50MHz TROPHY CONTEST

Saturday 18th June 2016

David G0LRD and Dave G6KWA decided to mount a last minute attempt at the 50MHz Trophy Contest. We used the same location as last year on the high ridge at Therfield at 160m ASL.

G2XV/P working at Therfield

Again, as last year, we used G0LRD's lightweight kit, consisting of a SOTABeam 'fold-up' 6m 2-element Moxon, a fibre-glass fishing pole and the ICOM IC-7100. Rather less lightweight, the 130 Ah lead-acid battery allowed the use of 100W throughout the 6 hour contest.

G0LRD operating

The 'shack' was the rear seat of KWA's car. Setting up was relatively quick so we had a bit of time for testing before the 15:00 (local) start. While setting up the voice keyer on the IC-7100, an eagle-eyed George M1GEO from the Kelveden Hatch Secret Nuclear Bunker group spotted our signal on his band-scope during our first test transmission and called us back for a chat. This was fortunate since he reminded both of us that 'Museums on the Air' was next weekend, not the weekend after.

G6KWA logging with 'Minos'

As usual, the performance of the 'lowly', 2-element Moxon beam was remarkable, particularly for the excellent front-to-back ratio and very deep nulls at about +/- 120 degrees off the beam.

Rotating - Armstrong method

Just before the contest began Sporadic-E was observed, making southern European stations audible. Of course, it faded out at almost exactly 15:00. The first couple of hours provided mainly UK stations.

This trip was also a convenient opportunity to test some M&P Ultraflex-7 feeder.

At 7mm diameter, this feeder is a little bigger than 5mm RG-58 but has a loss roughly equivalent to 10.3mm RG-213.

Being very flexible, it seemed to take in its stride the mild abuse we gave it from being wrapped around the mast while rotating the mast by hand.

At about 17:00pm we were visited by David M0ZEB and shortly after Denise XYL-G0LRD arrived with some very welcome sausage and chips for everyone!

Conveniently, as we finished eating, around 17:30, a Sporadic-E 'tunnel' opened up to Spain and Portugal providing a nice batch of long-distance QSOs. These were important because this is a 'points per km' contest.

QSO Map

The Sporadic-E continued, although the Spanish path closed, to be replaced with a new one to the Ukraine thus providing another nice run of 1800-2000 km QSOs.

Final Outcome at the end of 6 hours:

42 QSOs in 20 Locator Squares covering 6 countries.

Claimed Score: around 600,000 points.

Best DX: UW7LL/A in the Ukraine at 2,390km

Report & Map - thanks to David G0LRD

POSTSCRIPT

from Dave G6KWA

The next day, Sunday, I was listening to 50MHz in the home shack but found things were very quiet. I soon realised that my tuner was no longer working on 50 because I had altered my doublet. So, I quickly lashed up a new S-matcher suitable for the band, using a PA0FRI design.

The results show what can be heard and worked on a wire doublet 25m long at a height of 7m and fed with home-brew open line. I was using my FT-950 set for 20 Watts output.

The low end of the band was crammed with stations, all fading in and out as the E clouds shifted, entering and leaving positions favourable to my location. Without trying very hard and only operating intermittently during the last hour, I worked 8 stations with 8 locators in 5 countries, giving a claimed total of 145,548 points.

What was really interesting was how the band went dead at 15:00. The DX maps and clusters went quiet and except for the usual buzzes and video carriers there were no stations to be heard.

Of course, propagation had not ceased, it was just that the contests throughout Europe had ended. The moral of this story? - It is always worth calling CQ even if a band seems dead. Everybody is waiting to see if the cluster or E-maps are going to show any activity.