AltLog 3

General Purpose Amateur Radio Logging Software

User's Manual

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Introduction

AltLog 3 is a general purpose amateur radio logging program that incorporates a database and a flexible user interface to make logging easy. Most of the user interface is user configurable, so you can customize it to fit your individual needs and preferences. While AltLog 3 is primarily meant for casual QSO logging, it also supports contest logging and award tracking, with the ability to export log data in ADIF and Cabrillo formats, as well as standard text format. Log data can also be exported directly to Microsoft Excel (tm).

Quick Start

To start using AltLog 3, simply create a directory for it (**C:\Altlog3** is suggested) and copy the files **Altlog3.exe, Cabrillo.abs** and **Prefix.abs** to that directory. It is suggested that you also create a **Log** subdirectory for the log files and a **Backup** subdirectory for backup data. An **LOTW** subdirectory where log data is exported and kept ready to upload to LOTW may also be useful.

To start AltLog 3, simply run or double click **Altlog3.exe**. A new **Template.abs** file will be automatically created, since one does not exist. (If you later decide you want to delete Altlog 3, simply delete the files and directories. There are no Windows™ registry entries to worry about.)

The first time you run AltLog 3, you will need to create a log database, so at the prompt, select **Yes**. (Pressing **No** will prompt you to select an existing database file, and pressing **Cancel** will run AltLog 3 with no database available. Do so at your own risk! You can also create and select different databases from the File menu.) Next, select the **Logs** subdirectory, enter a filename and select **Save**. Your new log database will be created and you'll be ready to start using AltLog 3.

Once AltLog 3 is running, you should first set the basic configuration by selecting Tools | Configure from the menu. There you can enter your time offset from UCT, decide whether to display frequency in kHz or MHz, set up any CAT interface for your rig, and decide whether you want to allow online searching for callsigns. Note that AltLog3 is preconfigured to lookup callsigns using www.qrz.com, if desired.

If you have existing log data, you can import an ADIF file to get started with AltLog 3. Simply select File | Import | ADIF from the menu and then select the file to import.

Now you're ready to go. To start a new QSO you can press Ctrl+N or select QSO | New from the menu. To save the QSO, simply press F2 or select QSO | Save from the menu. There are other commands available to edit and delete QSO. See the QSO menu for details and for short cut keys.

Using LOTW is easy with AltLog 3. Simply export your log data selecting File | Export | ADIF from the menu, enter a filename and decide whether you want to re-export data that has previously been marked as having been exported and whether you want to mark the QSO records as having been exported. AltLog 3 will then create the ADIF file. All you have to do is sign the file with TQSL and upload it to the LOTW server.

For information on configuring and customizing AltLog 3, see the following sections.

Background

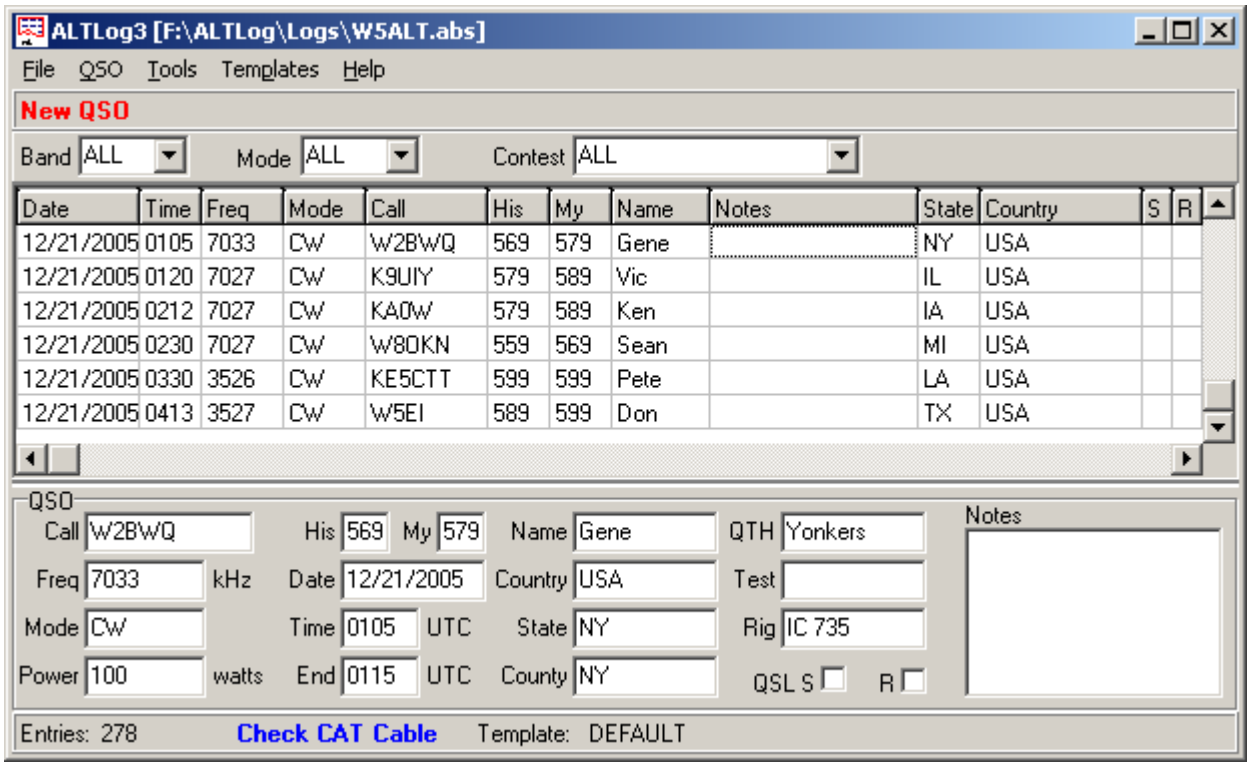
In order to understand how to use AltLog 3, a little background is useful. First, AltLog 3 uses a database system based on Absolute DB from Component Ace (**www.componentace.com**). You can download the free (for personal use) Absolute database software and poke around inside the files if you like – at your own risk, of course. All log information is stored in the database, so it is all easily accessible using standard database queries.

The user interface of AltLog 3 is shown below and consists of 3 major parts. At the top of the window, just below the menus, there is an information bar and several “filter” selection boxes that control what log information is listed. Using the drop down lists, you can choose to show log information for a single band, mode, contest, or any combination of those. The middle part of the window, just below the log filters, shows a list of recent QSO's similar to a paper logbook, while the lower part of the window allows data entry. At the very bottom of the window is a status bar that displays various bits of information. The amount of screen space allowed for the log listing and for the data entry area can be adjusted by placing the mouse between the two areas, pressing the left mouse button and moving the splitter. Of course, the position of the splitter, as well as the size and position of the window, is remembered the next time you start AltLog 3.

The middle part of the screen, the log listing, is for display only and no editing or data entry is permitted there. Selecting any row will display the QSO details in the data fields below. The column contents, column width and even the number of columns can be reconfigured as desired. In addition the listing can be easily sorted on any column.

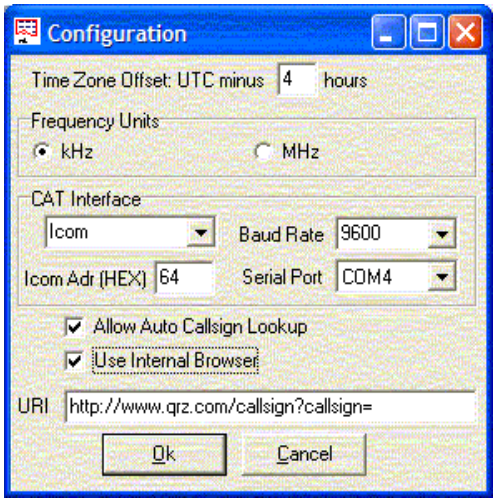
The lower part of the screen labeled “QSO” is where the data entry and editing takes place. Various data fields are shown where log information may be entered. If there is a CAT (computer interface) available, the frequency information may be automatically input. Certain other information can also be automatically entered, such as retaining the last mode used, the time of the start of the QSO, the country based on a call sign, etc. The actual data field layout and most of the behavior is user configurable, as will be explained later.

The configuration of the AltLog 3 log listing and data entry fields is defined in a template and a default template is always available. Although the default template can never be changed, the columns displayed in the log list and the layout and behavior of the data fields can be modified and saved in the current template or as a new template. There is no limit to the number of templates possible and any previously defined template can be loaded at any time. In order to make sharing templates easy, templates can also be exported to and imported from an ASCII file. Of course when you start AltLog, it remembers what template was used the last time.



Configuration

To set the configuration for AltLog, select Tools | Configure from the menu. A configuration dialog will be displayed, as shown below. On this dialog you can set the time offset from UCT and choose to display frequency in either kHz or Mhz.



The CAT interface section is used to set the configuration for the computer interface. Select your rig (Kenwood, Icom or Yaesu) along with the serial port and baud rate to use. For Icom rigs you also need to specify the rig address depending on your rig and how it is set up. The default for an IC 756 Pro II is 64 in hexadecimal.

The bottom section configures the automatic callsign lookup in AltLog 3. The first check box determines whether automated look ups are allowed, while the second checkbox specifies whether to use the internal mini-browser in AltLog. If you allow lookup, but don't choose to use the internal browser, AltLog will use your default system browser. Finally, to actually do the lookup, specify the URI to use. AltLog will send the specified command send to Windows with the callsign appended to do the actual lookup. The default URI uses QRZ.com, but you can specify a different location if desired.

Note that to actually activate the automatic callsign lookup, the LookupCall Macro command must be specified in the log data fields. This allows the automatic lookup to be customized or disabled as needed, for example during a contest or if you have no internet connection.

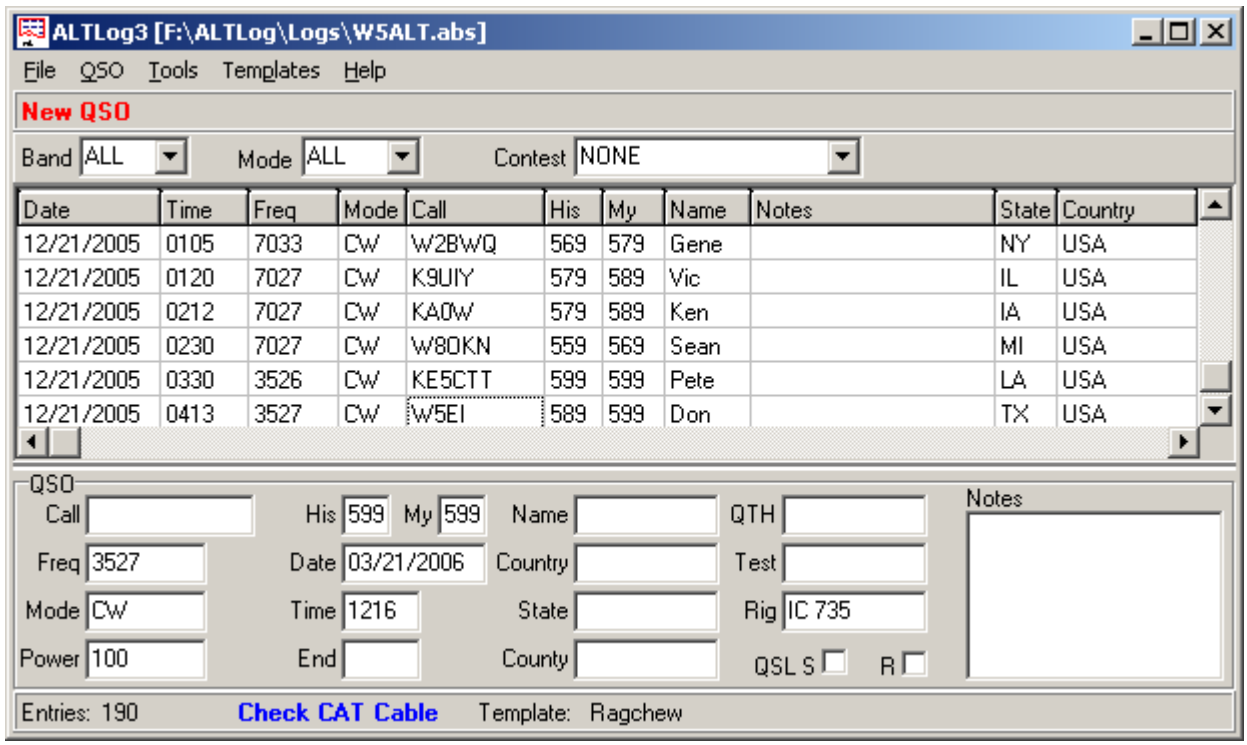
Finally, press Ok to save the configuration or Cancel to abort without saving any changes. If the CAT interface is active, AltLog 3 will reset the interface.

Changing the Log List

Configuring the log listing is easy with AltLog 3. Simply place the mouse cursor on a column heading and right click to show the column configuration pop-up menu. From the menu, you can insert a new column, delete a column or change the data field to be shown in a column. By placing the cursor on the line between column headings, pressing the left mouse button and dragging, the column widths can be changed. You can also select column and drag it right or left to change the order in which the columns appear.

The default sort order for the log listing is by date and time. If you want to sort the listing by another column, simply double click the mouse on the respective column heading. Double clicking a second time will reverse the sort order. To go back to the default sort order, double click the column heading showing the Date.

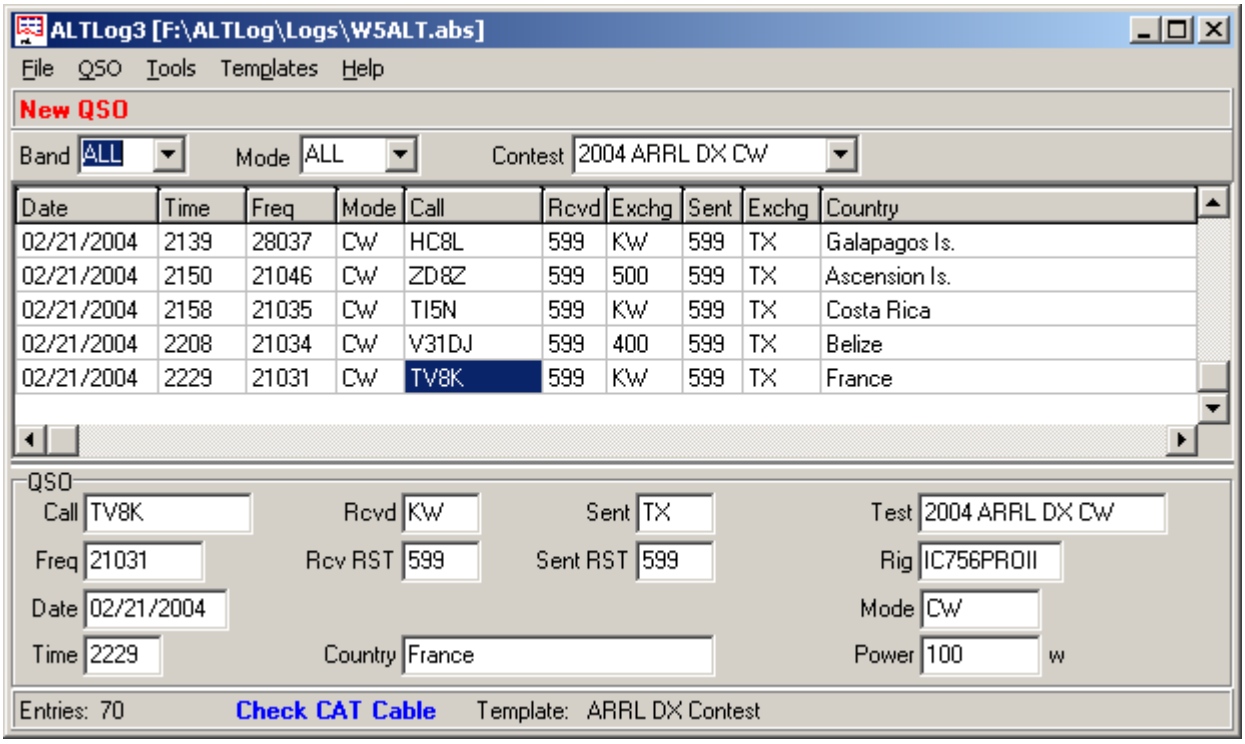
Of course the column layout is saved along with the templates, so you can define several layouts for different purposes. For example, you might want to show lots of information for normal rag chewing, but only a minimum of information during a contest. Whatever you prefer, just set the columns the way you like them, save the template and you're ready to go.



Changing the QSO Data Layout

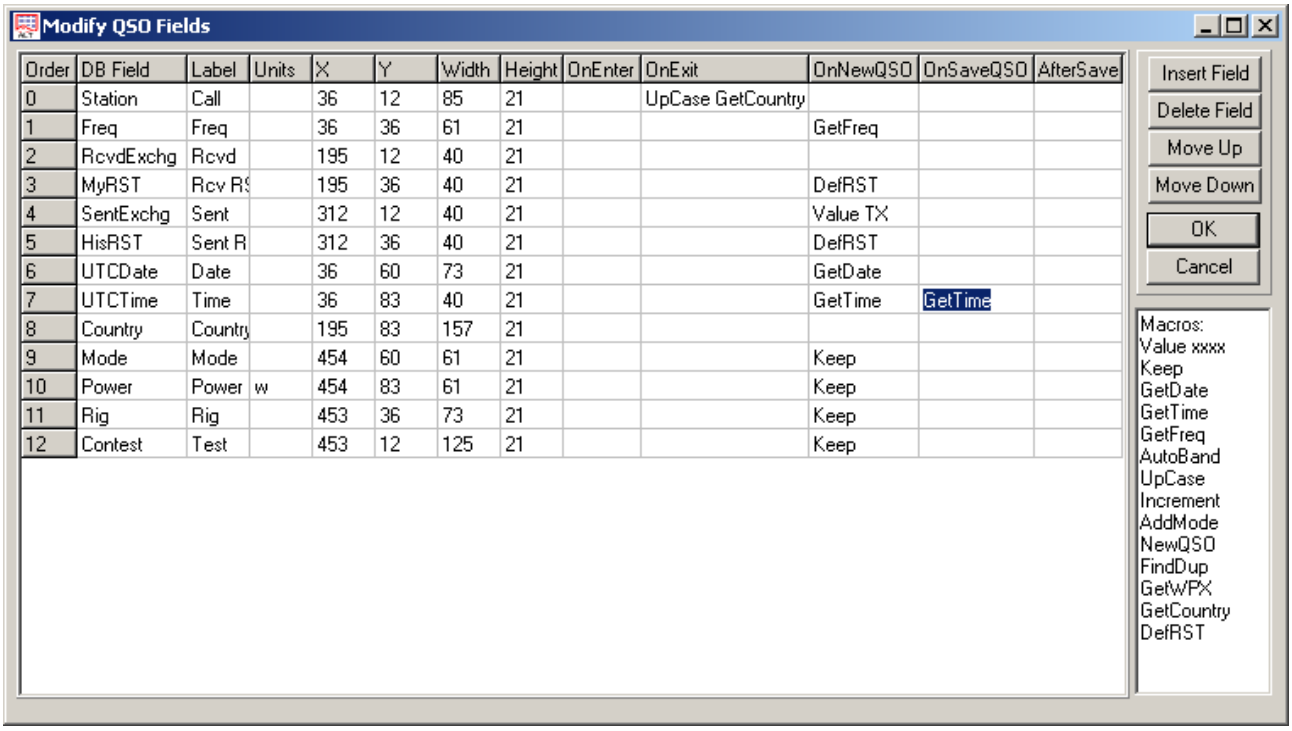
The screen layout of the data fields shown in the lower portion of the window can be rearranged interactively. To allow the fields to be moved, select Templates | Move QSO Fields from the menu. While in field editing mode, you can place the mouse over any data field and drag it anywhere you like within the QSO Data area. The label and units will move along with the data field once it is dropped at a new position.

When you're finished changing the field layout, be sure to select the Templates | Move QSO Fields menu item again to exit from the editing mode and go back to QSO logging.



But even more can be done to customize the layout. Selecting Templates | Edit QSO Fields from the menu

or pressing the right mouse button while in field moving mode will display a dialog allowing complete editing of the template.



As shown above, the dialog will display a listing of all the data fields visible, along with their labels, units, tab order, X and Y positions, width, height, and the actions to perform when the field is entered, exited, on creating a new QSO, before saving the QSO and after saving the QSO. The buttons on the right can be used to insert and delete fields and change their order by moving them up or down in the list.

Selecting a cell in the DB Field column will drop down a list of all database fields and you can select what you want to display in each field. The Label column is the label that will be displayed next to the field and the Units column specifies what units should be displayed following the field. Normally the Units are left blank, except for Frequency, Power, etc. The X and Y columns specify the pixel location where the data field will be displayed, while the Height and Width columns specify the size of the field.

The remaining columns allow macros to be associated with each data field. The macros will be executed at various times. The OnEnter macros will be executed when the field is selected, the OnExit macros will be executed when the focus leaves the field when another field is selected, the OnNewQSO macros are executed when a new blank QSO is created, the OnSaveQSO macros are executed just before the data is saved to the database, and the AfterSave macros are executed immediately after the data is saved. On the lower right part of the dialog is a list of the valid macros that can be used in any of the macro columns. By changing the order and position of the data fields and the macros to be executed, it is possible to customize AltLog 3 to do almost anything you want.

From the Templates menu you can also load a previously defined template or save the current configuration to the current or to a new template. And to make it easier to backup, share and distribute common or specialized configurations, there are also options to export to and import templates from standard ASCII files.

AltLog 3 Macros

Much of the flexibility of AltLog 3 is due to the use of macros in the data field templates. It seems that there are some common things that people want done for them, but not all the time and not for everyone. Rather than build an infinite number of software versions or make a complicated configuration procedure, AltLog 3 allows itself to be modified and configured for personal preferences by the use of predefined macros.

In essence every data field may have a set of macros assigned to it. The macros may be called when the user selects the data field (OnEnter), when the user leaves the data field (OnExit), when a new QSO is

created (OnNewQSO), before saving the QSO data (OnSavingQSO) and after the QSO data is saved (AfterSaveQSO). If no macros are assigned, the default behavior of OnNewQSO is to clear the data field while all of the others do nothing. Multiple macros can be assigned to each event by entering them separated by a space.

So, for example, a common macro to use for the Callsign field would be “UpCase GetCountry” which would change the call sign to all upper case letters and automatically look up the DXCC country based on the call sign. To automatically add default RST reports, the “Value 599” or the “DefRST” macro could be added to the OnNewQSO event for the sent and received RST fields. To increment a contest serial number, the “Increment” macro could be used for the AfterQSOSave event along with the “Keep” macro in the OnNewQSO event for the contest exchange field. As you can see, by using and/or changing the macros, the behavior of AltLog 3 can be customized to do just about anything you might want. And since the macro configuration is saved along with the template, changing from rag chewing to contesting configuration, or any other configuration, is fast and easy.

List of Available Macros:

Macro	***Function***
Value xxx/"xxx"	Place value in field, use quotes if there are spaces
Keep	Don't clear the old value
UpCase	Convert to upper case text
Increment	Increment the field (useful for contests)
GetDate	Insert the current date
GetTime	Insert the current time
GetFreq	Insert the current frequency
GetContinent	Get the continent from the callsign and country
GetCountry	Get the DXCC country from the callsign
GetWPX	Get the WPX prefix from the callsign
DefRST	Insert 599 or 59 for RST
AutoBand	Automatically change the filter to the current band
AutoMode	Automatically change the filter to the current mode
AddMode	Add a new mode to the filter list if needed
NewQSO	Start a new QSO
FindDup	Find previous QSO
LookupCall	Lookup the callsign, by default on QRZ.COM