



**Z S 8 M**

## **September 2010 News**

***Pierre D. Tromp ZS1HF***

ITU Zone: 57 CQ Zone: 38 46 54 S 37 05 E

Grid: KE83wc IOTA: AF-021

Hi All,

Welcome to the September News Letter.

I will be concentrating more on the operational and technical side of ZS8M this month, as well as a bit of usual chit chat and info on life out here.

The Polar Supply Ship SA Agulhas arrived at Marion Island on Thursday 12 Aug and spent six days off loading construction workers, cargo, diesel and food. The new base has been under construction for a number of years and is scheduled to be completed end October / beginning November.

Good news; John ZS1LF will be departing to Gough Island on 2 Sept and will be active as ZD9GI around end of November. I have sent my linier back to Cape Town and John will be using it at Gough Island. John and I are friends and former colleagues from the SA Air Force and are both qualified radio technicians with a passion for HF. Keep a lookout for John on the HF bands.

My SteppIR BigIR Mk III arrived and will remain the box until the construction team departs. I will be installing it closer to the new base around middle November.

Talking of beams, I have had a few enquiries or comments as to why I am using a dipole. Firstly, no extra antennas and buildings unless it has been approved by an EIA. Secondly, I am not aware of any HF beam that will withstand 90 knots gusts and lastly and very importantly, management are trying to decrease bird casualties. We do have birds flying into buildings at night during storms, but mostly during misty conditions coupled with lightning.

I often get a begging request for me to beam long or short path into a certain region, only to tell the operator that I cannot comply as I am using a dipole. What, no beam? Are you sure you don't have a beam? Is that possible? Yes OM, no beam. I suppose this creates more of a challenge for the station trying to work me as well. Here I am working approximately 300Watts into a dipole compared to a station working with 1,5 or 3kW into a Yagi, but I am getting out and hopefully when propagation improves, I will be able to work more DX as well.

Thanks to all who have sent me pictures of their stations. I feel intimidated looking at these awesome stations that have taken time, love and dedication to create.

The ZS8M Dxpediton is going well. To date I have make some 2900 contacts, considering the hours that I am able to operate. Propagation has been picking up very slowly, still making DX a challenge. I have absolutely no control over where and for how long propagation will be open into a specific place or region, making it all the more interesting so see where I am communicating.



So it's back to basics; the skill is to select the right frequency, time of day, knowing your propagation and make sure your station out performs your competitor. So far the results are interesting; my dipole and 300 Watts compared to the 1,5 or 3kW into a Yagi; the signal reports are very similar. I give actual reports, not just 59. I am not in contest mode, but end with a 'thanks for the contact OM, look for you again, good DX, 73'.

There has however been a pirate using the ZS8M call sign and has created a few incidences where a QSO has been queried. I have informed those enquiring that I have a sexier voice than the pirate, so this should be the standard to identify me correctly.

Propagation has been fair in the morning with DX into the USA, Brazil and sometimes British Columbia, but there have been mornings when propagation was poor. On a few occasion when a massive cold front swept over the island, coupled with thunder and lightning, no contacts were possible due to excessive static (QRN) levels. Not only was communications wiped out on the higher (amateur) HF frequencies, but also on the lower 2MHz commercial band where the island has a commercial frequency to communicate to the over night huts. Daily propagation studies continue.

Very bad discipline from Italian and Spanish operators prevented other European operators from working ZS8M on 30 Aug 2010. It's a pity that this type of attitude spoils it for everyone. I received many emails from operators around the world condemning these actions. Thanks for the support.

If you have any questions or comment, please feel free to contact me: [zs1hf@telkomsa.net](mailto:zs1hf@telkomsa.net)



Snow coverage



Operating my Icom IC-7200

Some visitors to the island:



Pierre, Jacques and Gideon      Dr. Jannie Horn, Linda (team member) and Pierre

The massive and mighty Kamov heavy lift chopper doing its thing!





**Frozen grass**



**Frozen water underneath water tanks**



**Penguins arriving on the island to breed**

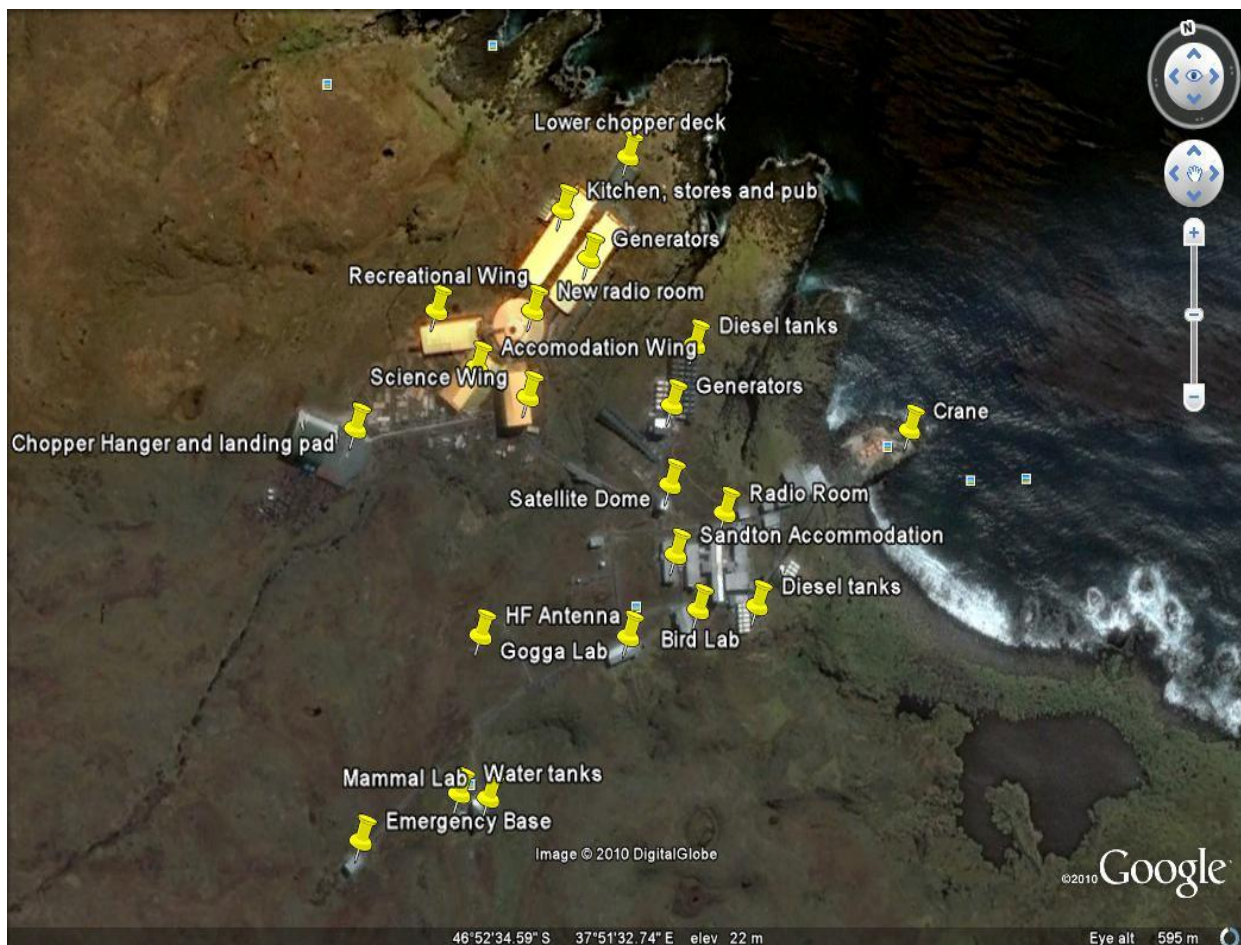


**A seal catching up on some sleep**



Marion Island's Three Wise Men

L to R: Simon: Medic and Team Leader, Vincent: Diesel Mechanic, Pierre: Radio Technician



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