

Cape Cod DX Get-Together 2004

Log Report and Comments from Mark Connelly, WA1ION - Times / dates = UTC / 2004

Chatham, Cape Cod, MA
(GC= 69.965 W / 41.717 N)
(at QTH of Vern Brownell, W1VB: Eastward Road)

Drake R8B receiver, DXP-3 phasing unit

Antenna system: 100 m NNE longwire phased against vertical

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"CADX" (Cape Area DXers) get-together: see comments following logs

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*** TRANSATLANTIC DX ***

Many more stations were heard: these are longer-haul or less-often-reported ones.

882 | SERBIA (t) | Podgorica et al., OCT 16 2312 - possibly this with Slavic talk mixing with, and occasionally over, UK & Spain. Nearby Albania-1214.95 was strong a little earlier and Croatia-1134 was S9+40.

927 | TURKEY (t) | Izmir, OCT 16 2340 - Turkish-sounding talk; in tough CJYQ/WGIN/other-930 slop; logged just after a clear reception of the Turk on 1017.

1017 | TURKEY | TRT, Mundanya (Istanbul), OCT 16 2320 - Turkish talk dominating over Germany & Spain.

1170 | UNITED ARAB EMIRATES | R. Farda, Dabiya, OCT 16 2300 - with WWVA phase-nulled, this thing was absolutely blasting in with a good Radio Farda ID at the top of the hour. No 1169 or 1171 het at this time, though the 1169 Iranian was actually showing up against local WFPB (less than 10 km distant!) more than an hour earlier, well before sunset.

1214.95 | ALBANIA | Fllake, OCT 16 2152 - superloud (S9+25) with pop vocal (that I first thought was just Virgin R.), then there was distinctive eastern European talk by a man and a woman. This was totally dominant and was stronger than adjacent VOAR/WPHT-1210. When I zero-beat the frequency, it was about 50 Hz low of nominal 1215. Soon a growl from the 1215 stations (UK & Spain) appeared.

1431 | DJIBOUTI | R. Sawa, Arta, OCT 16 2350 - pop Arabic music, Sawa mention; fair.

1476 | UNITED ARAB EMIRATES (t) | UAE R., Dubai, OCT 16 2259 - most likely this on extended Ramadan schedule with Arabic string music at fair level. Propagation to that area was very good, based on how Farda-1170 was booming in.

1548 | KUWAIT | R. Sawa, Kabd - Kuwait City, OCT 16 2230 - strong with dance music, Arabic talk. Adjacent 1550 had Algeria atop at times.

1593 | unID | OCT 16 2355 - pop music and possible bits of English talk: this seemed more like the Irish pirate rather

than VOA Kuwait.

*** COMMENTS ***

It had been a while since I'd visited my DX friends on Cape Cod so I figured that an October trip to the area was a good idea (after summer tourists and traffic had departed and before the arrival of winter's snow). Marc and Debby DeLorenzo had moved from Marstons Mills to a new home in South Dennis, off Route 134. Marc needed some antenna improvements done, so with my car loaded up with antenna supplies of all types (and myself loaded up with caffeine from Marylou's coffee shop in Weymouth), I rolled into his driveway at 9 a.m. on Saturday, 16 OCT. This was the first of three DX stops for the day. The bow and arrows, fishing line, ropes, wire, and toolbox were quickly set up on his back deck and the antenna work commenced. Up to this point Marc had been running his NRD-525 receiver from a phasing unit fed by an indoor Quantum Loop and an outdoor non-noise-reduced south longwire on the ground. He'd had as much as 500 ft. / 150 m of wire out there on conservation land behind his house until some local kids made off with over half of it. There were pine and oak trees of decent height behind the house, so I suggested a broadband loop and a vertical. The broadband loop we put up peaks east-west and is square, about 12 m per side. It is center-fed on the bottom side through a 4:1 transformer. The vertical is about 15 m bottom to top. This would need a ground rod to "work against" for low-noise operation. Luckily nearby DXer Chris Black (N1CP) had a 2.4 m ground rod, so he brought it over and we pounded it in near the bottom of the vertical wire. A 16:1 transformer worked well to couple this to coaxial feedline. With two new antennas up (as the main "TA-gettin' set-up"), we thought that there were still some occasions when a longwire running south would be a valuable DX tool. I was mostly thinking about Latin American DX during auroral conditions. Instead of running the wire on the ground (and inviting sabotage by the DX-unappreciative), I ran it out, about 60 m worth, through low branches about 4 m off the ground. The effective method for this was tossing a string, attached to a rubber mallet, over branches while trying to keep the overall run as straight as could be managed. Then I pulled the length of wire through following the string. The end of the wire closer to the house was fed to one side of a 4:1 transformer and the new ground rod to the other side. All three of the newly-installed antennas, therefore, are configured to pick up minimum local electrical noise. Marc still has the indoor Quantum Loop as a fourth antenna to "play".

With this mission accomplished, it was now just a bit after noontime. We carried the "show" on to DX Shack #2, that of Chris Black in South Yarmouth. Chris took me on a tour of the antenna farm in the woods on downsloping land behind his house. There were pitch pines out there that were well over 20 m tall: good-sized trees by Cape Cod standards. Like Marc, Chris is lucky to border land that is not likely to be developed in the near future. Chris mentioned future plans for a BOG (Beverage-on-Ground) though, considering what he already had it didn't seem that necessary. He has a supersized dual K9AY loop, a vertical, a longwire at 40 deg., and another longwire at 130 deg. On the house are some other antennas for ham and SWL use. Noise pick-up is minimized through rigorous usage of ground rods and matching transformers. Marc and Chris watched as I "drove" Chris's Drake R8B and phaser to null various stations when using the 40 deg. wire against the vertical, undoubtedly the set-up of choice for Europe. It was sweet to wipe out WOR-710's nasty IBOC garbage from 720 and get entertainment-quality CHTN in the middle of the day. And while my mind was on PEI, I just had to step up to WPRO-630 and null it to oblivion to hear country music from CFCY. I can get these PEI stations at home in Billerica during the day on the Flag antenna, but nowhere near as strong as I got them on Chris's set-up. I am now happy to report that Cape Cod DXers Marc and Chris are both "ready for prime time" when it comes to hearing Trans-Atlantics on medium-wave.

The time was a bit after 2 p.m. when we phoned a third Cape DXer, Vern Brownell (W1VB), about our imminent invasion of his palatial digs on the Chatham waterfront. All of this antenna work and stomping through the woods in cool autumn weather had given us a "wicked big" appetite. En route to early dinner I drove down Station Avenue in South Yarmouth, a place of many memories for me from the years that my parents had lived in the area. I rolled onto Route 28 in South Yarmouth with WROL-950's "Irish Hit Parade" show blasting out of my car speakers; this brought more "good old days" memories to mind. Chris, Marc, and I got to Seafood Sam's restaurant for a great meal and DX conversation. Chris went for scallops and Marc and I had - what else? - clams. I chatted up the idea of looking for Thailand-1575 at local sunset via Arctic-zone greyline. This would require very quiet geomagnetic conditions. India-1566 would almost have to be a "pest" for this to happen, I surmised. Chris filled us in on his trips to the 2004 NRC Convention and to the "mother church of homebrewers": the Dayton, OH Hamfest.

Soon we were off to Chatham for our visit to DX Shack #3, that of Vern, W1VB. This ride took us by the old WCC site

at the corner of 28 and Old Comer's Road, overlooking picturesque Ryder's Cove. Vern is working with a local historical preservation society to make an antique wireless museum in one or more of the remaining WCC buildings. Some of the original towers are still there, unlike the South Chatham part of the operation that was completely demolished. We rolled out Fox Hill Road, past the Eastward Ho Golf Course (if I ever win the \$200 million Powerball, I'm buying that !) and down a maze of little streets to Vern's place on Eastward Road. He is one of a select few DXers whose home location is DXpedition-worthy. It's as good as hand-picked sites I visit to DX from the car. All the comforts of a house (a great house at that) and the DX quality of a "super-site". I guess Pat Martin in OR and Richard Wood in HI would also be in the elite group of those living in "DX heaven".

With the sun still fairly high at 4 p.m. local (2000 UTC), Saudi Arabia - 1521 was already putting a fat het against the 1520 domestics. Knowing that we still had close to an hour before the really interesting stuff showed up, Vern rolled out about 100 m of wire along the beach going roughly north-northeast. I did a jury-rig repair to a broadband loop I'd set up outdoors there about 4 years earlier. Vern also had a vertical antenna available for use. After playing around with a couple of different antenna configurations as inputs to Vern's phasing unit, I determined that the 100 m wire (noise-reduced via 4:1 transformer) versus the vertical was going to deliver the most "candy" on the Trans-Atlantic route. Really high latitude stuff like Norway-1314 was only so-so and, alas, deep Asians such as India would have to wait for another day. What was happening were some phenomenal signals from south-central Europe. Albania - 1214.95 was drop-you-in-your-tracks loud, annihilating UK and Spain. Turkey-1017 right in there. Of course Croatia - 1134 was monster level, almost pegging the meter and sometimes better than adjacent WBBR-1130. Saudi Arabia - 1521 was also super-huge and, with its extended Ramadan schedule, should be heard just about everywhere. An effect I'd seen in Newfoundland was also repeated at Vern's in Chatham: Different geographical areas or different parts of the band popped into the spotlight as others receded. France-1377 was S9+35 one minute and 1206 was hard to hear at the same time, then it totally swapped around. Channels that are often single-station dominated, usually by something from Spain, had deep complex clusters of signals from all over Europe. At times you'd have to sit on a pile-up and wait for something to rise to dominance. When it did, it wasn't always the "usual". TalkSport-1089 was entertainment-quality, but so was Radio Farda UAE on 1170, super with WWVA easily phased. As we DXed, Vern's wife stopped into the shack with snack platters, including shrimp which I had to sample. By 8 p.m. EDT (0000 UTC), DXing wound down and Marc, Vern, Chris, and I chatted a bit longer before departure time. It was the end of a fun DX day on Old Cape Cod.

On my way out of Chatham, I put on the Boston Red Sox - New York Yankees game on WEEI-850 and noted that WEEI was taking a beating from a het and slop from Spain-855 ! The reception bore a marked resemblance to WEEI as it sounds on Route 10 in eastern Newfoundland or maybe even to how it sounds in Ireland. I said to myself "This is one wild DX location." The Cape's resident DXers have the ability to contribute logs and audio clips that will be nothing short of astounding.