have you started your entry? It's not too late! See P5 for details.



If you turn up to the Sept. meeting without an entry for the Constructors Award, chances are you will be roped into judging them!

Not sure if any of you remember the Doozers from Fraggle Rock. They were always constructing things.

Fraggle Rock debuted in 1983, involved Jim Henson puppets, and was filmed in Toronto.

Doozers were small humanoid creatures, pudgy, green, and industrious. They stood about 15 cm tall ("knee-high to a Fraggles").

