

Best Practices for Logging Accurate Location Information

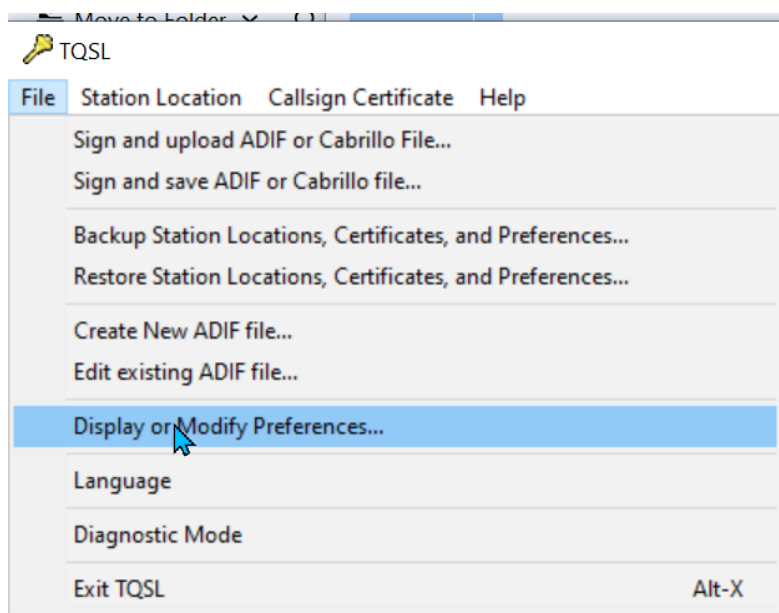
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Back in April of 2023, I wrote an article about getting accurate location data into TQSL for uploading QSOs to LoTW. In that article, I described creating a new station location for each portable operating location. This is inconvenient and difficult to manage if you do a lot of portable operating. I have since learned that this is completely unnecessary! There is an optional setting in TQSL that eliminates the need for matching locations to QSOs. This is another useful and practical operating tip that I learned from my activities on the POTA CW Discord server.

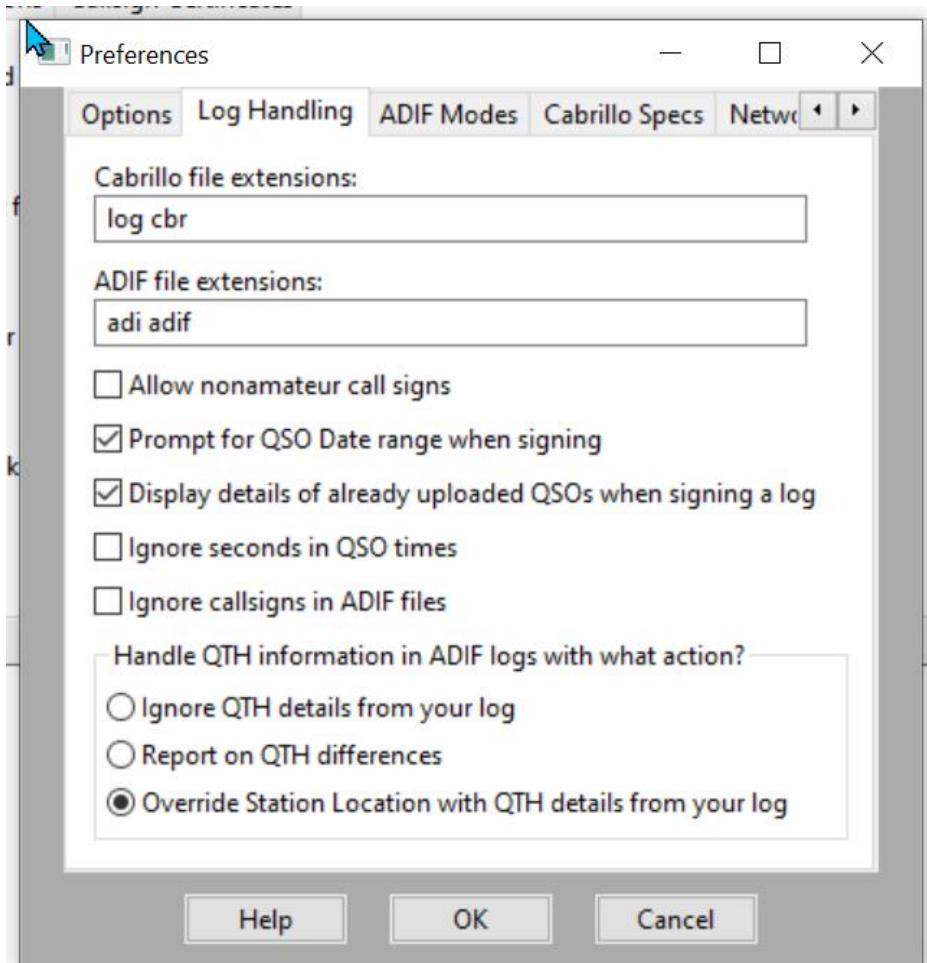
Modifying your TQSL settings is very easy and described four steps below. This setting allows you to over-ride your primary station location with the location data in each individual QSO. So, if you operate portable and record the correct grid square, county and state in the QSOs, that information will be uploaded to LoTW. Your logging software usually has a selection for location when you upload QSOs to LoTW, but this will be ignored.

The use location data from the QSO records instead, open TQSL and follow the steps below:

1. From the "File" menu, select "Display or Modify Preferences"



2. In the "Preferences" window, select the second tab "Log Handling"



3. At the bottom are three radio buttons. The default is the second one "Report on QTH differences". This is why ALog tells you that your location does not match and won't let you upload POTA QSOs unless you change locations to agree with what is in the QSOs.

4. To override QTH checking, select the third radio button "Override Station Location with QTH details from your log". This will allow you to upload QSOs regardless of the location data in the TQSL / ALog settings and use the location data in the QSO records.

That's it! Now you can record accurate location data for your portable operating QSOs and upload correct data. In going through this odyssey on getting correct location data, I have found many errors in my own log. Much of this is a result of letting the logging software "fill-in-the-blanks" (using QRZ.com or similar database) for your QSOs. This

will usually result in location data for the operator's home location and will be wrong if they are portable. Secondly, POTA lists 6-digit grids for parks, but these can be close to correct or wildly wrong. POTA does not list counties in the park reference data and even states can be wrong, especially for trails or very large park entities.

The following discussion refers to ACLog which is what I use for my main log. Similar features and options are likely available in other loggers. To help get more accurate location data in my log, I have made a few changes in how I record QSOs:

1. I have turned off auto-filling of missing QSO data from QRZ.com;
2. When I record a QSO before uploading to LoTW, I make sure that the operator's grid and county are empty and, if there is any doubt, I delete the state as well (you can cut and paste these into the comments to compare to what is downloaded from LoTW); and
3. For FT8, where grid is part of the exchange, I will always cut and paste the it into the comments section.

Having the location data fields blank allows them to be over-written with data downloaded from LoTW when the QSO is confirmed. This assures that the location data is what the activator uploaded. Of course, you are relying on the activator to accurately upload their location data. As more and more people operate portably, I think that the awareness has increased and getting accurate location data from the operator is more and more likely. This is especially true among the POTA activators.

Lastly, make sure that your own location data are correct before clicking the button to upload your QSOs to LoTW! To help me remember this, I have the ACLog "Setup" window open every time that I start ACLog. This is the screen where you enter your callsign, country, continent, latitude and longitude, grid, etc. Seeing this screen reminds me to enter the correct location data if I am not operating from home. When activating parks, I use an app on my phone named "Grid Square Locator" to get an accurate 6-digit grid square. I also use a state map to find out what county I am in for QSO uploads to LoTW. If you use a different piece of software to log when portable, some of the location information may be recorded in each QSO and available in ACLog when you import.