Activating an RSGB Historic Call Sign: FAQs

Who can operate?
All Full Licence holders who are Members of the RSGB are eligible to apply to operate one of the RSGB Contest Club Calls (see RSGB website for details). Intermediate and Foundation Licensees can also operate under the supervision of a full licence holder.

How do I apply?

1. **To operate or to supervise others, you must be a member of the RSGB Contest Club (with no obligation to take part in any contests).**
   This is necessary to comply with the terms of the Club Licences issued by Ofcom. If you wish to join the Contest Club in advance then please send an email with your call sign, RSGB Membership number and your RSGB region number to ContestClub@rsgbcc.org.

2. **Choose when and where you would like to operate.**
   Each RSGB Club Call has its own schedule which is held on a Google Spreadsheet which can be found from a link on the QRZ.com page for the Club Call and on the RSGB website.
   The schedule divides each day into three time-columns: 0000-1200, 1200-1800, 1800-2359.
   Time-columns are split into bands: 160, 80, 40, 30, 20, 17, 15, 12 & 10
   Each band is divided into modes: CW, Data (combining RTTY, PSK & FT modes) & SSB.
   This gives a total of 26 band/mode slots in each time slot. Theoretically, we can have 26 stations active with each RSGB Club Call at any time.
   Please book **no more than three slots** in any one time column. If on a particular day, a slot is unreserved, you may take that slot **at the time**, providing you keep no more than three slots booked in total and you update the schedule.
   This gives others an opportunity to activate the call sign.
   Each RSGB Club Call may be activated by any Contest Club member, to operate in the country for which it is applicable.
   You can request access to the google spreadsheet for a call sign by sending an email to ContestClub@rsgbcc.org. Please include in your email, the address from which you will operate or else confirm that your address on QRZ.com is correct. If you intend to operate from a portable location, a postcode or maidenhead locator will suffice. This information is required by Ofcom and will only be shared with Ofcom staff if requested. It will not be published.
   You will have access to add or remove your call sign from the schedule yourself.
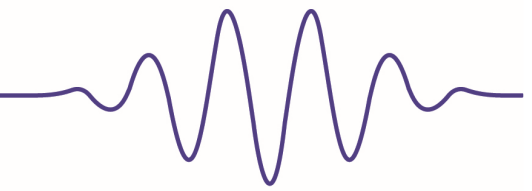   If you are unable to activate a slot for which you are booked, please be sure that your call sign is removed so that others may activate the RSGB Club Call.

What if we want to use one of the RSGB Club Calls with a group or a local radio club?
In this case we need one RSGB member with a Full Licence who will supervise the operation of the station. We encourage participation by Foundation and Intermediate Licensees and this is one appropriate way to allow this.

When can I operate?
Please do not operate if your call sign is not in the schedule.

Which bands and modes can I use? You may operate on any (or all!) of the HF bands (1.8-29.7MHz), excluding 5MHz, using any mode permitted by your licence. CW, SSB and FT8 or FT4 will the most popular modes. For FT modes we suggest that operation is within the normal allocation of frequencies on each band, as previous experience has shown that the level of traffic can be accommodated in the available bandwidth; operating elsewhere would exclude any spontaneous QSOs.

How do I operate with one of the RSGB Club Calls?
You may call CQ or look for other callers and respond to them. This is not an award activation so you may operate as you wish.
Feel free to self-spot from time to time when on SSB. This should not be necessary on CW or FT modes.
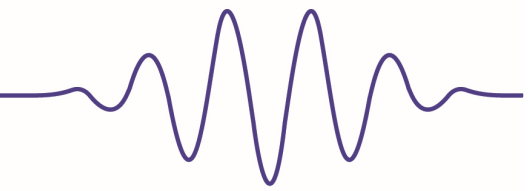
How to I identify the station? Wherever you operate, whether it is from the address on your licence, an Alternative Address, Temporary Location, Mobile location or a Maritime Mobile location, please use the RSGB Club Call without any additional suffix; so no /P, /A, /M or /MM. This is so that each call sign is only ever used in one format.

What do I say? (Using G5WS as an example)
- For initial calls, or if activity dries up a bit use a simple CQ call such as "CQ G5WS" on CW or "CQ UK to ZL Centenary, Golf Five Whiskey Sierra" on Phone; if activity is busy then it is enough to simply give the call sign.
- Unless you have very few callers, you should restrict each QSO to exchanging signal reports; these should be "CALL 5NN" in CW or "CALL 59" in SSB. Remember, other stations are waiting to get into your log. Whilst this may not be a "true" report, it is almost impossible to judge the signal strength of one signal in a pile-up. In an HF pile-up, the stations calling you are *only* interested in knowing that you have received and logged their call sign correctly. Any other information, from them or from you, is slowing everything down. This is not a contest, but your two underlying aims are (a) to make as many QSOs as possible and (b) to log these QSOs accurately.
- At the end of a QSO send "TU G5WS" on CW or "thanks G5WS" on Phone.
- Use "QRZ" only if you need a caller to repeat their call sign. In most cases, the more succinct you can be, the greater the opportunity there is for those participating in the celebration, to get their call sign in your log.
- On FT8 and FT4, use the standard exchanges but you may omit TX1.

Do I need to operate for the whole period? No: just operate for as long as you are comfortable. The only constraints are that you do not begin before the allotted start time, and that you finish before the next person takes over the call sign. However, the intention is to air the RSGB Club Calls for as long as possible, so please try and use as much of your allotted time as you are able. If you cannot manage the whole slot then please delete your call sign from the schedule when you have finished. We will have a record that you have operated because we will have your ADIF file.

Supposing my plans change? No problem: please remove your call sign from the schedule before your session is due to start. The earlier you can remove your call sign, the better however, since this may allow someone else to use the slot.

What software should I use for logging?
In preparation for your activation, make sure that you have suitable computer logging software installed. Contest logging packages such as N1MM+ (free download), SD (free download), DXlog (free download), or Wintest, have a "DXpedition mode" which not only allows QSOs to be recorded but will easily generate the required ADIF file at the end.

HRD will work but you will have to change the default settings for ADIF output as they do not include BAND. Apple users can use SkookumLogger.

What about FT8 and FT4 Operating? (Instructions here for WSJT-X but other programs may be used)
Please use the standard default frequency allocations in WSJT-X on each band. Set the call sign to the RSGB Club Call and your location using File/Settings. Select AutoSeq and Start with TX6 calling CQ. Remain calling CQ and responding to callers. You may disable TX1 to shorten the QSO cycle.

What about FT8 and FT4 Logging?
WSJT-X saves your log as an ADIF file as you are operating, unlike normal logging programmes, so you will have to do some housekeeping.

An ADIF file is written to as you make QSOs; this is called **wsjtx_log.adi**.
Before you start using the RSGB Club Call you need to get rid of your existing wsjtx_log.adi file; for this we suggest that you rename it. You can access the file to change the name from inside the WSJT-X programme using **File>Open log directory.**

You could rename wsjtx_log.adi to wsjtx_log_yourcallsign.adi, for instance, by right-mouse clicking on the file name and selecting rename from the list.
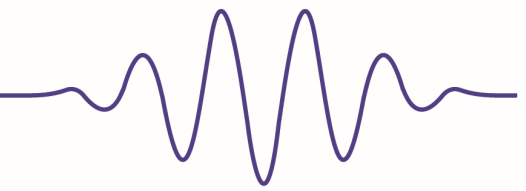
Now, when you start operating with the RSGB Club Call, WSJT-X will create a new wsjtx_log.adi file and will write all your completed QSOs into it.

When you have finished the RSGB Club Call operating session, please rename the wsjtx_log.adi file which has only your RSGB Club Call QSOs, using the naming convention described below, and then move it to the **Desktop**. It will be easy to find it there to attach it to an email and to send it in. The WSJT-X programme will be ready to start a new empty ADIF file the next time it is used.

What about logging for SSB and CW?
It is essential that you log all the QSOs you make, using logging software, on a PC or Mac. This logging software must be capable of generating an ADIF logfile at the end of each logging session. Set the call sign in your software to be the RSGB Club Call that you will using. Logging must be in UTC.

Please send your log, in ADIF format (only), to ContestClub@rsgbcc.org as soon as possible after your slot has finished. If you are operating on more than one occasion, please submit your log after each activation. If you experience any problem with compiling your log in the correct format, please ask for advice.

What should I do with the ADIF file?

Ideally, please save the ADIF file with a file name in the format:
20221201 1200 G5WS@MYCALL.ADI – this is the date (YYYYMMDD) and time in UTC that you started, the RSGB Club Call you were using @your call sign. This filename format gives us a fighting chance of keeping the ADIF files sorted in chronological order.

Whatever logging software you use, your ADIF file output must include the following minimum fields for Club Log. Please check that these are all selected.

- CALL
- QSO_DATE
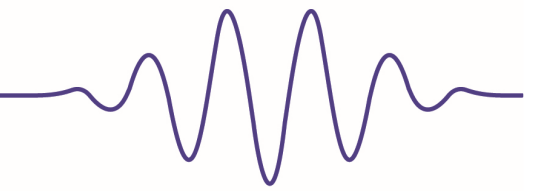- TIME_ON (QSO start time)
- BAND
- MODE
- RST_RCVD
- RST_SENT

Next please email the ADIF file, with minimum delay, as an email attachment, to ContestClub@rsgbcc.org.

Will I have to send QSL cards? No. Paper QSLs will be available for this event but only through our QSL manager, and at the end of the event we will upload all the complete logs to LoTW.

I have a modest station – will this be good enough? Experience of activating similar stations shows that those operating the most basic of stations (100w to a dipole or similar antenna) enjoyed operating, and their signals attracted many callers. The only drawback may be that your choice of band will be limited. If you have access to a club or colleague's station, this may increase your options during your activation.

I've not operated a call sign that is likely to attract a lot of callers before. How should I approach it? One of the objectives of the event is to give people like you the experience of being at the "business end" of a pile-up so you will not be alone! If this is your first time, "keep it simple", is probably the best advice i.e.

- limit your operating to a mode or modes that you feel comfortable with and on band(s) that you are familiar with.
- try and find a frequency that is clear of nearby stations before starting to call CQ.
- once you have established yourself on a frequency, stay put unless you have to move (due to QRM or QRN).
- only operate at a pace that you feel comfortable with. Make sure that you have logged the caller's details before moving onto the next and don't be afraid to ask for a repeat of call signs if you are not sure of what you have copied.
- The only information that you need to exchange is a signal report and conventionally this is 59 (599). This will allow you to work through the list of callers as efficiently as possible. If the queue of callers dries up, QSOs can be more leisurely. If you find that you are not attracting many callers, occasional self-spotting on a DX cluster like DXwatch.com will help callers to find you.

- If, during your session, you are called by someone who is already in your log, making this a duplicate QSO (dupe), please work them and log the QSO again. It could be that they felt that they did not complete the previous QSO with you.
- If you are swamped with European callers, then please occasionally ask for Europe to QRX and listen for callers outside Europe or for ZL callers in particular. This is easy on SSB but on CW you might have to suffix your call with "OC" or whatever.
- If there are a high number of callers making it difficult for you to copy individual call signs, it can be more effective to operate split-frequency – typically listening 1 kHz or more up on CW and 5 kHz or more up on SSB. The main advantage of split-frequency operation is that your callers can hear your replies, as your signal is not buried under all the stations who are calling you.
- Don't worry about it if you struggle! Try and keep calm and keep control of the pile up. If all else fails, say "QRX" and take a break before resuming.

As a Full Licensee, how should I supervise Intermediate and Foundation Licensees who wish to operate with one of these call signs?

We suggest that "light-touch" is the best policy. There will be unfamiliar aspects to the station, particularly when high power is used, so setting-up for operation on a particular band and mode may need the Full Licensee's help. Logging is key to success and this is another area where some guidance may be needed to get someone started.

Where can I get more help? When you sign up to use one of the RSGB Club Calls you will be sent an invitation to join the RSGB Contest Club discussion group. The group exists to exchange advice and experiences between those who are activating the call signs. You are not obliged to join the group but this is an excellent place to find help and share advice.