

Despite the challenges, a successful H26 2021 for HB9HTC

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In Corona times, normal things become much more complex. This fact, along with some technical issues, made organizing and carrying out the H26 contest for the Helvetia Telegraphy Club particularly challenging. Normally we have two stations on the air ó HB9HC and HB9HTC. This year, the HB9HC crew found that their standard QTH was not able to offer any food, and that along with the need for participants to go home every night led to them deciding not to participate this year.

For HB9HTC, our problems began when we discovered that our previous QTH in the Jura was fully booked and not able to accommodate us. Rather than simply give up, Robi HB9DEO and Paul HB9DST went on a search for an alternative site. After running into some dead ends, they found something viable, a hotel near Appenzell that would let us stay there overnight, would provide meals, and ó most important ó would let us set up antennas, string wires into trees, and run our radios. (We consider ourselves very lucky because we also learned that this hotel will be closing down permanently in a few weeks, we got there just in time!)

As our team, consisting of Robi HB9DEO, Paul HB9DST, Urs HB9ABO and Marcel HB9TWM, arrived on Friday, the hotel manager had a surprise for us: the trees we had our eyes on for antenna supports were deemed ðholyö by the farmer who owns the land and we could not use them. We looked at the other side of the hotel, and there were limited possibilities. It was not really ideal for a full-sized dipole, so we decided to use a multi-band 1kW end-fed antenna (MyAntennas.com EFHW-8010 rated for 1 kW). Erecting it was not easy because we had to run the antenna wire above some low-lying telephone wires. Clearly, we had to be very careful during setup and teardown. Next, it would later prove very fortunate that Urs brought along a 20m delta loop. A final note: Corona did bring one benefit. We were very lucky that the restaurant did not have any terrace foodservice, so we could do our work without any worries of disturbing anyone.



We ran the coax for the end-fed antenna from a 2nd floor balcony into the tree, then the antenna wire ran from the tree to this mast. Very hard to see are the telephone lines in the dip between the mast and the hotel.

With the antennas all set up, we measured the SWR on all bands and found the readings to be acceptable (the antenna was resonant in the SSB sections, but UrsøKX3S tuner did a fine job). We did run into some glitches. First, the desktop PC was crashing at times, but a snap-on ferrite on the USB cable solved that problem. Next, on certain bands ó first 160m and then as we discovered others ó we found that the signals coming into the shack from the end-fed antenna were switching capacitance-based touch lamps on and off ó and not just in our õshackö room, but also in rooms at the other end of the building. Further, we were also triggering the hotel fire alarm, and we got a crash course in how to reset the alarm so the fire department did not make a visit. Unfortunately, nobody brought along a common-mode choke. Thus, for certain bands, we were limited to running with the loop.



Our shack, including the KX3S.

Despite these obstacles, we had a successful H26, working all cantons except two (BS and UR) and making 426 QSOs (unchecked log). Best of all, it was the comraderie that was so important in these times where Corona has isolated so many of us from our regular daily activities.



The HB9HTC team for H26 2021. Left to right: Urs HB9ABO, Robi HB9EO, Paul HB9DST and Marcel HB9TWM.