LUNCH BOX SOTA STATION

I have wanted to develop a minimal but effective SOTA station for a little while. It was to be built around the X1M the small 5 W Chinese HF transceiver. Just before Christmas I saw a small fishing tackle box about the size of a workman's lunch box for under $10. That was the incentive to get on with this project.

Using a nibbler, tin snips and a file I hacked out some of the dividers in the removable tray to make space for some of the bits. Initially I was thinking of using an end fed half wave and a tuner to cover two or three bands, but this is one of several projects on the back burner. In the interim a 40 m dipole fed with RG174 had been made up and it fits nicely into the box on its homemade winder. The coax is wound on an empty bricklayers line spool and sits in the bottom of the box with the X1M.

The rig is powered from two LIFEPo4 batteries connected in series to give just over 13 V. These are stuck together with double sided thin foam tape. It took a bunch of connectors to arrange for individual charging and combined use but it all fits in OK.

The all up weight is just under 3 kg or 61/2 pounds. It can be carried using the folding handle or put into a back pack without the need to bubble-wrap anything.

The photograph on the previous page shows the packed lunch box. The coin is an Australian dollar.

Above: The packed lunch box. The X1M is at the left in the body of the box and the coax feeder on a spool on the right. The microphone, leads, battery and antenna on a winder all fit in the tray. Note the protective foam used for protection of the rig.

Not in the box at present are two lightweight wire tent pegs to secure the ends of the dipole if there are no convenient shrubs or trees. Also not shown is the telescopic fiberglass pole to support the centre of the dipole in the absence of a convenient tree.

So there it is, a powerful 5 W SSB/CW HF station capable of a several hours use in the outdoors that can be carried like your lunch box. Food and drink not included.