

BRITISH DX CLUB

UNITED KINGDOM ON SHORTWAVE



Guide to shortwave broadcasts from the UK's only remaining shortwave transmitter site at Woofferton

featuring
updated B-17 shortwave schedule for Woofferton
Reflections on the BBC transmitter site at Woofferton
Focus on the BBC at Woofferton

February 2018

UNITED KINGDOM ON SHORTWAVE

WOOFFERTON (SHROPSHIRE) 02.43W 52.19N

Woofferton schedule for B-17 season, updated 31 January 2018

Time/UTC	Days	Station	Language	Target	kHz	kW (Azi)
0030-0100	Daily	BBC	Dari	West Asia	7445	250 (082°)
0100-0130	Daily	BBC	Hindi	South Asia	7430	300 (086°)
0100-0130	Daily	BBC	Pashto	West Asia	7445	250 (082°)
0230-0330	Daily	BBC	Persian	West Asia	6095	250 (090°)
0300-0400	Daily	BBC	Arabic	North Africa	5875	250 (140°)
0400-0500	Daily	BBC	Arabic	North Africa	7285	250 (140°)
0529-0600	Daily	BBC	Hausa	West Africa	5975	300 (160°)
0529-0600	Daily	BBC	Hausa	West Africa	7305	300 (160°)
0600-0629	Daily	BBC	French	North Africa	6135	250 (172°)
0600-0629	Daily	BBC	French	North Africa	7265	300 (170°)
0600-0700	Daily	BBC	English	West Africa	7325	250 (160°)
0700-0800	Daily	KBS World Radio	Korean	Europe	6045	250 (102°)
0700-0800	Daily	BBC	English	West Africa	9915	300 (170°)
0700-0800	Daily	Dandal Kura Radio	Kanuri	West Africa	13810	250 (165°)
0800-0830	Daily	IBRA Radio	Arabic	Middle East	15260	250 (107°)
1200-1230	Daily	BBC	French	North Africa	17830	250 (170°)
1400-1500	Daily	Voice of America	Kurdish	Middle East	15600	250 (102°)
1430-1500	Daily	Radio Ashna (VOA)	Pashto	West Asia	13655	300 (075°)
1500-1630	Daily	Radio Ashna (VOA)	Dari	West Asia	13655	300 (075°)
1600-1800	Daily	Voice of America	Somali	Horn of Africa	15620	250 (126°)
1630-1700	Mon-Fri	Voice of America	English	North-East Africa	13865	300 (135°)
1700-1830	Daily	IBRA Radio	Arabic	Middle East	9775	250 (107°)
1700-1900	Daily	Deewa Radio (VOA)	Pashto	West Asia	9820	300 (075°)
1730-1800	Mon-Fri	Voice of America	Oromo	Horn of Africa	9485	300 (126°)
1730-1900	Daily	IBRA Radio	Arabic	North-East Africa	9635	250 (140°)
1800-1830	Daily	BBC	French	North Africa	7265	300 (170°)
1800-1830	Daily	Afia Darfur	Arabic	Darfur/Sudan	9650	300 (140°)
1800-1900	Daily	KBS World Radio	Russian	Russia	7235	250 (066°)
1800-1900	Daily	Voice of America	Amharic	Horn of Africa	9485	300 (126°)
1800-1900	Daily	BBC	English	West Africa	9915	250 (170°)
1830-1900	Sun	to be confirmed	Arabic	North Africa	7220	300 (114°)
1900-1930	Mon-Fri	Voice of America	Tigrinya	Horn of Africa	9485	300 (126°)
1900-2000	Daily	Radio Taiwan Int.	German	Europe	3955	250 (114°)
1900-2000	Daily	BBC	English	West Africa	5875	300 (172°)
1930-2000	Daily	BBC	Hausa	West Africa	9545	250 (160°)
2000-2030	Fri	BBC	Hausa	West Africa	9545	250 (160°)
2000-2100	Daily	KBS World Radio	German	Europe	3955	250 (114°)
2030-2100	Daily	Voice of America	Hausa	West Africa	9765	250 (180°)
2100-2115	Daily	Radio Akhbar Mufriha	Tachelhit	North Africa	7300	250 (170°)
2100-2200	Daily	KBS World Radio	French	Europe	3955	250 (114°)
2100-2200	Mon-Fri	BBC	English	West Africa	9915	250 (170°)
2115-2145	Daily	Radio Akhbar Mufriha	Arabic	North Africa	7300	250 (170°)

DRM TRANSMISSIONS ON SHORTWAVE

Time/UTC	Days	Station	Language	Target	kHz	kW (Azi)
0559-0700	Daily	BBC	English	Europe	3955	100 (114°)
1100-1130	Fri	NHK World R Japan	English	Europe	9760	100 (105°)
1130-1200	Fri	NHK World R Japan	Russian	Russia	9760	100 (105°)

British DX Club visit to Woofferton - October 2017

In October 2017, twenty BDXC members gathered at Woofferton for a much anticipated tour of the transmitter site. Read the report by Alan Pennington of this enjoyable day here: <http://www.bdxc.org.uk/woofferton.pdf> (this article originally appeared in Communication in November 2017)

Reflections on the BBC transmitting station at Woofferton

by Alan Hardy (June 1994)

The BBC Transmitting Site at Woofferton first came into operation in 1943 as a result of wartime expansion in external broadcasting. Initially, there were six 50 kW shortwave transmitters with aerial systems beamed in several directions, directed by the needs of the time.

The BBC Transmitting Site at Woofferton first came into operation in 1943 as a result of wartime expansion in external broadcasting. Initially, there were six 50 kW shortwave transmitters with aerial systems beamed in several directions, directed by the needs of the time.

The Woofferton site is located 52°18'N or about three miles south-south west of Ludlow in Shropshire, near to the Shropshire-Herefordshire border. Quite an area is now covered by the array of aerials on the site, which cater for the six 250 kW and four 300 kW transmitters used for shortwave broadcasting. In addition, the BBC South Shropshire relay of Radio Shropshire is located at this site, operating on 1584 kHz with 500 Watts.

After the end of the Second World War, and at the beginning of the Cold War era in 1948, Woofferton became the site of the Voice of America shortwave operations in the UK. The transmitters were operated by the BBC on behalf of the VOA (the first VOA broadcasts from the UK took place over BBC long and mediumwave transmitters in February 1942).

The Woofferton site was an early example of shortwave transmitting sites outside of the US which could get a stronger signal into target areas this side of the Atlantic because of greater nearness. From Woofferton, two networks were developed; the 'Blue Stars' and the 'Grey Stars', which combined broadcast in total about sixteen hours a day. The target areas were Central and Eastern Europe, the Balkans and Near East, plus European Russia. Latterly, broadcasts to Africa were also made from Woofferton.

Over the years, VOA has introduced and expanded other sites in Europe and North Africa which has reduced Woofferton's present output to a level less than has been seen in the past. Indeed, with the collapse of Communism in recent years, former RFE/RL transmitters at Gloria in Portugal have become available to VOA and a new site in Morocco has been set up, perhaps at the expense of Woofferton. With this, though, the BBC has filled available airtime with a few relays of Radio Japan and Radio Canada International in addition to its own transmissions.

However, VOA still broadcasts some vital output from Woofferton. The schedule on the opposite page lists several frequencies for the Serbian and Croatian services, beamed to the war-torn former-Yugoslavia, and some transmissions in languages of the former-Soviet Union also originate from Woofferton.

Living in Knighton, 18 miles west-north west of Woofferton, it gives the writer a good opportunity to listen to groundwave from this site. Reception is best during summer months when the lower shortwave frequencies tend not to be used or don't propagate well to the UK as when they do for the rest of the year. 6040 kHz is a good example between 1630-2200, offering excellent reception in summer with only a half-length telescopic aerial on my radio-cassette comparable, say, to Radio 4 on longwave.

As to the future of Woofferton, we will have to wait and see. Perhaps there will be more in the way of relays from Radio Japan and CBC, and others as well in this era of relay exchanges. VOA's output may also be dictated by world affairs, so further changes in the number of hours used from Woofferton may take place. Whatever the outcome, VOA's association with the site will be fondly remembered.

Alan Hardy - June 1994 (this article originally appeared in Communication in July 1994)

Focus on the BBC at Woofferton

by Alan Hardy (August 1998)

The origin of the BBC transmitter site at Woofferton goes back to 1943. Woofferton itself is a village on the A49 between Ludlow and Hereford, three miles south of Ludlow and twenty two north of Hereford. The actual transmitting site sits astride the Herefordshire-Shropshire border, the complex stretching from Shropshire into Herefordshire.

In 1943, on response to the radio expansion of the BBC's external services, the site at Woofferton came into being. The initial complement of transmitters consisted of six 50 kW units. By April 30th 1944, the BBC's external services had reached their wartime peak with 35 shortwave transmitters in use, plus three mediumwave transmitters and one longwave transmitter. These were used for three European services and two Overseas services.

By the end of the war, there was over-capacity and in 1948 the transmitters were operated by the BBC to relay Voice of America programmes. In effect, Woofferton became a VOA relay site, similar to Munich, Tangier and Salonica.

Over the years, the initial 50 kW transmitters were replaced by 100 kW units, until the current complement of six 250 kW and four 300 kW transmitters existing today were arrived at.

In 1991, the BBC shortwave site at Daventry closed down, leaving Skelton in Cumbria and Rampisham in Dorset as the homes for BBC shortwave transmitters, in addition to the third site at Woofferton.

Nowadays, in addition to the BBC and VOA, Woofferton transmitters are also currently used to relay Radio Japan, CBC, Radio Korea and RFE/RL. In addition to the ten shortwave transmitters at Woofferton, there are now additional ones for BBC Radio Shropshire on mediumwave (1584 kHz) and FM for coverage of South Shropshire.

Those are the facts about Woofferton, but to me personally at 56 years of age, Woofferton and the countryside surrounding it holds a semi-mystical fascination. My first knowledge of Woofferton goes back to reading the Guide to Broadcasting Stations published annually over forty years ago.

All shortwave stations over 1 kW were listed, according to frequency and wavelength, and at the back of the book they were listed by country and frequency. In the main text at the foot of the pages were notes stating "BBC Overseas transmitters are located at Skelton (Cumberland), Daventry (Northants), Woofferton (Shropshire) and Rampisham (Dorset)". Daventry has since gone, could Woofferton be the next?

My second experience was a result of travelling by train from Manchester to the south-west of England on holiday. The train left at 23.15 with a single locomotive engine hauling twelve carriages at a slow pace. Not getting a seat, I sat on a suitcase in the corridor and dozed off, only to be woken when the train stopped at signals. Checking my watch, it was 03.45 and looking out of the window there was a vast aerial field in sight. When the train moved, a sign saying "Woofferton Junction Signal Box" appeared. This was the Woofferton transmitter site that I had read about!

Ten years later, in 1970, I saw the transmitter site again whilst on holiday in the area. Situated in South Shropshire/North Herefordshire, with Wales in the west and England to the east, the countryside looked magnificent and it made a great impression on me, so much so that ten years later I left the north-west and settled in the Welsh Borderland at Knighton (Powys).

Living locally, a few years ago I had the pleasure of speaking to a resident of Woofferton, now in his mid-eighties, and he distinctly remembered the site being developed, for or by the BBC, whilst working as an agricultural worker during the war in 1943.

Every time I see the aerial arrays, which are visible for miles around, I remember the hot stuffy night in August 1960 and the diesel fumes from an overworked British Railways locomotive!

Alan Hardy - August 1998 (this article originally appeared in Communication in September 1998)

Editor's note: Alan was a BDXC member for several years and sadly passed away in November 1999.