News, reports and articles

Region 1 VHF 2017 -summer on the summit

Up

Posted by OZ1FDH
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Screen Shot 2017 09 08 at 19.44.08

What a difference a year can make. The 2017 contest was in many ways a contrast to 2016. Absolutely perfect weather and almost no technical glitches. Propagation –not so good

The main part of the crew OZ1GER Birger, PA5DD Uffe, OZ1FDH Claus, OU1E Rene, OZ7UV Svend, OZ5BD Bjørn and OZ5MD Mia meet at the restaurant in Klintholm Harbour on Friday afternoon for fried fish with potatoes, parsley and a nice cold beer -definitely one of the contest´s highlights. AG6QV Frank and OZ1IKY Kenneth couldn't join the event this year, but OZ5BD was back :) after 4 years in Greenland as OX5T. OZ1FTU and OZ7UV joined the team for the first time :).

Entering the Kongsbjerg site at the edge of Møns clif 134 m ASL is always a challenge. The summer of 2017 has been monsoon-like in OZ-land, and the forest track had a thick coat of very green and slippery grass. The first attempt for the old Landrover to climb the track with the loaded trailer stalled with the wheels spinning in a green paste, and we spend quite some time clearing the grass. Climate change is also making its impact on VHF contesting

There is always something new and unexpected in every year's contest, this time it was cow-droppings. The Danish nature agency keeps the area free from being overgrown by grazing livestock. They have in recent years changed their herd from goats to cattle. The goats were very friendly and we have had several ruminant visitors and co-operators entering the shack over the years.

Tough the cattle in no way are as friendly as the goats and also shyer, we found clear evidence that they also like to stay at the summit, as approximately 2 min after we reached the top, OZ1FDH had the first of several close encounters with the cow droppings. Also, we observed an interesting transport phenomena of cow dropping samples beginning to show at the floor of the trailer. It all contributed to the rural atmosphere when you bring

the equipment into the field. But if we had a choice, we would prefer the goats to the cattle.

A "minor" problem was that we (OZ1FDH) had forgotten to pack the phasing cables, and they were still in the barn 143 km away! Luckily enough OZ1FTU was still back at work in Copenhagen and could pick up the cables -phew!

We never have been that many to set up the equipment, and we took good care to check and measure all the antennas. There were a couple of poor connections between the baluns and the dipoles, and once we cleared those, the antennas really performed perfect with 25-35 dB of reflection coefficients.

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PA5DD and OZ7UV assembling the 4x10 el DK7ZB

Friday evening, it was time for food (spaghetti Bolognese a la´ OZ1FDH and desert surprise a la´ PA5DD) and red juice. Darkness came, and after a while of telling all the old jokes and stories for the nth time, we all went to bed.

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Relaxation and radio talk

Saturday, we continued to set up the equipment. The station has 4 antenna systems 4x10 el, 8x3 el, 8x3 el and 4x 3 el. All antennas are DK7ZB design made from Nuxcom kits. Only the 4x 10 el can be rotated, the other systems are in fixed directions. Compared to last year the only main change to the station was the new DB6NT transverter (read more about the TR144 PRO **here**), and apart from a few cables being mixed up we had a rare year of very few technical problems. We have over the years tried to make the operator position simple and logic. Clear the table for equipment as much as possible and reduce the antenna switching and turning of rotators to an absolute minimum.

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Operating position for 1st operator

At the contest start PA5DD was all ready to go. The first hour gave 87 QSOs and the second hour 56. This was a slow start, and after 4 hours we were about 50 QSOs behind last year. A difference we did not pick up later. Conditions were tough and many of the stations calling were really weak.

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QSOs pr. hour

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OZ1FTU and PA5DD busy operating the station

Saturday evening OZ1GER served his famous ham radio chili can carne for our contest dinner, but as the contest had started there was no more red juice.

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8x3 el DK7ZB yagis. Antennas always look nice.

In the evening, there was a very nice tropo lift lasting about 1 hour with very strong signals, even OK2KKW was 59, UR7D called with a nice signal, but after a while the conditions faded and we were back to digging out the signals from the noise. 9A2AE at 1015 km was, just like last year, the only Balkan station we managed to work, they must have a very good setup and location.

To monitor our signal, we used DO1MAH Marco's on-line SDR receiver in Bielefeld. This was really very useful, thanks a lot! Marco for setting up this service.

Suddenly at 00 AM the south-east antenna system went silent. SWR was fine but the RX was gone. It turned out that the EME systems antenna relay was mechanically stuck in the TX position. OZ1FDH solved the problem in the first round by a couple of good kicks to the mast, and we got the south-east antenna system back on-line.

OZ1GER and OZ1FTU worked the very late night and early morning hours. Few QSO's but some good DX, with TM0W at 1030 km as our ODX.

Sunday morning the TX relay problem came back, and we had to take down the south-east antenna system. The relay coil had some old hardened grease that we cleaned, and everything was fine again.

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OZ1FTU and OZ1GER fixing the antenna relay

On Sunday, it was pure summer on the summit. Definitely a big difference from last year's rain and fog. We even could see a tornado in the distance, fortunately it kept to the sea. The QSO rate on the radio was unfortunately at the low end. Was it the conditions or just the activity? Judging from DR9A's fantastic result of more than 1100 QSO's there must have been good activity, and we can probably only blame the conditions.

The final result of 662 QSOs, 90 locators, 17 DXCC and 323258 points (unchecked) was behind last year, reflecting the not so good conditions. Average points pr. QSO was 482, pretty normal from up here.

Taking the station apart and loading the equipment was just smooth, and we could leave already 3 hours after the contest. The only minor issue was OZ1FDH who thought his camera was broken when taking the group picture, only to realize he had forgotten to put on his glasses –age is definitely beginning to show there.

Looking ahead we are considering to put up another antenna system, but it is a balance between feasibility and complexity. Another issue is to reduce our CO_2 load which is close to 220 g CO_2/QSO, biofuels could be an

opportunity to run the generator.
We are still using Taclog as our log program. It is a very critical component of a contest. Tough Taclog is definitely outdated and needs to run in a dos-box, it is a very good program. Its main feature is simplicity; entering information can be done in any order you need, and there is only the essential information displayed. We have looked seriously at programs such as Tucnak and Wintest, but compared to Taclog they are still way off.

Anyway, no matter the results below average, we had a fantastic time. All the equipment worked almost all the time, we enjoyed each other's company and some of us even got a small sun burn. It doesn't really get any better. See you all next year J.

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5P5T operating team 2017. Front PA5DD, OZ1FTU, OZ5BD. Top OZ7UV, OZ1FDH, OZ1GER

Screen Shot 2017 09 09 at 18.33.57

Top 20 QSOs

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