

CDXC

The UK DX Foundation

Spring 2024

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DIGEST

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Cover photograph: The TX5S Clipperton team *photo: Nodir Tursun-Zade EY8MM*

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Editorial Policy: The views expressed in the *Digest* are those of the respective authors and may or may not represent CDXC policy.

The Editorial deadline for contributions for the Spring (May) Digest is 21 April 2024

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EDITORIAL

Chris Duckling G3SVL



In my last Editorial I asked if there was anyone who could help me with the production of the Digest. Soon after the edition hit the doormats, Colin, G6MXL contacted me to suggest that Tex, G1TEX might be able to assist. Colin provided an introduction and Tex has indeed stepped forward. Readers of Practical Wireless will know Tex, and those of us with longer memories, will recall his work on Shortwave Magazine and RadioActive as technical editor. Right after that piece of luck Paul, EI5DI, who is an award-winning photographer, offered to improve the pictures such that they look better in the printed form. So what you see in this edition is my work on pulling together and editing the articles, Paul's wizardry with the pictures and Tex crafting it all into a magazine. Thank you Colin, Tex and Paul for stepping up to help.

Friedrichshafen 2024

For those who intend to visit this year, do take the time to drop by the CDXC stand. We will be in our usual place in the DX Plaza. And if you can, please man the stand for an hour or so to allow those of us from the Committee to look around the show too. And of course, do come to the institution that is the CDXC meet-up at noon on the Friday in the beer garden - we'll be there on the trestles come rain or shine. I particularly enjoy meeting our overseas members and hearing what they are up to.

AGM and DX Convention

Planning for the CDXC DX Convention on 20th July is well underway and booking is open. We have four talks already confirmed:

- Mike, G4WNC will be explaining all things SDR and how to get the best from them
- Mark, M0DXR will give an update on WRTC 2026 and how to support and participate in this UK-hosted event
- Nigel, G3TXF on "The dramatic Impact of FT8 on DX-Peditions"
- Gregg, W6IZT will be talking about building, deploying and operating a Rig in a Box (RIB) as used by a growing number of DXpeditions

But as always, it is not just about the talks; the socialising and catching up is a major reason to be there. And the best time to socialise is over the dinner that evening. For the up to date programme follow the links from our Homepage. You can book to attend from there too.

And finally

Since the last Digest Bob Allphin, K4UEE, a long-time member of the Club, became a silent key. His ability to organise DXpeditions to 'top-10' Most Wanted locations is quite remarkable. He will be sorely missed.

I hope you have spotted how many of the recent DXpeditions are displaying CDXC Flags and showing us as a sponsor. Your membership fees go to good DX causes.

See you at Friedrichshafen and/or our DX Convention.

73 Chris, G3SVL

NOTICE OF CDXC 2024 AGM

CDXC Committee

Notice is hereby given of the CDXC 2024 Annual General Meeting (AGM) to be held at 11.00am on 20th July 2024 at The Littlebury Hotel, Bicester, OX26 6DR

Everyone is welcome but only members are permitted to vote on motions*.

2024 CDXC AGM Agenda

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Minutes of the 2023 AGM**
3. Matters arising
4. Chairman's Report
5. Secretary's Report
6. Treasurer's Report
7. Election of New Committee
8. Election of Auditor
9. Any Other Business

Notes:

* Online voting will be available on the CDXC website from 4th July 2024 and will close at 23:59 on 18th July 2024. Members will be emailed the voting details nearer the time.

**Draft minutes of the 2023 AGM can be found in the August 2023 CDXC Digest.

THE CDXC CONVENTION, DINNER & 2024 AGM

NEW VENUE:
THE LITTLEBURY HOTEL
BICESTER, OX26 6D



Programme for the Day

- 10.00 Arrival and coffee served
- 11.00 The CDXC 2024 Annual General Meeting
- 12.00 Lunch break
- 13.30 Convention Presentations
- 19.30 Dinner

We've moved to a new venue for this year's combined AGM, convention and evening dinner/social. The event will be held at the Littlebury Hotel, Bicester, Oxon. This family-run business was established in 1959 and has grown over the years, and now boasts 35 en-suite bedrooms, a bar, restaurant, and conference facilities. Private car parking is at the rear of the hotel, or if coming by train, the hotel is within 5 minutes walking distance of Bicester's two railway stations. The location will provide first-rate support for our AGM, the afternoon presentations, an evening dinner in our own restaurant space plus a bar/lounge all within a comfortable hotel environment.

Bicester is only 5 miles from the M40 (Junction 9), and is within easy reach by car of the Cotswolds, the Chilterns, Blenheim Palace, and the city of Oxford. What's more, the Bicester Village Designer Outlet is only 10 minutes' walk from the hotel for your partner's ultimate shopping experience!

On arrival, there will be time for a cup of coffee and greeting old friends before the AGM kicks off at 11.00. This is the opportunity for you to hear from your Committee, review the past year and to raise topics for discussion.

Lunch is not provided as part of the package; however there will be a good range of sandwiches available. Please order your lunch on arrival in the morning.

We are in the process of putting together a programme of four presentations for the afternoon session, and details of these will be announced on the CDXC website.

There will be plenty of time for socialising in the bar/lounge before dinner at 7.30pm. This will be in a private dining room and feature a three-course meal followed by coffee, with three choices for each course plus a vegetarian option.

We hope that many of you will take advantage of the room rates for doubles and make it a weekend away with your partner. Bicester and its surrounding area have plenty for them to do during the afternoon.

Costs & Booking

Booking is open now; just follow the links from our homepage. Please make an early booking so that we can ensure that the Hotel facilities can support the numbers. You will be able to make full payment up to two weeks before the event.

Full details of the hotel can be found at: <https://www.littleburyhotel.com>

MEMBERSHIP

CHRIS KIRBY, G4FZN

CDXC offers a warm welcome to the following new or returning members:

Callsign	Name	QTH
M0DSK	Richard Powell	Newcastle, Staffs
5B4AJG	Richard Langmead	Pegeia, Cyprus
M0MCX	Callum McCormick	Kenilworth
GM5DDX	Alan Dunlop	Glasgow
OE3TWA	Thomas Woelfl	Korneuburg, Austria
G4CXT	Malcolm Bell	Saxmundhan, Suffolk
M5ZZZ	Steve Burke	Market Rasen, Lincs
MW0ZZK	Steve Redmond	North Wales
MI5JYK	Pete Lowrie	Newtownabbey
M3BGE	Richard Allen	Stroud

We regret to record the passing of the following CDXC members

Peter Robinson, G0EYR

Bob Allphin, K4UEE

David Wood, G3YXX

Our thoughts are with their families and loved ones

Any changes to your CDXC Membership details?

Have you, for example, changed your

- Postal address
- E-mail address
- Telephone number

Please advise Membership Secretary, Chris Kirby G4FZN - memsec@cdxc.org.uk

AROUND THE BANDS

Don Field G3XTT



I remain without HF antennas at my son's QTH but I did put up my Spiderpole there (some readers may remember that it was blown down at my home QTH late last year) and managed a 160m QSO with 8R7X - one of my 'silly' ones still needed although in fairness, 8R has rarely been on 160 in recent years. On the subject of which, didn't the lads do well? A fantastic effort showing what a talented and enthusiastic group of youngsters can do.

I was in East Africa for much of February, with Alan G3XAQ in Uganda and then the two of us joined Andy 5Z4VJ and others in Kenya for a 'CW Dinner'. A great trip and my first to East Africa, having been many times to West Africa. The trouble with East Africa, from an amateur radio point of view, is that it's several thousand miles further from the USA compared with West Africa, and therefore much shorter band openings and weaker signals. But it was certainly interesting to experience propagation from there and I may even return for CQWW CW in November, if only because there are still plenty of contest records to chase from 5X. Alan's aim in February was to take part in ARRL CW, which he did, while I played on 12m CW using an elevated quarter-wave vertical. It worked extremely well, as we have found on 6Gs DXpeditions in the past, helped no doubt with reasonable power from my KPA500 amplifier.

I did make a handful of QSOs from 5Z, to add to my total of 'DXCC entities activated' but primarily it was a social trip, including a great half day excursion to the Nairobi National Park (where we saw an amazing variety of animals, considering the Park is so close to the city) and a fascinating visit to the Karen Blixen museum. Others who were with us in Kenya included Fred G4BWP and family, Bob GU4YOX, Adrian KO8SCA and xyl (Adrian is a past-member of many big DXpeditions and gave us a slide show of 3Y0J and W8S Swains. He will also be on the forthcoming Jarvis Island trip) and Joe DL4CF.

From my home QTH I put up a low 80m inverted-vee dipole in readiness for the March CW leg of the RSGB Club Championship and, to my amazement, finished in number one slot (and a respectable third place a month later)! Later I put up an elevated quarter-wave for 20m for one of the legs of the CWops CWT events and was pleased to work plenty of DX, including the west coast of the USA, VK, UA9 and more. I was even spotted at good strength by the RBN in BY, 9M2 and ZL but I guess there were no entrants from those locations. A few days later, while playing in the SP DX Contest on 20m, I saw A8OK spotted and had them in the log within three minutes, despite a big pile-up - I was running the new limit of 1kW from my DX1200 amplifier.

Not that this should be a surprise of course. A vertical (especially elevated) will generally outperform a dipole to DX unless the dipole is at a great height (ideally at least a wavelength). My 20m vertical is a wire taped to a 10m fiberglass telescopic mast and tied to a fence post. I can put it up or take it down in a matter of minutes. When we were operating as TX6G from the Australs (and I apologise if I am repeating a previous column, but it's worth repeating) we used

two-element vertical dipole arrays (VDAs) on the higher bands, at the water's edge (indeed, the sea lapped around the bottom of the support poles at high tide). I was asked when giving a presentation at the next RSGB HF Convention how the gain of these arrays compared with a three-element Yagi. Wrong question! There is no comparison (unless the Yagi had been at maybe 60ft, unlikely in a DXpedition situation). What matters is gain at low angles (especially when three thousand miles from the nearest centre of amateur radio population, as we were on that occasion). A low Yagi will be sending its radiation at much too high an angle. I recall, and again I may be repeating myself, talking to Ronald PA3EWP at a GMDX Convention and mentioning a QSL card I had seen from a Conway Reef (I think it was) DXpedition, showing a horizontal Yagi on the beach at maybe 15ft at best. I said I thought this was crazy. He admitted (to my embarrassment) that he had been on that DXpedition. But he did say that one day he had been working Europe on a vertical when it was needed by one of the other ops and he had been swapped to the Yagi. He could no longer even hear Europe, never mind work it!

Jarvis Island

The 'big one' coming up is Jarvis Island (N5J), scheduled for August. This will be a RIB (Rig in a Box) effort, with the main operators on a boat offshore but also a gaggle of other operators remoting in from around the world. I have talked about RIB operations before but suffice to say, this is a classic example of why the RIB idea is important. US Fish and Wildlife have only been persuaded to allow this operation because it is being conducted in that way. They will be monitoring closely and will decide, on the basis of how it works out, whether to allow similar operations from other islands within their purview.

Incidentally, I have recently been reading a classic book about the development of the atom bomb, in which there is mention of the massive US build-up of arms and the battles that took place on a number of Pacific islands during WWII, islands that we now consider rare and inaccessible. How times have changed!

Other upcoming operations

Relatively little has been announced so far - CY9C, St Paul, Island, in late August is about the only one of significance. And I guess many of you are watching the unfolding plans for next year's Bouvet operation - at the time of writing they seem to be having trouble raising the necessary funds, perhaps not surprising given that there have been two (expensive) attempts on Bouvet in recent years. Time will tell whether the Norwegians are able to put this one together.

MACHINE READING OF THE *DIGEST*

Sight impaired members who use a machine reader may have had problems when reading the electronic *Digest* from the website. The answer is to request the basic Word document. If you are in this category, please inform the editor at ed@cdxc.org.uk.

VISIT TO THE BVRS RALLY

David Gould G3UEG



Having missed the Canvey Rally this year, I thought I would do something a bit different and go to the British Vintage Radio Society (BVRS) Rally at Biggleswade which is just within a one-hour travel time from my home. It took place on February 25th 2024. I am on the hunt for a small roller inductor and thought there might be a (small) chance of finding one... I was right I didn't find one!

The event is held at the Weatherley Centre not far off the A1 bypass at Biggleswade, a Sat Nav gets you close and then it was well signposted locally by the event. It opened to visitors at 09.30, with an entrance fee of £8. There was good parking early in the morning but filled up later on as the adjacent school and morning sports activities got under way. It was a well-run event and was busy, but not so busy you couldn't get around easily. There were about 50 trade tables including a large bring and buy section. The catering had a good choice of drinks and hot food and was good quality but there was a bit of a wait as the hot food was made to order. My bacon bap was excellent!



As the event name would suggest, it was a gold mine for anyone interested in vintage equipment or perhaps more importantly wanting to repair vintage equipment. As well as general vintage components there was plenty of test equipment for sale and lots of valves and even a couple of valve testing machines. There were plenty of vintage broadcast radios, some really quite old with interesting cabinets, record players and records from 78s to more recent ones. What surprised me the most, was the number of vintage items that flew off the bring and buy tables. After a couple of hours several of the tables were bare.

There was some amateur radio related equipment for sale, noticeably an HRO 5T receiver (unfortunately without coil packs) and a Drake R4C / T4C pair for £500. There was plenty of choice for air spaced variable capacitors. Another standout item was a RACAL 543 military VHF auto ATU, the seller had the cover off so you could see the inside build quality. Constructed on a very substantial cast metal chassis it was a feast for the eye. (A web search will bring up a good selection of pics and details).



It was an enjoyable morning; it was a bit different with a very pleasant dose of nostalgia. More information about the Society can be found at www.bvws.org.uk.



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SWAINS ISLAND, W8S DXPEDITION 2023

Gerben A.Menting, PG5M



It was in 2016 when Hans, DL6JGN started his e-mail exchange with Alexander E. Jennings regarding a possible DXpedition to Swains Island. Alexander (Alex) is the owner and representative of the island and therefore you need his permission to operate from Swains Island. Three years later the plan became firm, and a contract was signed for the transport ship and the support on the island. A team of ten operators was organized, including an operator/doctor. A few months later the call sign W8S was claimed, a web site was set up, announcements made in the DX community and clubs and sponsors approached for their financial support.

The team started to plan and prepare all the equipment and materials and booked their flights. Early 2020 everything was ready to go but then problems started to pop up. First a measles breakout in American Samoa, a hurricane that damaged the ship and next, a global Covid outbreak. As a result, we had to decide to postpone the DXpedition, not knowing how long that could last.

It was not until May 2023 that the situation was OK again and a new contract could be signed. Since four of the original operators could not join the DXpedition anymore, we had selected four new operators to complete the team of ten operators.



In addition, we also organized a team of pilots: Francisco HK3W - South America, John G4IRN - UK, Joe DL7JAN - Europe/Africa, Champ E21EIC - Asia, Lee VK3GK - Oceania, Steve N2AJ - US, and chief pilot and responsible for social media Alex PA1AW.

We started making plans and assigned tasks to each operator (antennas, equipment, IT,

operations, camps, etc.). Every two weeks we had a Zoom meeting to discuss progress, issues, problems, etc. At the same time, I had a Zoom call with Alex and his team every other week. Once the antennas and equipment were defined, we started to collect all the materials that could be shipped in advance. Coax cables were cut to the specific length for each antenna. All coax and data cable between the laptops, radios and amplifiers were made and labeled, so nothing could go wrong in setting up the stations.

We chose to use only Elecraft K3 (modified) and K3S radios and SPE Expert 1.3K amplifiers. With several spare radios and amplifiers, we could easily and quickly replace a defective radio or amplifier. All radios and amplifiers would be transported as personal luggage. Masts, coax, antennas, tools, etc. were packed in wooden boxes and shipped in advance to American Samoa. The tables show all of our equipment and antennas.

Station	Radio	Amplifier
1	Elecraft K3	Expert 1.3K – FA
2	Elecraft K3	Expert 1.3K – FA
3	Elecraft K3	Expert 1.3K – FA
4	Elecraft K3S	Expert 1.5K – FA
5	Elecraft K3S	Expert 1.3K – FA
6	Elecraft K3	Expert 1.3K – FA
Spare	Elecraft K3	Expert 1.3K – FA
7	FlexRadio	RF2K-S (for 6m EME)
Spare	Elecraft K3	RF2K-S

Band	Red Camp	Blue Camp
160m	Top loaded vertical with ground radials	
80m		Vertical with ground radials
60m		Vertical
40m	Phased vertical with ground radials	Vertical with elevated radials
30m	VDA	VDA
20m	Hex beam	VDA
17m	VDA	VDA
15m	Hex beam	VDA
12m	VDA	VDA
10m	Hex beam	VDA
Receive	K9AY	K9AY
6m EME		8 element yagi

We planned for two camps (Red and Blue) that would be 400 meters away from each other. With that, and in addition the high power BPFs, we would be able to operate CW and SSB on the same band.

On 27th September 2023 the operators started their journey from the Netherlands, Germany and US to gather in

Hawaii from where we flew to American Samoa. From September 29 - October 2nd the team was staying in Pago Pago (the capital of American Samoa) to do some shopping for last preparations (wood, steel pipes for masts, mosquito repellent, guy stakes, wood, etc.). Since we found the six wooden boxes damaged, we decided to buy plastic boxes to repack all the materials; two wooden boxes were reinforced to carry the fibreglass masts.

To our surprise we were informed that the schedule of the ship was delayed by two days. This was a big disappointment. We went to the port authorities and had a meeting to discuss the situation and what we could do to avoid further delays. We got a commitment that we would leave Pago Pago on October 5th. However, the voyage was not directly to Swains; we had to visit Manu'a and Ofu islands first. As a result, the voyage would take 8 hours longer.

4th October 2023

We went to the port in the afternoon but had to wait until 10pm before we could board the Manu'atele. On board we had good chairs for the long voyage to Swains, but some of us were seriously struggling with seasickness. The whole voyage took about 30 hours to arrive at Swains Island.



Our Luxury Cruise Ship!

6th October

We arrived at the island around 04:00 but had to wait 3 hours before we could offload all the materials and get the people on the beach. A flat bottom landing vessel was used to bring people and materials from the Manu'atele to the beach. This took about 4 hours after which the Manu'atele left for Pago Pago.

Martin and I immediately started to walk along the beach to identify the location for the Red and Blue Camp. After this was done, the support team transported all our boxes and suitcases to the respective camps locations. Since all boxes were marked red or blue, it was easy to get the right materials at the right camp. After the materials were at the camp locations, four operators per camp started to build the antennas. At the same time the support team built the tents and installed the tables and chairs for the operations.

7th October

The first day we erected about half of the antennas and built the radio stations. It was extremely hot, and we also had some heavy showers. We were all exhausted. As soon as we had some radio stations and antennas ready, we started our initial operation. That was on 7th October at 08:31 UTC (7:31pm local time). The next day we continued with the antenna building and started our full operation. We had a shift plan scheduling two operators per camp and ensuring 24 hrs a day operation.



Alex and his support team in the meantime built the Base Camp that consisted of the kitchen area with storage for food, water and drinks, two sleeping areas for the operators, a shower area and two toilet buildings. The four ladies that were running the kitchen did an outstanding job. When arriving at the Base Camp after we had done our shift, we were asked what to drink and/or what to eat. We often got cold coconut drinks, soda, fruit drinks, etc. In the morning around 7am we had breakfast and around 6pm we had dinner. Every day we had different food, ranging from fish, lobster, crab, chicken, beef, turkey and always with a nice dessert. It was like a great restaurant. This made the tough living on the island certainly more enjoyable.



For sleeping, two tents were set up. Each tent could accommodate 5 sleeping beds and each operator had his own mosquito tent and mattress. The support team also provided a shower area where they supplied two barrels with water (from the lagoon) every day. We used it for showering and doing our laundry

8th - 16th October

With two operators per camp soon it was already common practice for operators to operate CW or SSB and FT8 on the 3rd station at the same time. This meant that we could operate very efficiently.

We heard from many people, especially from Japan, that they were extremely interested in a 6m contact so we had decided to build an additional station specifically for 6m. That would also include EME activity, which would be the first ever activation from Swains. However, the erection of an 8 element 6m yagi on a 6-metre-tall pipe was not an easy task. With the help of most of the operators and some of the support team, we managed to get the yagi up. By means of ropes the antenna could be rotated and elevated. With the 6m station ready operation could start and many 6m contacts were made. Quite some effort was put into trying to make EME contacts. First, we learned that some stations were able to hear us, but we could not hear them. But we continued to make new attempts and finally we got 3 EME contacts in the log.

Our daily activities were based on a shift plan for the entire team. The 10 operators were divided into 5 teams of 2 people and running shifts of 3, 4 and 5 hours per camp. With the shift plan, each operator would operate on different times of the day, work alternating from Camp Red or Camp Blue and had various rest periods for sleeping and activities of their choice. Especially in the early days the rest periods were also used to set up more antennas and organize the operating positions.

The walk from the Base Camp to the Red or Blue Camp was quite an exercise and when arriving at the camp you would need to cool down (especially during the day) and relax a bit. We quickly asked the support team if they could use their ATV and transport the operator to and from the camps. They agreed to do so, and we provided them with a shuttle schedule. From that moment on we went by ATV between the camps - even at 0300. This was a big relief to the team.



VDAs, Hexbeam, 6m yagi and phased verticals

A particular element of the DXpedition was having very good internet access. This was provided by a Starlink terminal with unlimited internet access 24hrs a day with speeds up to 160 Mbps. This allowed us to upload our logs (the primary purpose of the internet link) daily to our QSL manager Charles, M00XO. It also allowed us to have online interviews with clubs and organizations, talk to our chief pilot, have contact with our family and friends and provide for the first-time provide internet access for the support team.

We were focused on making as many QSOs as possible, dividing operations over the different modes and paying attention to all regions of the world. Obviously, it is easy to work Japan and to a lesser extent the US. Europe was more challenging, especially northern Europe where we had to cross the North Pole which caused disturbance to signals. In the end we were happy that the number of QSO's was equally divided over the US, Europe and Asia.

As soon as we had our first operations on 160 and 80m we realised that we did not really need the K9AY receiving antennas and therefore decided not to install them.

Each camp consisted of 3 radio stations, comprising of an Elecraft K3 and an SPE 1.3K amplifier. Besides the low power BPF between the radio and amplifier we also had high power BPF's after the amplifiers. They were mounted on a wooden pannel which was situated behind the operators. The antennas were directly connected to the BPF's and the operator could choose the band for the operation by connecting the cable from the amplifier to the respective BPF. With this method, you avoid operators accidentally start operating on the same band. For 6m operation we had an additional station with a FlexRadio and RF-kit 2KW amplifier. Over the whole operation we had one K3 and one SPE becoming faulty but for the rest, all equipment and generators worked flawlessly.

As we know from the previous DXpeditions to Swains, the heat and mosquitos would be our biggest enemies. For some of us that was right to the extreme. Although we brought enough insect repellent, it was not always sufficient.

When we were nearing the end of our stay on Swains Island, we started to discuss how and when we should dismantle our camps. The schedule was that we would return to Pago Pago on 17th October. Since the time to load all equipment and materials on the Manu'atele would need to happen in a short period of time, it needed to be well planned. We learned that the Manu'atele would arrive at Swains Island in the afternoon of 16th October. This allowed the support team to transport some materials from the main camp that afternoon.

We received instructions to be ready for departure at 0300 local time on 17th October. With that information estimated when we needed to dismantled our camps, and have everything packed and transported to the beach. We first started to dismantle the Blue Camp which was farther away from the Base Camp. We decided to dismantle the camp in the evening/night as it would be cooler. We started on 15th October 15 at 1930 local and finished at 2330. This was an good guide for the Red Camp of how long they would need to have their camp dismantled and packed. In the afternoon of 16th October the Red Camp was also packed and transported to the beach. We gathered at the Base Camp discussing the DXpedition and how it went and enjoyed some last food and drinks before taking a short nap.

17th October

Around 0300 we were all up and had packed all our personal things and were gathering again at the kitchen area, which was already in the process of being dismantled and packed by the support team. Fortunately there was no rain.

As soon as the tide was right, the landing vessel arrived, and the first load of the day was transported to the Manu'atele. In the following rides, passengers and cargo were transported and

we finally departed for Pago Pago around 0700. Some of us went to sleep and others gathered on deck. The captain told us that the sea was quiet but soon we experienced big waves. At one time, part of a wave went over the upper deck and some passengers got completely soaked.

18th October

Around 0600 local we arrived in Pago Pago and the ship was quickly unloaded. We gathered all our suitcases and grouped together for transport to the hotel. Alex Jennings and his team took care of all our boxes and transported them Alex's house. A public bus was arranged to take us to the hotel and when the bus started moving, the driver switched on his audio system with very loud reggae style music. Everyone on the bus was singing and smiling.

Once in the hotel we could take a decent warm shower! During the day we were relaxing, discussing the fantastic DXpedition we experienced. That day we also went to Alex's home to add some materials to the boxes and secured them for the transport back to the Netherlands.

19th October

We visited two transport companies to discuss the transport of our boxes and get quotes. We were invited by Alex to have dinner in the evening after which we would go to the airport to catch our flight to Hawaii. We had a very nice dinner together with Alex and his wife, some people from the support team and the children and grandchildren of the Jennings family. All W8S team members received a traditional lavalava (a wrap-around skirt) and "Swains" T-shirt and two signed books about Swains Island. This was obviously highly appreciated by the team.

Recap

Unfortunately, our stay on Swains Island was cut short by two days due to the ship schedule. This had an impact on our goal of 100,000+ QSO's. Finally, we ended up with 91,847 QSO's. All operators were very positive about how we operated as a team and how we were interacting with the support team. It was a great experience that we will long remember.

This DXpedition was only possible with the great help and support of Alex Jennings and his team. They did a great job in making the DXpedition a success. Because Alex wants to further develop activities on the island communications are vital and it was the first time he and his team could experience unlimited internet access due to our satellite connection. To support Alex in his plans, we decided to donate the Starlink terminal to him.



Alex and his wife

We would also like to thank clubs, companies and hundreds of individuals for the generous support we received, which is essential to make a DXpeditions like this possible. We would also like to thank our QSL manager Charles M00XO who has now the task of answering the many requests for a QSL card or LoTW confirmation.

Special thanks go to CDXC for their financial support!

CLIPPERTON ISLAND, TX5S DXPEDITION 2024

Gene Spinelli, K5GS



An introduction to Clipperton Island

Clipperton Island is in the Northeast Pacific Ocean, 1,626 miles (2,618 km) south of San Diego, California and 795 miles (1,280 km) west of Acapulco, Mexico. The island has a total area of about 4.6 square miles (12 square kilometers). The island is at sea level with only a few rock formations that protrude above the surface, the highest is Clipperton Rock at 95 feet (29 m). Situated in the center of the

island is a large lagoon with only occasional intrusion of sea water. Occasionally because the intervening sand / coral can be breached during storms allowing salt water to enter the already brackish lagoon. The maximum water depth is 241 feet (73m), with the top layer being rainwater. The lagoon is stratified (layered), the water doesn't mix. While in the past people living on the island drank the water we

were advised to avoid not to do so, although several of the team did use the lagoon for bathing.

The ground is generally densely packed sand on a volcanic / dead coral base. One unique characteristic is the crab population has burrowed under the surface to create a maze of underground tunnels. When walking in these areas the ground will easily collapse beneath your feet and you will find your foot (feet) in a depression. We quickly learned to avoid those areas and to walk along a well-traveled, packed down, path between the beach and the campsite. The ground surface was rocky, and in some areas, soft sand. There is very little vegetation on the island; the few palm groves, grasses, and tree tobacco plants were remnants of attempts to inhabit the island for commercial or military purposes. Wildlife consists of the ubiquitous masked booby, crabs and rats, the latter allegedly introduced by shipwrecks.

The weather was hot, humid, and windy, rainfall was minimal. However, on the last morning while removing the overnight team and equipment from the island the sky opened with a monsoon-like downpour.

The United States claimed the island in 1856 but France had already made a claim in 1855.



Clipperton Location

In 1897 Mexico stationed a garrison of military personnel on the island. By 1914 all inhabitants left the island. Today, Clipperton is a French possession; it's the only French Pacific Island in the northern hemisphere. For many years the US, Mexico, and France each laid claim to Clipperton. It wasn't until 1930 that France received full ownership when King Victor Emmanuel III of Italy adjudicated the dispute and awarded the island to France, whose original claim dates to the year 1711, thus the decision made some degree of sense.

All attempts to commercialize the island through guano (phosphate) harvesting and farming eventually failed. In 2016 France enacted a 200 nautical mile Marine Reserve around the island to protect its marine environment. Landing on Clipperton requires a landing permit issued by the French government. Clipperton is far from an idyllic desert island with visions of palm trees and beautiful beaches. Clipperton is visually unappealing and lacks character.

DXpedition Planning and Preparation

The global pandemic ended almost all DXpeditions, and the Perseverance DX Group (PDXG) had some time to think about the future. Unfortunately, a government agency we had been working with before the pandemic reversed a previous decision and declared that amateur radio was no longer an acceptable reason to visit their entity. Shortly after the world reopened in 2022, we did a 2-week fly-in to the Austral Islands as TX5N. It was fun, but we wanted another boat-tent- generator DXpedition.

When Clipperton came on the radar we didn't begin the landing permit process without first having a boat. In July 2022 a telephone call was made to Frank LoPreste, owner of "Shogun" from San Diego, California. Frank and the Shogun had been to Clipperton many times for scientific, sport fishing, and DXpedition projects. Frank knew the island well and one of his employees had also been to Clipperton several times. Shogun's sleeping arrangements include 13, two and three-person, passenger cabins. With a total of 19 passengers, we assigned two people per cabin and placed radio equipment in the unused cabins. The boat's dining/salon area was large enough to seat the entire team for meals and meetings. To avoid accidents, while underway, meals were served by the boat's crew, and there were always snacks and refreshments available in the galley. Shogun has four toilets and three showers which made it more comfortable than our previous DXpedition boats.

After receiving a commitment for a boat, the next hill to climb was the landing permit. Clipperton was administered from French Polynesia by the office of the High Commissioner. I enlisted Jacky F2CW/ZL3CW, a French national, to help and he asked Phillipe, FO4BM, to be our on-site Tahitian representative and to help me with the translation of our proposal(s) to French. Several people said that a landing permit for Clipperton would not be issued because of changes to the laws governing the island. While the law did change in 2016, and ham radio wasn't considered a good enough reason to issue a landing permit, after many email exchanges and telephone calls Phillipe found a middle ground.

Under the new regulations a project must include scientific content. The next challenge was to enlist the help of bona fide individuals that had scientific standing with the French government. Phillipe, FO4BM, reached out to Anthony Tchekeian, a professor at the University of French Polynesia, an accomplished author who in 2016 published a book about Clipperton Island. Anthony

wanted to return to the island, and he agreed to conduct additional studies during TX5S. Joining Anthony was Partick Lelue, a professor from the University of Orleans. Also joining the team was Jean-Francois Beaulieu who represents an organization in Paris whose goal is to protect Clipperton's environment, The Association la Passion-Clipperton.

With a credentialed science team and a government approved boat we received the landing permit in March 2023. The next requirement was a call sign. We had worked with the ANFR (France's licensing agency) for the TX5N project, so we had good idea what they required. ANFR graciously agreed to reserve TX5S for us. With a boat, a landing permit, and a radio license, the next task was to build the team. With Jacky ZL3CW/F2CW as the team leader, Steve, W1SRD; Dave, K3EL, and Gene, K5GS, as Co-leaders we went ahead staffing the team and building the project plans.

The project cost indicated we would need a larger team than usual to keep individual member fees reasonable. The radio team included 16 experienced DX and/or contest operators: Jacky, F2CW/ZL3CW; Dave, K3EL; Steve, W1SRD; Gene, K5GS; Glenn, KE4KY; Rob, N7QT; Walt, N6XG; Heye, DJ9RR; Francesco, IK0FVC; Dave, WD5COV; Ricardo, PY2PT; Andreas, N6NU; Arliss, W7XU; Chris, N6WM; Nodir, EY8MM, and Paul, N6PSE.



TX5S Team - Photo EY8MM

Many of the team members knew one another from previous DXpeditions, or had met at ham radio events. We knew there would be significant interest from the DX community since the most recent major DXpedition to Clipperton was TX5K in 2013, eleven years prior to our proposed date. Anyone newly licensed or taking up DXing since the last project would need F00/C. Additionally, neither 60m nor FT8 operation had been used previously on Clipperton.

In preparing for the DXpedition, we held several planning teleconferences. Topics included living on the island, radio/antenna planning, operator scheduling, travel planning, permitting and licensing. Each team member was required to have a French license in addition to their own license and the TX5S license.

At the 2023 International DX Convention in Visalia, John Kennon, N7CQQ, offered us equipment he used on previous Clipperton DXpeditions. John provided the power grid, several shipping cases, and 225 one-meter rebar stakes used to guy the antennas. This alone saved us several thousand dollars.

Travel and Meeting the Team

Ten of the 16 radio team members live in the US, and seven within one day's drive to the boat. The team began arriving in San Diego, California on January 8, 2024. We spent a few days buying last minute items, including a three-day supply of emergency food should the weather make replenishment from the Shogun impossible. While previous DXpeditions required us to ship thousands of pounds of equipment across the world, departing from San Diego saved us about \$25,000 in shipping expenses, plus drayage and port fees. We hired a truck and drove the equipment to the boat ourselves, a 12-hour drive.

On January 9th our equipment was loaded aboard the Shogun by the crew and several helpers from Fishermen's Landing, the firm that operates the wharf. We departed San Diego on January 11th for the planned six-day transit to Clipperton Island. A Garmin inReach personal locator allowed many of you (and our families) to follow our progress. The boat had a Starlink Internet Terminal, so email and telephone calls were available. The local weather caused a late start as the seas would be rough and the boat pitching and rolling right out of San Diego. The skipper decided to wait out the weather front that was passing through the area.

The journey to Clipperton took about 1.5 days longer than planned. The seas were rough and the boat was getting knocked about quite a bit, several of the team retired to their cabins. When we arrived at Clipperton the skipper circled the island looking for the best landing zone. He chose to stay on the leeward side of the island where the surf would be less of a problem.

The Landing and Camp Site

Operating from an island can be challenging, especially an uninhabited island where you're completely on your own. One real concern was the landing situation. Clipperton is surrounded by a reef that lies just below the waterline, 25 - 50 metres from the beach. Watching the surf breaking over the reef is the first indication that landings won't be "routine," there is no protected bay or harbor.

We were forewarned that transiting to and from the island would be dangerous. Both the High Commissioner, who issued the landing permit, and Shogun's owner Frank LoPreste made it very clear there would be challenges getting over the reef. During the 2013 TX5K DXpedition the team spent three days without replenishment because of dangerous surf conditions. Shogun's crew used three custom made aluminum skiffs for the landings. The skiff's reinforced hull was less prone to damage when striking the reef or the rocky shore. It was only possible to go ashore during high tide during daylight hours. This, of course, limited our transit opportunities; how much equipment could be brought ashore, and when.

Only one crew member had been to Clipperton, the others were unfamiliar with crossing the reef. After a few tries, they learned how to navigate the reef. A defective fuel tank caused us an additional delay. As the wind and surf were building it became more challenging. We began taking

people and equipment to the island. When one of the skiffs was swamped and some campsite equipment lost, further attempts to land on that (first) day were halted.

The team members on the island had some supplies for the night, although not all the tents they would need. By now the total delay to the DXpedition start was almost three days. The plan for two campsites was changed to a single campsite to reduce the amount of equipment needed ashore and to get on the air sooner. Over the first few operating days the remainder of the camp was assembled, and the five stations became operational.

Meals, drinking water and generator fuel were brought over by the Shogun crew, supply runs timed for high tide during daylight hours. A total of 42 trips were made to transport people and equipment. Breakfast foods were stored on the island and regularly replenished by the Shogun. Weather permitting, each day additional meals were brought ashore. Except for the last day, everyone stayed on the island for the duration of the DXpedition.

The campsite consisted of eight sleeping tents, a kitchen/dining building, an HF operating building, a dedicated EME/6m/satellite operating tent, and an HQ tent. The shelters included “REI Wonderland 6” tents for sleeping, the EME/Satellite station and for the HQ tent. The operating and dining buildings were multi-purpose structures marketed as portable automobile garages



TX5S Camp Site - Photo W7XU

by Shelter Logic. The dining tent was equipped with two small refrigerators, a microwave oven, a toaster, water boiler, food storage bins, and tables/chairs. The operating building consisted of five radio operating positions which could accommodate any band/mode.

Based on information from the Internet and other people that had been to Clipperton we expected to encounter a large presence of crabs, especially at night. We brought 600 feet of fencing to keep the crabs out of the camp, but we deployed no fencing. While there were crabs, their numbers were so low that they were not a problem. One possible explanation could be the presence of rats on the island. One theory is the rats decimated the crab population.

We're happy to report there were no serious injuries, only some sunburn and several conditions treated by the team doctor, Arliss, W7XU. Dehydration was always a concern, we provided plenty of drinking water and a supply of Gatorade to restore electrolytes.

Radios and Antennas

Each operating position had an Elecraft radio: there were three K3s and two K4D transceivers. The amplifiers included two Elecraft KPA-500, two Elecraft KPA-1500, and one Flex PGXL.

The HF antennas were monoband Vertical Dipole Arrays (VDAs), and vertical antennas for 40, 60, 80, and 160 meters. We were close enough to the sea and the lagoon to achieve benefit from the saltwater amplifier effect. The 60m antenna was actually a 60/80m antenna, manually adjusted for each band when needed. Dave, WD5COV, designed and built this dual-purpose antenna.

The 160m antenna was the “Top Band Express,” also designed and built by Dave, WD5COV. While it was always windy, we had very few antenna problems. The signal reports and never-ending pileups were good indicators that the stations and antennas were performing well.

The generators were a Generac 6.5kw unit and several AI Power 4kW units. We had no equipment failures, although the equipment did get covered with sand and silt that blew through the HF tent. Subsequently, all the Elecraft equipment was returned to the factory for cleaning, refurbishing, and calibration. The antenna filter and patch panel designed and built by Walt, N6XG, provided the flexibility to connect any antenna to any radio.

Radio Operations

The team’s 16 radio operators were assigned as follows: three teams of five radio operators per team and an EME/Satellite/6M station operated almost exclusively by Andreas, N6NU. Team staffing considered operator mode preferences and each team had a captain. On-shift operators agreed on bands/modes, and as propagation changed the operators worked together to meet team goals. Based on pilot input and over the air comments we knew the DX community was happy with our strategy to follow the propagation. The pilot team was communicating with us via Starlink. This was the second DXpedition in which we used a Groups.io account for the DX community to provide input and communicate with the pilots. That too worked well, with over 500 registered users; there was plenty of daily traffic.

The first contact was made January 20th on 17m CW with NL7S, and the final contact was made January 28th on 40m SSB with NJ7G. We were delighted to find good propagation and reasonably strong signals to many parts of the world, not unexpectedly NA/SA being the best, followed by EU.



During periods of good propagation all five operating positions were in action. As high-band propagation waned during the night SSB usually dropped out first. The SSB operations would shift to FT8. The equipment plan included a rack of high-power bandpass filters manufactured by Low Band Systems (LBS). The combination of Elecraft

Main Operating Tent - Photo EY8MM

radios and LBS filters proved to be very effective, we had very little interstation interference.

An important aspect of TX5S planning was operator scheduling. We used the same schedule that was used on South Orkney Islands, VP8PJ. For each four-hour shift operators were scheduled on the five stations, depending on expected band activity. Every few days each of the three radio teams would move their start time by four hours, thus over the project's duration each team experienced different geographic openings and band conditions.

EME/6M /Satellite Activity

There was significant interest in EME, 6m, and working through the Greencube satellite from Clipperton Island. During the 2018 VP6D DXpedition to Ducie Island we made 28 6m EME QSOs. VP6D was the first time we included EME in a PDXG project. Andreas, N6NU, was the architect and station captain for these TX5S activities.



Satellite station - Photo EY8MM

As Andreas writes: “How does one get to be the Satellite Captain for a major DXpedition? Satellite operators and 6M EME groups had reached out to us about possible activity. When the DXpedition co-organizer Gene, K5GS, asked the team who has Satellite equipment or some knowledge about it, I raised my hand.” The result was: “Great, you got it, it’s your project!” After a discussion with the team co-leader Steve, W1SRD, the decision was made to dedicate 100% of my time to activate Satellites, EME for 6M and 23cm, as well as 6M tropo when the station was not pointed at the moon. This was now a full-time effort and not an afterthought anymore. We had to plan for a separate operating tent, generator, and fuel.”

Satellite operations on the island were a great success with 375 QSOs and 47 countries worked. The OZ9AA terminal software worked well and Jeff Schwartz, KI0KB, ended up being the ad hoc pilot for us staying in contact with the Facebook group. We managed to focus on some geographic areas during different passes and I would like to thank the satellite community for standing by and allowing us to work the hard ones at the edges of the coverage areas.

The first Moonrise operation yielded a handful of 6m EME Q65 QSOs. On the following day the second session brought a surprise. After working a few EME contacts the WSJTX screen started to show many strong signals coming in directly via tropo. The band had opened, and we worked as many stations as we could to make use of the opening. The final EME count was 17 QSOs and 3 countries; however, over the next few days, we added 197 6m tropo QSOs and 13 countries to the log. The band was open to NA, SA, AF, ZL, and VK.

The last band to be set up was 23cm/1296MHz. Due to the constant wind the 2.4m dish had to be converted from fabric to wire mesh. We made a total of 55 initial contacts in 17 countries. I want to thank Dave, K3EL, for helping on 6m and the Satellite station as well as Arliss, W7XU,

working many 23cm QSO's. Andreas wrote a more detailed report of his TX5S experience available on the TX5S.net website.

TX5S Statistics

Total QSOs made was 113,736. We were using a new version of WSJT-X and when propagation was strong it was not unusual to see us running 4-5 slots making 350-400 QSOs per hour. We had no problem with FT8 dupes, and the overall dupe rate was 2.9%. Until the last few days the overall dupe rate hovered at 1.9%, the operators noted more SSB and CW dupes were occurring as the DXpedition close approached. QSO distribution was: NA 48.1%, EU 29.4%, AS 17.8, SA 2.2% and AF 0.46% and OC 1.96%, with 23,810 unique call signs and 171 DXCC entities, see Figures below for additional details.

TX5S Band / Mode Statistics

The number of Not in Log/Busted Call inquires we received was amazingly low at only 268 inquires. For 113,736 QSOs this is an unusually low number, a good indicator that the TX5S operators paid close attention to logging accuracy. Many of those inquiries indicated inexperience with logging, in general, and using LoTW.

E a c h

TX5S QSOs per Day

morning we'd

DATE/MODE (last 20 days)	CW	FT8	PKT	Q65	RTTY	SSB	TOTAL QSO
20240128	1147	1936	0	0	0	362	3445
20240127	2376	4976	56	2	0	3521	10931
20240126	3046	9619	5	16	0	3305	15991
20240125	5000	6518	42	20	0	3711	15291
20240124	4772	9817	41	25	369	2500	17524
20240123	5056	8967	59	13	0	3969	18064
20240122	5004	7814	134	1	0	4725	17678
20240121	2550	6782	173	0	0	3256	12761
20240120	600	1451	0	0	0	0	2051

look at the N1MM+ graphs and see that we were making between the 3,445 QSOs on the first partial day on the air to over 18,000 QSOs on the third day of operation. While averages don't always tell the story, we averaged an amazing 14,217 QSOs a day.

As with VP8PJ, it was interesting to see the popularity of FT8, not just amongst the callers, but also with the DXpedition operators; perhaps the chance to remove the headphones and relax

CONTINENT/BAND	160 m	80 m	60 m	40 m	30 m	20 m	17 m	15 m	12 m	10 m	6 m	70 cm	23 cm	TOTAL QSO	TOTAL %
AFRICA	3	22	10	59	56	79	68	67	86	67	1	0	1	519	0.46 %
ASIA	443	1440	39	2857	2274	2937	2809	2366	2498	2494	0	58	4	20219	17.78 %
EUROPE	398	2014	696	4548	5413	6850	3727	3261	3502	2931	0	94	32	33466	29.42 %
NORTH AMERICA	1651	3559	909	4820	4494	8437	6874	7570	8223	7757	117	328	21	54760	48.15 %
OCEANIA	36	154	20	312	233	281	374	429	165	189	20	13	0	2226	1.96 %
SOUTH AMERICA	26	91	26	274	225	300	277	388	359	465	86	19	0	2536	2.23 %
Not Determined	0	0	0	0	1	2	1	2	3	1	0	0	0	10	0.01 %
TOTAL QSO	2557	7280	1700	12870	12696	18886	14130	14083	14836	13904	224	512	58	113736	100 %

TX5S Continent by Band

was a welcome break from the adrenaline rush of working a pileup on the other modes. During the voyage to Clipperton Island we operated as N6WM/MM, there was no /MM operation on the return voyage.

Logs, Livestream and Starlink

During the project planning phase Steve, W1SRD, contacted Starlink to confirm availability at Clipperton. In a written reply, coverage was confirmed. Our two Starlink Terminals were online 24 X 7 while on the island. Team members were able to exchange emails with friends and family and/or use WiFi calling. Logging computers were Lenovo X-230 laptops running WSJT-X and N1MM+.

Both Club Log's Livestream and the traditional daily log uploads to the M0URX's Bespoke OQRS application were used. To the user, Bespoke OQRS System looks similar to Club Log. However, the Bespoke system automates many of the QSL manger's backend manual tasks. For example, the TX5S website's donation process seamlessly integrates with Bespoke. This relieves the QSL manager and the DXpedition team from manually entering and managing donor information. Label printing and LoTW upload files are easily created with a few mouse clicks. Almost all manual tasks are automated, making the manager's job less time consuming, and QSL card addressing errors almost nonexistent.

The Science Team

The primary interest of the Science Team was to study the behavior of the rat population on the island. Using infrared camera and data recording instruments they recorded data on rat movements at night. Another aspect of their study was an assessment of future uses for Clipperton Island. These three gentlemen blended well with the radio team, and for the most part did their work away from the radio operations.

Departure

A DXpedition team needs a departure plan. It begins by merging the team's plan with the skipper's departure schedule, and removing non-essential equipment from the island as soon as we determine something is no longer needed. Antennas will gradually be removed, stations disassembled and packed for shipment. This process typically begins about two to three days before the planned departure date, but the actual departure will depend on weather and sea conditions. The skipper was providing regular weather forecasts. Our departure plan considered available daylight and high tide to transit the reef; the skipper's plan considered the sea conditions/forecast on the route to San Diego - and they weren't looking too good.

Based on a building weather front, the skipper established the departure date to be no later than January 29th. On January 27th we removed equipment and some team members from the island. The remaining operators made QSOs until shutdown on January 28th. The morning's high tide allowed the team this additional operating time, but they also encountered a monsoon-like rainfall during the final take down. Once back on the boat it took several hours to store and secure all the equipment. The 8-day ride to San Diego was very rough and we were greeted by more rain upon arrival in San Diego. The Shogun's crew and helpers from Fishermen's Landing offloaded all our equipment to a waiting truck for the next day's drive to Northern California.

Corporate Sponsors

We received support from manufacturers and distributors of amateur radio equipment:

Elecraft loaned two K4D transceivers, and two KPA-1500 amplifiers; DX Engineering donated coax, connectors, tools, antenna parts, aluminum tubing and countless other accessories; Arlan Communications loaned eight RadioSport headsets; Bart SQ1K designed and provided the TX5S clothing. The DX Store subsidized the cost of several shipping cases; M0URX United Radio QSL Management Service and ON5UR QSL Print Services subsidized the cost of QSL card production. The Daily DX by Bernie, W3UR, was a financial sponsor. Low Band Systems, Spiderbeam, and Rig Expert supplied our previous projects with equipment used on Clipperton. The generosity and ongoing support of these manufacturers and distributors is greatly appreciated.

Wrap Up

We would like to acknowledge the help and support of the organizations and individuals that contributed to Clipperton Island 2024. We appreciate the major financial sponsorship from: the Northern California DX Foundation (NCDXF), the German DX Foundation (GDXF), the International DX Association (INDEXA), The European DX Foundation (EUDXF), CDXC: The UK DX Foundation, and the Clipperton DX Club for their very generous support, and that of the many other clubs and foundations. Please review the list of Corporate and Club/Foundation sponsors at TX5S.net, they deserve your support.

Over 1,600 individual donations were processed through the website, including 73 Premier Donors (contributing \$200, or more) and over 1,700 DXers added a contribution to their OQRS confirmation request.

The on-island team was supported by many individuals and, in particular, we want to recognize our Chief Pilot Curtis, WX4W, and his pilot team of: Joe, JJ3PRT; Claudio, PY2KP; Bjorn, ON9CFG; Alex, 4L5A; Andre, V51B, and Luke, VK3HJ. Managing the early donor program was Doris, K0BEE, and Tim, M0URX, who processes your QSL confirmations and uploads your LoTW confirmations.

Among the highlights of the project were giving many DXers an ATNO and/or band fills, logging the first FT8 and 60-meter contacts from Clipperton Island, and working with a fantastic team of amateur radio operators and a wonderful support team. For several people in the log TX5S was their first ever DXpedition contact. We must also recognize the Shogun crew who were as much a part of the project's success as the radio team.

Until the next time, thank you for your interest in TX5S Clipperton Island 2024.



EME Antenna - Photo N6NU

THE FT COLUMN

Eva Telenius-Lowe, PJ4EVA



Greetings from my new QTH, Exmouth in Devon! Steve, G4JVG (ex-PJ4DX) and I returned to England in March and are settling down very well. It was the second time we returned from living in the tropics in the month of March (the first time was in 1994 from P29) and the shock to the system of experiencing temperatures of around +8 Centigrade remains the same, 30 years on. A month or so after arrival I think we are slowly getting used to it!

At the moment we are living in temporary accommodation as our new home is being completely refurbished. At the time of writing it will still be another month or so before we can move in.

We are often asked when we will be back on the air again and the answer to that is literally still “up in the air”. When we are ready, we will let you know here, on the reflector and in Practical Wireless where Steve writes and compiles the HF Highlights column.

You may wonder why I am not using my UK call in the Column. The simple answer is that I am waiting for the second phase of the new Ofcom regulations to be put in place. I will then apply for a new callsign as I do not intend using my current UK callsign. So my PJ4EVA call will remain the one I use in the FT Column and my email account evapj4eva@gmail.com remains the same until further notice.

I have to admit that it did feel very strange to go QRT. Being on the air with the FT modes almost every day for three years and four months - whether it be for chasing a new DXCC, contesting, running a pile-up or working a DXpedition - to suddenly not having all that fun was odd. My final total of QSOs was 25,600 with 289 DXCC on the FT modes. Both Steve and I will continue to update our confirmed FT mode scores in the FT DXCC Table for the rest of 2024 as now and then another DXCC is confirmed on LoTW.

Being QRT means that I will no longer be able to give the sort of input to the Column that I have been able to do so far. So please, fellow FT fans, keep sending your contributions and updates. I look forward to hearing from you.

Here follows the final instalment of PJ4EVA's fun on the air!

DX on FT

TX5S was a great operation - the first using FT8 from Clipperton - and continued to give me new band slots after the first three I mentioned in the last FT Column. I ended up working them on all bands from 10m to 160m, missing only 80m.

I had tried to copy CBOZEW (RIB callsign) Juan Fernandez Islands (Robinson Crusoe Island)

on 12m and 30m without success when, on the evening of 11 February, to my surprise and delight the DXpedition's other callsign, CB0ZA, suddenly popped up on 6m and became my first QSO with them. Two more QSOs followed, with CB0ZEW on 10m and 12m.

My first QSO with 8R7X Guyana was on 6m and it was really nice to find out afterwards that the operator at the time was Philipp Springer, DK6SP. I met Philipp and fellow 8R7X team-mate Jamie Williams, M0SDV, in 2018 when they both visited Bonaire for a DXpedition, living next door to Steve and me. They were great neighbours and the four of us had a really nice time together when they were not busy on the air. It was clear to both me and Steve that the future of DXpeditions are in safe hands with these two very talented operators and they have certainly proven us right these past six years.

**DK6SP, PJ4DX,
M0SDV & PJ4NX
(IN 2018)**

H40WA, Temotu Province, came on the air on 24 February and it was announced that they were using anti-spoofing software. I saw this sort of software mentioned last year and am wondering if Club Log livestreaming (when



possible) is not enough to ensure that you are working the correct station? I really like it when my callsign pops up on that black screen with the map of the world, confirming my QSO. I first worked H40WA on 10m around 0200UTC on 25 February when they were running 10 streams.

As the chance of working XZ Myanmar / Burma (a place I visited in 2011) is non-existent at the moment, it was truly wonderful to be able to make a 'DXCC full house' of countries I have lived in or visited in South East Asia on 1 March. It was arguably the most tricky QSO I have made so far, it took me four days and many hours but well worth the joy when I eventually received RR73 and put XU7GNY Cambodia in my log on 30m. On 5 March he was decoded again on 20m and he became my last QSO as PJ4EVA as I went QRT immediately afterwards. I love Cambodia and its people and visited twice, first to Phnom Penh in 2006 and then to Siem Reap in 2007.

What I found, and still find, very hard to comprehend is that such gentle, honest and kind people could have turned so viciously on each other during the incredible brutality of the Pol Pot regime in the 70s. An example of their honesty is that in Siem Reap I left a duty-free shopping bag, with my passport inside it, on the back seat of the taxi that took us from the airport to the hotel. The driver returned to the hotel on his own initiative after 30 very frantic minutes, with the bag and my passport in his hand. As a result of this we hired him as our driver for the rest of our stay. Visiting the Killing Fields and the infamous Tuol Sleng prison in Phnom Penh was a



harrowing experience and one I will never forget. As a complete contrast, climbing to the top of Angkor Wat - the pinnacle of Khmer culture - was amazing, if somewhat scary as the steps are so worn down after centuries of worship. The thrill of reaching the top and looking out over the temple and the surrounding landscape - it was just breathtakingly beautiful.

EVA IN CORRIDOR AT ANGKOR WAT.

7P8EI, Lesotho, operated by the EI DX Group, was on the air between 21 and 29 March, by which time I was back in England. They made over 58,564 QSOs of which nearly 50%, 26,734, were made on the FT modes.

TX5XG Austral Islands came on the air for six days at the end of March. It would have been very nice, and hopefully fairly easy, to put them in my log as I note that it was almost exclusively an FT mode DXpedition. They made 5096 QSOs on the FT modes out of a total of 5946 QSOs.

An interesting fact about the Austral Islands and in particular Tubuai is that this is the island which Fletcher Christian and the mutineers on the Bounty first headed to after the mutiny. And that leads nicely to a quick mention of Pitcairn where Fletcher Christian and the mutineers eventually settled. VP6G came on the air between 5 and 13 April and was operated by Gerben, PG5M. He made over 16,000 QSOs, split fairly evenly between CW and FT8.

A8OK Liberia (usual prefix EL) came on the air 5 April and was operated by the Czech DXpedition Group. When they closed on April 18 they had made over 122,000 QSOs, being very active on both FT8 and FT4.

So what have we to look forward to this summer? Well, it looks fairly quiet in the calendar until FT4GL Glorioso Islands comes on the air between 24 May and 19 June. The operator is Marek, FH4VVK, who will be working on the island. The Glorioso Islands are the number eight rarest DXCC entity so it will be a really great one to add to your logs. After that it is not until the beginning of August when the next “big one” comes on the air, N5J, Jarvis Island. This will be a 100% RIB operation with five operators on the boat and many others operating remotely via the satellite Internet link. Good luck with both of them!

Contributions

Dave Gould, G3UEG, was the first to send in a contribution: *“The last three months have again been fruitful, but much harder work with my compromise antennas. Six digital new ones worked, but only 4 confirmed, but amongst those were 2 real ATNOs taking my all-mode tally up*

to #313, with hopefully a few more in the offing for later in the year. January started off with TX5S which was a joy to work and got 7 slots but it was the only one where I got more than 1 or 2 slots. I filled in needed slots for ZD7Z on 30m and 40m, and 5X7O on 17m”.

“Having completed my 7-band WAS on FT8, I thought I would start again on FT4. I had a few slots already from incidental operating, but thought I would concentrate on one band at a time, doing 10 / 15 / 20 / 12 / 17 in that order. I noticed some very interesting propagation between England and Alaska on 10 / 12m. One day there was a good opening (HamAlert and PSKReporter) between Alaska and northern Germany but absolutely nothing to eastern England. The next day the signals were romping in. The other thing I have noticed on several occasions is that the principle of reciprocal propagation does not seem to work on this path. Many of my QSOs on FT8 / FT4 on 10 / 12m have shown much better propagation from England to Alaska than Alaska to England. I sent -09 but received +02 with me running 400W to a dipole at 30ft compared to the AK running 1KW to a beam on a tall tower.

“February brought S21AF, C21TS (ATNO #312), and H40WA on 10m, and FW8GC on 30m for digital new ones. March was a big struggle for me to work T32EU (also ATNO #313); their signals were very weak and irregular so not possible to call if unlikely to hear the reply. I don’t know how many hours I spent for only 2 slots on 12m (S -22 R +05) and 17m (S -24 R-07).

“I have completed my FT4 WAS on 10 / 12 / 15 / 20 and now down to just needing the dreaded NM and WY on 17m, not a squeak from either of these in the several weeks. I started looking for new states on 30m FT4 and have been surprised at how little activity there is on 30m FT4 compared to good activity on FT8. Looks like this one is going to be difficult! Having been doing much more on FT4, I have been shocked by the number of stations that transmit in the WSPR sub-band. I don’t know which software they use but WSJT-X and JTDX clearly indicate the WSPR sub-band and prevent transmission there.” A few days later I received this quick FT4 update from Dave: “After a month or more of nothing heard from NM and WY on 17m FT4... two come along all at once... I now have both states worked and confirmed. So on the top 5 bands I now have WAS completed on FT4.”

The next contribution came from Mike Weber, MOAGP: “This year I only had about 20 digital QSOs. But I worked a few ATNOs: TX5S Clipperton, the various CBO stations at Juan Fernandez, Phil C21TS and the VP6G DXpedition. Juan Fernandez posed a real challenge as it was exactly off the ends of my fan dipole - so I took down my 60 / 80 / 160m antennas and used their rope and pulley system to erect a 17m dipole up 60ft “pointed” their way. It was built from a plastic cutting board, two fishing poles, wire and zip ties - and I worked them without much trouble.

“Then I converted it to 12m, and again worked them fairly easily. Somehow I also managed to work them on 10 and 20m despite them being quite weak and off the dipole ends. I tend to let my dipoles sag (a risk management decision), likely decreasing the null depth. I also worked C21TS using the same 17m dipole but it was on 15m with a high SWR and lower power! I did miss working the JD1/M but I have no complaints!”

From John Barber, GW4SKA, came this update: “The bands have been buzzing here with a lot of good contacts on 10m and 12m. Recent ones include VQ5P, VP2M, 3D2AJT, VR2XMT, OA4DOS,

VK6IR, V26K, CB0ZA, TO1Q and TO5LA. It was also nice to find VK9DX on 17m and TO2BC Austral Islands on 20m for an ATNO.

My totals on the FT modes are now 259 worked and 236 confirmed on LOTW. It's noticeable that most of the FT contacts get confirmed right away on LOTW. My recent check showed 78k confirmations out of a total 157k digital contacts"

Martin Davies, GOHDB, wrote: "Not very much to report from me this time round; my combined FT4 / FT8 totals have gone up to 299 DXCC entities worked with 288 confirmed (as of 31 March); I must try to find another new one to take the total worked up to the magic figure of 300. I expect something will appear on the bands before too long! I think the two new entities I've worked using the FT modes since my last report in January are H40 and FO/C."

Another member who did not have much to report was **Mike Harris, VP8NO**, who wrote: "Nothing in particular to report, not been very active, mainly a couple of days of 6m into North America which has brought my 6m WAS up to 40W / 43C, all LoTW. Otherwise a simple lack of enthusiasm. Just a few LoTW confirmations.

"It's a busy season for autumn work in the garden and some window replacements on the house. The HF beam was down for repair, needing a rebuild and modified attachment of the 10m driven element. Fortunately the necessary materials were to hand.

"...Yesterday evening I was monitoring 10m whilst doing other work in the shack and caught an opening into VK and ZL for a couple of new countries on 10m FT8. Also decoded and called FK8CE in New Caledonia, received a reply but we couldn't complete for a new one on 10m FT8. The situation was rather confusing as both SP and LP were predicted possibilities and swinging the beam didn't help mainly because SP is an unhelpful take-off and LP is out to sea."

I was so pleased to hear that **Mark Scott, G7IRN**, continues to enjoy the FT modes when he sent me this update: "I am very sorry I didn't manage to contribute to the last FT8 column but I had a nasty dose of Covid which left me struggling for several weeks and restricted my radio operating and life in general. I did, however, work some DXCCs during the period and I summarise my activity below.

"I ended 2023 on 251 DXCCs worked with DXCC achieved on 30m, 20m, 17m, 15m, 12m and 10m. I also achieved WAZ on the same bands. Worked all States was achieved on 17m, 15m, 15m, 12m, and 10m. I am just missing LoTW confirmation for Louisiana on 20m. I have also qualified for the ARRL DXCC Challenge Plaque which I never thought I would achieve with my modest station.

"As I write this email I have just worked KH0/KC0W Mariana Islands to achieve 201 DXCCs worked so far this year. I reached 199 by working VP2MDX Montserrat and number 200 working VP6G Pitcairn, both ATNOs.

"My total DXCCs worked since I started the digital journey in January 2023 now stand at 263 with 255 confirmed either on LOTW or QSL. I would like to thank you again for inspiring me to try digital modes. It has been and continues to be great fun."

CDXC 2023 HF Marathon Challenge

The 2023 President's Trophy for most DXCC worked using MGM went to Trevor, EI2GLB, with 263 DXCC, only 3 behind in second place was William, N6RV, who scored 260 and third place went to Norman, 5B4AIF, with 257. Many congratulations to you all!

Presidents Trophy and Salver (MGM)	EI2GLB	263
2nd MGM (Certificate)	N6RV	260
3rd MGM (Certificate)	5B4AIF	257
Intermediate (Certificate)	2E0FVN	241
Foundation (Certificate)	M3DFW	192

FT Table

Please note that the table shows DXCCs worked on the FT modes only (i.e. FT8 and FT4 combined). 'Confirmed' means either with a traditional paper QSL card or on ARRL's LoTW (Logbook of The World) - please do not include entities 'confirmed' only on eQSL, QRZ.com etc.

Call	FT wkd	FT conf
PA3FQA	306	298
G0HDB	299	288
PJ4DX	293	271
GM3PPE	292	292
M0AGP	292	281
PJ4EVA	289	264
G3UEG	288	285
G4RRM	281	260
M0NKR	278	260
G3KZR	270	268
OZ1ING	267	250
2E0LMA	266	230
G7SSE	264	256
G7IRN	263	255
G3PXT	263	245

Call	FT wkd	FT conf
G4OBK	260	250
GW4SKA	259	236
G0TSM	257	240
GM4FDM	254	229
EI2GLB	249	247
G4NBS	240	237
M0IFT	237	229
VP8NO	236	219
G6NHU	232	228
GI4FUE	211	186
G3VGZ	208	196
G7ILZ	197	178
G8GNI	186	185
MM0XXW	106	106

The RSGB's series of FT4 contests began again on Monday 26 February with new rules (as mentioned in the Winter Digest). Although we will not be able to take part in the rest of this series of contests from Bonaire, we put in a last effort before we went QRT in early March and to our delight we won our section. Good luck to all who continue to take part in this series of contests!

For the second year running, the RSGB held the FT4 International Activity Day for 24 hours from 1200UTC on Saturday 6 April. Even after such a short time, it looks like it is becoming a major contest for FT users. 60% of entries this year were from outside the UK and over 4,400 callsigns from all continents appeared in the logs. Winner of the UK 100W Single Radio Section was John Barber, GW4SKA, operating as GW0A. Many congratulations John!

If you do take part in contests and would like to share your experience - and perhaps encourage others to join in - please drop me a line or simply add it to your contribution / update and I will include it in the Contesting section.

The next deadline for contributions to the FT Column is 14 July. Until then, happy DXing and contesting with FT!

73, Eva, ex-PJ4EVA

RTTY COLUMN

Roger Cooke, G3LDI



I should have kept quiet about my tower situation. The saga continues. My son revisited, remounted the luffing winch bracket and fabricated a catchplate. That was the easy part. We then tried hoisting the tower and it stopped about 3ft off the bottom. I lowered it again and started over slowly. We thought it was just stiff to hoist when starting but 2 seconds later another bang and the top hoist rope snapped.

We chained it off and put chocks in so it cannot move. I am now waiting for a visit from Chris, G0DWV to climb the tower and find out exactly where the problem is (I have been served with a no-climbing injunction!).

RTTY Activity

I recently saw a message on the RTTY reflector from Allan, VY2XU QRV 14.083 and calling CQ. I took a look and sure enough a real RTTY signal. I called him and we had quite a nice QSO. It was the first keyboard-to-keyboard chat for several years. I then stirred things up on the RTTY reflector and several others are now taking a look daily and also putting out calls.

So, I guess there is life out there and all we have to do is put out more calls. Please take a look and join in if you get time. Don't just use RTTY for contests. Have a ragchew with like-minded people. Rich, VE3KI made a valid comment: Have you been spotting yourself on the DX Cluster network? That has a much wider readership than this email group. Paul, VA3PC suggested spotting on <http://hamspots.net> - if anyone is looking for a RTTY contact, it's likely they will be there.

The RTTY Scores Table

It should be made clear that only current entities count so that the maximum would be 340. Two columns, Worked and Confirmed, as in Club Log. This is just a bit of fun so it does not matter greatly whether they are verified or not. For separating modes on Logger32 try downloading a utility by JA1NLX at: <http://ja1nlx.blog109.fc2.com/blog-entry-4144.html> This should separate out the various Data modes in Logger32.

Contest Updates

John, GW4SKA/GW0A entered CQWW RTTY and BARTG: 2023 has been a good year in the GW4SKA shack. Nothing serious blew up or fell down in the wind! The RTTY contests were generally well supported again and my highlight was World 3rd in CQWW RTTY, my best result in 40 years of CQWW. The down side was the lack of RTTY in some of the

Call	Worked	Confirmed
PA3FQA	335	335
GM4FDM	325	324
MW0CRI	318	313
GW4SKA	307	307
G3SVD	306	306
WA4JQS	303	303
G3LDI	293	260
G3YYD	276	256
G7SSE	224	213

Call	Worked	Confirmed
G4OBK	263	237
G0HDB	246	227
M0VAA	227	211
G4RRM	177	160
G6NHU	172	163
M0NKR	175	150
G4NBS	140	130
G3VGZ	132	123
G0URR	103	103

DXpeditions; only one new country for me on RTTY.

2024 ... the new year started as usual with the BARTG New Year contest, which is a great way to avoid celebrating too much the night before! 80m only lasted about 40 minutes, then a switch to 40 brought in a good run of contacts. Marco, DJ4MH, was running neck and neck with me through the contest. I reckon one of us will win it but it's very close and I think he will get the 1st place.

Next for me was the BARTG Sprint. Band conditions had not been very good here in the lead up week, so my expectations were not high. It started slowly with only 45 in the first hour then it picked up a bit. Only a few of the biggest US stations were worked, but by 13:20 there was some activity on 10m, bringing in some good US areas, but it only lasted until 13:50 before dropping off again. Back on 15 and 20 until 16:10 when 10m opened again with some huge signals from the US. By this time I had 5 continents but where were the Africans? No sign of the usual EA8 stations, no CN. Then at 17:19 on 15m a big signal from ZD7BG was easily worked. I found him again a bit later on 20m for a bit of insurance of Africa! Now it would be just looking for new ones and keeping the rate up. Switching to 40m got the rate back up and then it was the usual 40/80 slog until I packed up at midnight with 670 Qs in the log.

My lovely helpful wife woke me up at 05:00 (I can't hear the alarm clock through lousy hearing) and by 05:30 I was on 40m. After 2 hours I found 20 open to the Far East and started picking up the JA areas. A brief foray on to 10m at 09:50 got 9N7AA in the log, followed shortly after by G3LDI! You must have got your antennas sorted out Roger. By now the rate had slowed up but the last hour saw another 44 in the log. Overall a good contest and nice to get back to high power after doing the 100W class for a while. My final total was: 934 Qs, 58 DXCC, 23 areas, 6 continents for a score of 453,924 points in the SOAB class.

The next one for me is the WPX RTTY in February, when I hope that 10m will behave well. I need Alaska for WAS on 10m, have a helpful station looking for me, and just pray for low noise and no aurora!

Mexican HF from Tom (or should that be Pedro), GM4FDM

Not one of the most well known nor busy contests in the calendar but I made a few QSOs last year and thought I'd give it a go this year. My main opponent was Murphy. The Contest runs from noon on Saturday until midnight on Sunday and conditions were pretty awful - especially on the Saturday. Contesting from my home QTH is pretty limited as I have no antennas for 160 or 80m and my 40m is only a Hustler 6BTV with no radials at the moment. I was hoping for good runs into the USA on 10m and 15m, but it was not to be. Saturday was very poor with not much DX on the go. North South path was non existent and the east west was not that great. As the afternoon wore on I was expecting the US to improve but not so. By about 7pm 10 to 20m was all but closed and the only stations I could hear had already been worked. My wife had other ideas about Saturday evening so I quit for the night and got up earlier than usual on the Sunday morning.

There didn't seem much activity on 10 or 15m around 7am so I started on 20m. I never heard any ZLs, but was called by VJ5W. Thereafter I worked a handful of JAs and YBs but signals were not great and the band was noisy. As the morning wore on I turned to 15m and then to 10m. I managed VJ5W on 15m also along with a few more JAs. I really spent Sunday morning jumping between 10, 15 and 20m trying to maintain a rate, but taking into account the lack of interest in

the contest and the resultant low level of activity it was hard going.

After lunch a switch to 10m brought a crop of Ws at last. Nobody was handing out big numbers and I guess that shows the lack of activity. Changing bands and being spotted brought a small flurry of activity, although better, conditions were not that great - though I did make it across to California, British Columbia and even a couple of Mexicans. I was pleasantly surprised to be called by Mike VP8NO on 10m which was unexpected and on turning the beam south managed a few PYs and LUs and an EA8 for about the only African station worked over the weekend despite a few being spotted that I couldn't hear.

To finish off I went to 40m and using S & P made a few QSOs, but found it hard going and I was always last to be worked. I put out a CQ call and raised a small pileup which allowed me a few more European multipliers, but no DX. Due to a family dinner I was forced to pull the plug about 7.30pm. My shack is in an outhouse and it was raining heavily so I had no appetite to gear up again after 10pm. In total I made 500 QSOs, 2 Mexicans (remember this is their contest!), 114 other mults for a total of 171,448 points. Band breakdown as follows: 40m: 36Qs; 20m: 226Qs; 15m: 138Qs; 10m: 95Qs.

Equipment was The SunSDR 2 DX, ACOM 1000 amp into a Cushcraft A4S about 60 feet and a ground mounted Hustler 6BTV. Software was SDC v17.2314 by Yuri UT4LW which is a really nice suite of programmes including a Contest Module with Digi decoder, skimmer, cluster support / telnet server. You have to use the internal decoder and I have no idea how it stacks up against 2Tone for example but there were several instances between the decoder and the skimmer where I decoded stations I could not hear with my ear.

I had a wee bash in the CQWPX RTTY Contest but gave up as it was too cold. This is the first time I have done 1,000 Qs in a long time but I guess the experts will be well ahead of me. Running my usual SunSDR2 DX with the old ACOM Amp into my Cushcraft A4S and Hustler 6BTV for 40m - for some reason it wouldn't tune on 80m. Don't know how the others found it, but I found conditions to be not so good, but yet the odd thing turned up just to prove me wrong. On Saturday I didn't start as early as I had a bowling match on the Friday night, which left me quite tired.

I had a look at 20m around 07:00 and saw only Europeans, so chose to start on 15m - it too was full of Europeans. I couldn't really get a run going despite my 400w and my beam at 60ft. After about a dozen stations, the run stopped and I was CQing perhaps 10 times to get a reply. I looked at 10m and also 20m but I didn't feel they were in any any better shape. I persevered for a couple of hours running and searching and pouncing. In the midst of my despair I was called by 3W9A on 15m, 9N7AA and an E21 so propagation was there - they were all a good signal, but perhaps DX activity was low, although there seemed to be the usual crop of Europeans. 10m found HS60RAST and 4F3BZ and BV2LA and a smattering of JAs some with a good signal but they were few. Searching found ZD7BG but there wasn't the usual pileup for him and he was in the log after three calls. Back to 15m and worked a solitary Chinese plus a few UA0s. 11:30 brought my first call from the west KP4JFR and then I was pleasantly called by TF3DC.

In the main it was Europe with a smattering of North America but nothing to write home about. I picked up YB9GV on the back of the beam and jumping backwards and forwards to 10m brought a few more YBs - good for the prefixes but no great DX. I spent the afternoon switching back and forth from 10 to 15 m and really failed to generate any great pileups. Not too many

South Americans were worked either but I found ZP6/N3BNA. Went to 20m about 16:30 hoping for something but it wasn't much better. At 18:00 I took a look on 40m remembering that almost everything is a mult and picked up an LX and 4U13FEB whoever and wherever he was. With not a lot happening it was back to 20m for a few Stateside.

At 18:30 the lights went out, the rig was dark, as were all my screens. A quick check of the house consumer unit showed a breaker had tripped. We had no power to the kitchen. First task was to safeguard the freezer, then a trip across the road to a friendly electrician. By trial and elimination we found the problem to be an outside floodlight which had got damaged in the great storm when we were away on holiday, and it had been slowly filling with water. You can imagine the effort to try to trace the wiring in house more than 100 years old. It was about an hour and a half before we got the power back on after the offending light was disconnected. That dampened my spirits somewhat and apart from checking everything was OK in the shack, I really didn't do much after beer and curry to make me feel better.

Sunday would be a new day. I didn't get on until around 07:00 and made a few North America Qs before the band went out. But my ground mounted Hustler is very noisy and a bit deaf (a bit like me). I turned the beam North East towards Japan but not a lot heard on 20m so off to 10m to find the band open to Japan and worked a few JAs along with a solitary VR2 and a couple of Chinese. 20m and 15m were full of short skip as well as Europeans, and I logged GW0A and M7T amongst the locals. 15m CQing brought 3W9A and BV2LA again for a new band along with a few more YBs. Around lunchtime the bands begin to open to the west with ZF2SS, CG2X and UA0SU back to back contacts but again the band was open but I couldn't generate great pileups. During the afternoon 20m brought back to back QSOs with 9V1YC, HS3NBR and 2E0CVN so conditions were a bit weird.

Then 3W9A and BV2LA again, before moving yet again to 10m and this time within a few calls I had a raging pileup to the USA. It was mainly east coast with a few to the mid and far west and I think I caught almost all of the VE call areas. By 19.30 the bands seemed to get very noisy with fast QSB. Whilst turning the beam I was called by a JA on long path on 20m. I called CQ and was called by another then a YB, then nothing. I persevered for 5 minutes or so, but there was no more. The dinner bell went around 20:30, and I figured I was cold enough by then and after dinner couldn't quite raise the enthusiasm of youth and decided to call it a night. I never heard a ZL although worked VJ3A on 3 bands.

1,072 QSOs with 490 multipliers for 1,302,420 points. Not a great score, but it keeps my hand in. The photo is me in my Contest gear in my winter outhouse shack. Yes, it was bloody cold, especially Saturday. Yes I have heating, but it's really not that efficient in a single-skin brick built building. Maybe it will heat up by my next effort!

Andrew, G8GNI updated his scores and also gave a short report on his activity in the CQWW: I had a dabble in the CQ WPX RTTY Contest on the Saturday, fitting it around moving furniture around the house and the Six Nations games. I was out all day Sunday so activity was limited to just a few hours today. I use an IC-7610 with verticals here. I didn't think conditions were particularly good with a lot of fluttery QSB, with 40m being the worst. I suspect a few broken calls and reports! In total I made 194 QSOs with a claimed score of 84,630. In terms of DX nothing spectacular but some interesting DX: 9N7AA, HZ1TT, E21AZ (10m), D4L, ZF2SS, HZ1TT (15m), VL3M (20m) and PZ5RA and lots of stateside late evening (40m). My RTTY DXCC count hasn't

moved for a long time: 163 worked, 162 confirmed.

Phil, GU0SUP spent some time in the WPX but stopped to don his whites and produce Sunday Roast, very nice....

Had a play in the WPX RTTY contest at the weekend, and had some fun. Not a serious effort, but I did more than expected. I started at 07:30 on Saturday morning, and 40m was amazing. I found KC7V in AZ, K6DTT in CA, and NC0DX in CO. Also bagged ZM4T on Sunday morning on 40m, plus NP4DX. Not bad for a half size G5RV. Only one of note on 20m was VL3M, but otherwise, 20m was not great. On 15m, I worked V55Y, HS, YB, and also N7WY in Wyoming. 10m was great too, with most of South America logged - LU, PY, OA, CX, ZP, TI, XE, ZF, plus 9N7AA, ZD7BG, D4L and NA gave me IA, CO, AZ and ND, plus many others.



GM4FDM in contest gear

I had to stop around 1600UTC on Sunday to go and cook the roast dinner, or I may have managed to get to 600 Q's and tipped over the 750k points mark. I ended with 572Qs, 434 Prefixes for 749,952 claimed points.

There was some pretty poor operating from a lot of ops in WPX! When I was calling CQ, I often saw GU0SUP GU0SUP DE HJKJGJHFHGD, and some asked me to repeat the number, which I did, and I then got TU 599 but no printable number. I also wish folk calling CQ would answer a call with GU0SUP 599 001 001 GU0SUP, rather than GU0SUP 599 001 001 as I often missed out my callsign, so wasn't sure who it was aimed at. Same goes with calling CQ - they really ought to send CQ (or TEST or WPX) "call" "call" CQ, as I kept seeing a call, but couldn't tell whether they were calling CQ or another station that I couldn't hear. Oh, and some of the SO2R ops were really slow to respond.... but that's always a gripe.

Serge, VA3SB spent some time in the WPX too: Although I did have some family commitments over the weekend, I did manage to find some time to participate in the contest. I thoroughly enjoy RTTY operation / contesting. Next to CW contesting this is my favourite mode. There appeared to be lots of activity throughout the weekend on all bands with very decent signal levels. I finished with 614Qs, 349 prefixes for 622,965 points.

Jim, W7RY also operated CQWPX and sent the following: A great contest with LOTS of activity. SO2R with a pair of IC7610s @ 5 watts output. N1MM+ with 2Tone and MMTTY decoders (3 per radio) plus a HAL ST-8000 for the 80 meter (and 20 & 10m radio). LOTS of different decoders is the key for copying weak/wobbly stations especially on 80 meters! Antennas: Cushcraft A4S @ 40 feet; Trapped 80/40 dipole @ 32 feet. But, there were lots of stations that were really strong, (S9+) and unable to copy me with many others, calling them. Possibly lots of folks are trying to improperly use the RTTY decoders built into modern day radios (not set up correctly), and these decoders are not nearly as good as a computer type of RTTY decoder. Or possibly not optimizing software decoders for conditions. Yet stations that were not even moving the S meter, were copying just fine. It was pretty frustrating for lots of operators; calling and calling and not getting a response. With the stations calling CQ just CQing away with lots of answers, but the callers were just not being heard/decoded. 644 Qs, 552 prefixes for 862,224 points.

David, G3YYD uses SO2R to get a great score. He says: I have run SO2R for over 15 years. I am still getting better at it. I am using N1MM. Here is a graphic of how I did with each radio QSO numbers listed by band. I use 1 keyboard using two is a waste of desk space and effort. If you set you macros well and make extensive use of running on 2 bands the dual CQing automatically ensures the keyboard focus point is correct. Further you will need to use ctrl-B a lot. Also control left arrow and control right arrow move between the two entry windows.

Band	1	2	Tot
3.5	110	149	259
7	297	103	400
14	277	224	501
21	114	451	565
28	321		321
Total	1119	927	2046

By the way I did the above in just under 26 hours. N1MM says score of 5,134,152 with 852 mults. Of course after adjudications those figures will be lower. Note how I played the points 40 and 80m are higher scoring bands per QSO. By the way those on East coast US should look at 40m as I worked the odd one calling me on Saturday morning. The last one I worked was NT0K at 1004utc and he is in NC. I know from past experience that the path is open later than that. Again from experience I started at 0824utc running on 20/40 to max point rate and moved from 40m at 1017 to 15m as point rate had slowed on 40m. For comparison my sunrise is at 7:25utc. I am almost 53 degrees north of the equator.

Dai, MW0CRI sent a very nice report of the CQWPX: I took part in the recent WPX RTTY test. Due to a family visit I knew it was impossible to do the full 48 hrs so I decided to enter the “classic” section knowing that I would get a few hours here and there. And I also wanted to get to grips with the FTdx101D in an RTTY contest. I managed to get in 18 hrs on and off. Amazing filtering within the radio and I found the decoder was slightly better than MMTTY. I managed to get a few QSOs on 80m adding a few multipliers for the final score. I spent 90% CQing and had some great runs. I finished with a decent score 1,678,320, but I’m sure there’s probably a few points off for mistakes but I am happy with that. Set up was FTdx101D running 100watts, 3-el ultra beam 10m to 40m, G7FEK wire for 80m, N1MM and MMTTY.

Tim, G4FJK/G8X kindly sent a report after seeing my plea! The CQWW and WPX contests are my favourites on the radio calendar, concentrating on single-band entries and using the “on-loan” G8X call. This year, I moved from 40m to 10m for this contest, the first time on this band with good conditions and more than 100W.

Saturday produced 554 QSOs, and Sunday 430. It should have been more, and I must learn to go SO2R properly, as there were always a good number of unworked calls on the bandmap. Working Zone 25 JA and HL was good fun, especially on Sunday morning, but the highlight was (of course?) having nice runs of W/VE on both afternoons. Zone 3 was better on the Sunday, and the total across Zones 3/4/5 was 496 QSOs. My final score was ‘alright’ but could be improved with better operator skills.

Paul, G7SLP sent a very full report: I was chatting to Chris, G4FZN on Wednesday night at the local radio club meeting. We discussed the recent CQ WPX RTTY contest. It was my first serious contest entry since returning to UK in June 2023 after a couple of decades living in Dubai. I like RTTY contesting. Last year as A65DR I won Asia SOSB-15-H, and set the second highest all time score for Asia in that category. So this year I was keen to show my presence in UK. The thing that might make this entry an interesting story, is that I am currently in a temporary rental house, with a small garden and a clause in the lease that says I cannot attach any antennas to the house. I also kind of like SO2R/2BSIQ in RTTY contests. So I made an attack on the SOAB entry.

With my antenna restrictions I just used two HF verticals shown in the picture.

The flagpole in the background is 7.5m tall 40m vertical with a centre loading coil. The foreground is a 12m (spiderbeam pole based) 80m vertical, again with centre loading. Both have about 20 radials laying on the ground, stopping at the garden boundary, so variable length radials with many being shorter than ideal. Both antennas use a shunt coil at the feedpoint to achieve a good feedline match.

I entered the contest knowing I would be a bit hobbled, but not out of the game - in WPX we get double points on low bands (40 and 80) so this will make up for the lower QSO rates on those bands. What it won't make up for is the larger number of prefixes that can be logged if we also add 20m. So going in I intended to put in a good effort, but not expect anything special (not least because I know UK has a lot of good testers).

At the end of the day, with raw scores, I came in at second with 3.055 million. M7T was the winner by a country mile, and is to be congratulated for a great effort. I'll have to chase harder next time. Also to be congratulated is Robb, G1N, who gave me a good chase, and came a cool third. I expect to need to fight hard to try to keep Robb behind me as he gets better with his S02R setup. Congratulations also to MM9I and MW7C for their respective super scores and winning their sections of the contest. Well done both.

What this did do, and I'm pleased it did this, is show that with a pretty much rubbish, temporary antenna setup in a normal domestic garden you can still mix it up with the big boys. The station picture shows my 4-screen setup, which had the main N1MM display on the lower screens, and a pair of of band scopes on the upper displays, with FLDIGI providing a separate decode from a separate SDR for each radio. Oh, and high power band pass filters from VA6AM.



G7SLP's antennas at dawn



G7SLP's 4-screen set up

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EQ20B-DSP (with added Bluetooth on input)

EQ20B-DSP QST Dec 2019 review "easy-to-use device that improves the audio clarity of amateur signals"

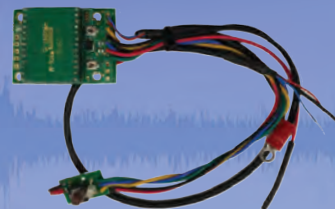
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5W amplified DSP noise canceling In-Line module - 8 filter levels 8 to 40dB - Use in-line with a loudspeaker - Audio bypass feature - 3.5mm mono inputs and outputs - Headphone socket - Audio input overload

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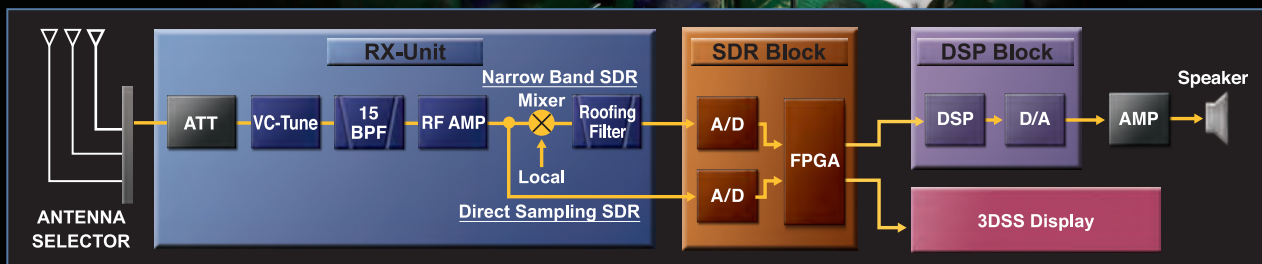


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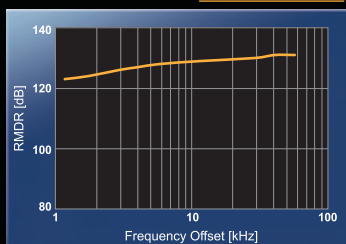
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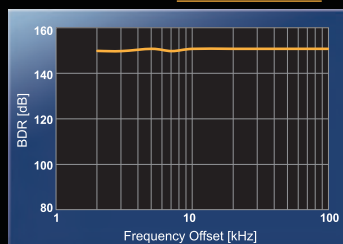


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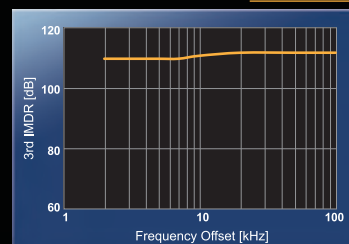
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