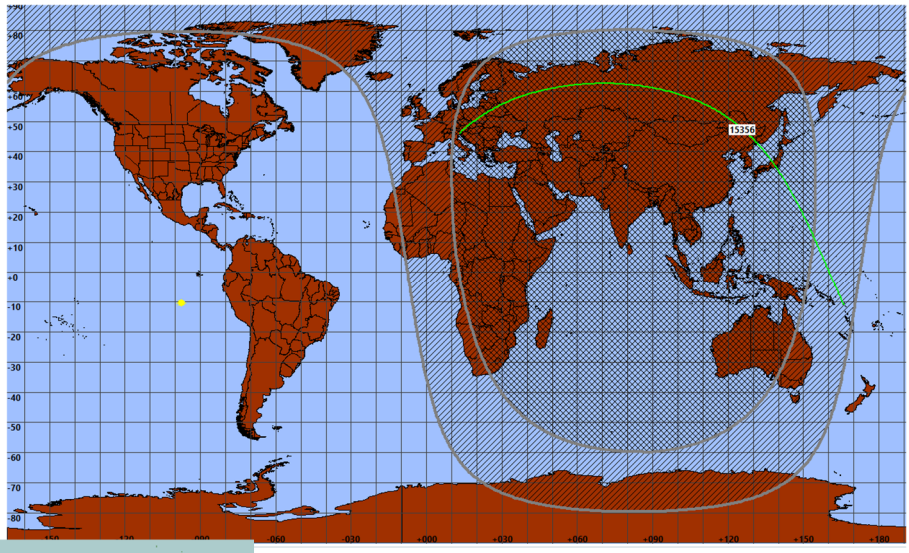
October 2011: H40KJ - Temotu Province by Jacek SP5DRH.

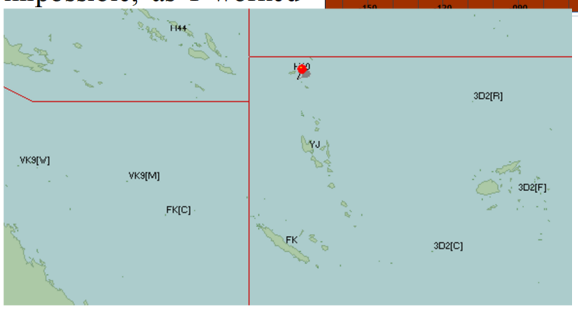
by Pierluigi "Luis" Mansutti, IV3PRK

This has been the third Pacific DXpedition by Jacek SP5DRH, a true Gentleman and great Topband operator. As usual, he dedicated all his nights - alone on a small island– to provide to the 160m. community a rare new one.



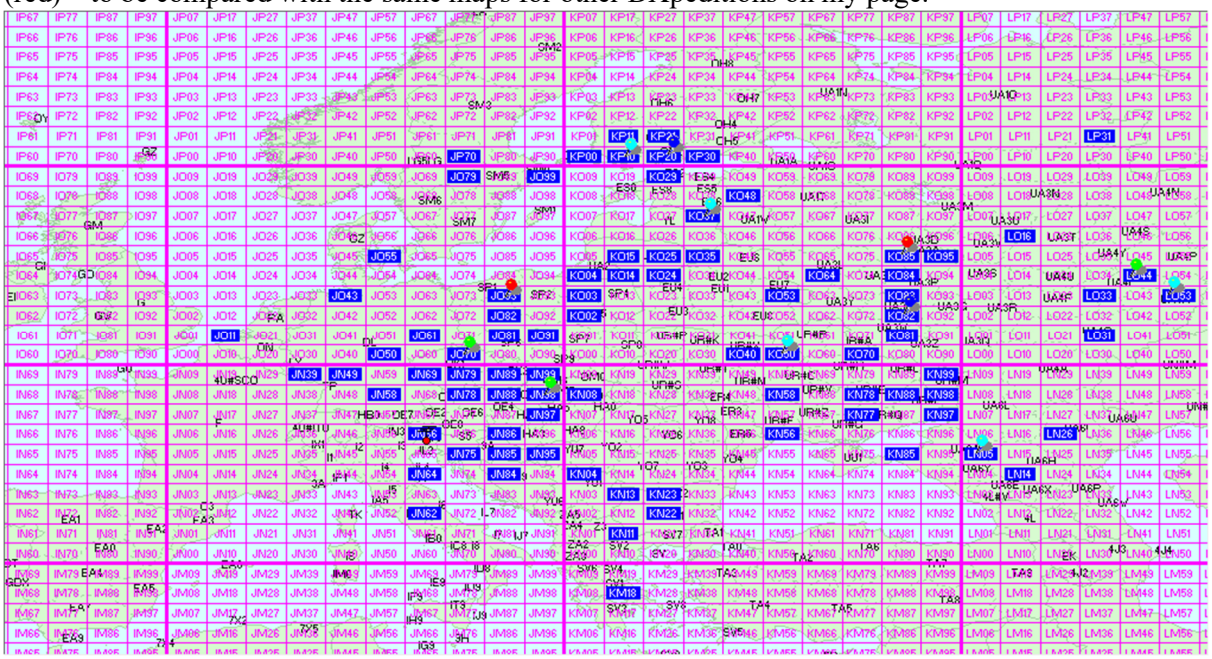
He operated from 8 to 21 October 2011 on Pigeon Island, in Temotu Province - loc. RH39DQ. The path from my QTH is 15.350 km at 42 degrees, certainly a tough one, considering its high latitude and the lossy ground reflections.

Nevertheless, it should had been not impossible, as I worked almost all the countries in that area, specifically three DXpeditions in October of two years before. But propagation conditions on the low bands were quickly worsening due to the increasing solar activity and this was a real challenge, so most of us, me included, didn't manage to work him.

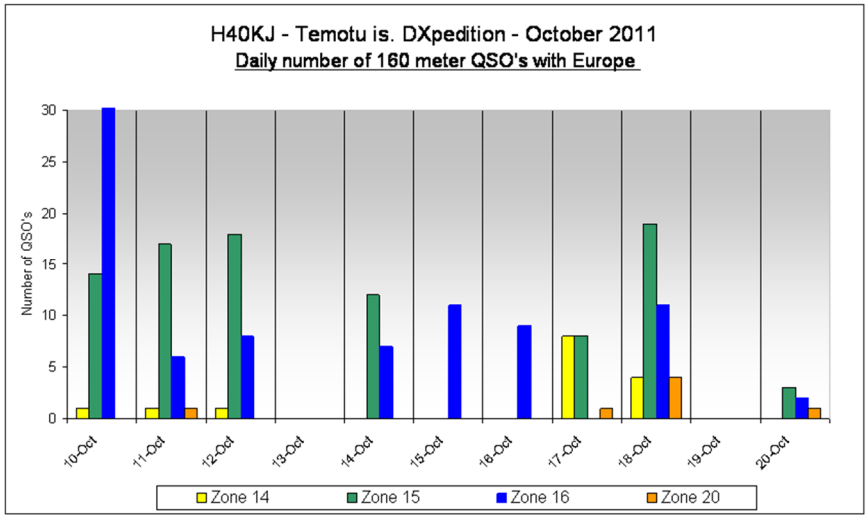


Anyway, Jacek sent me the logs for my usual analysis, trying to explain what happened.

This is the DX Atlas map showing the EU grid squares filled with a QSO and my usual-coloured stick pins indicating more activity - 3 or more (azure), 5 or more (green), 7 or more (blue), 9 or more (red) – to be compared with the same maps for other DXpeditions on my page.



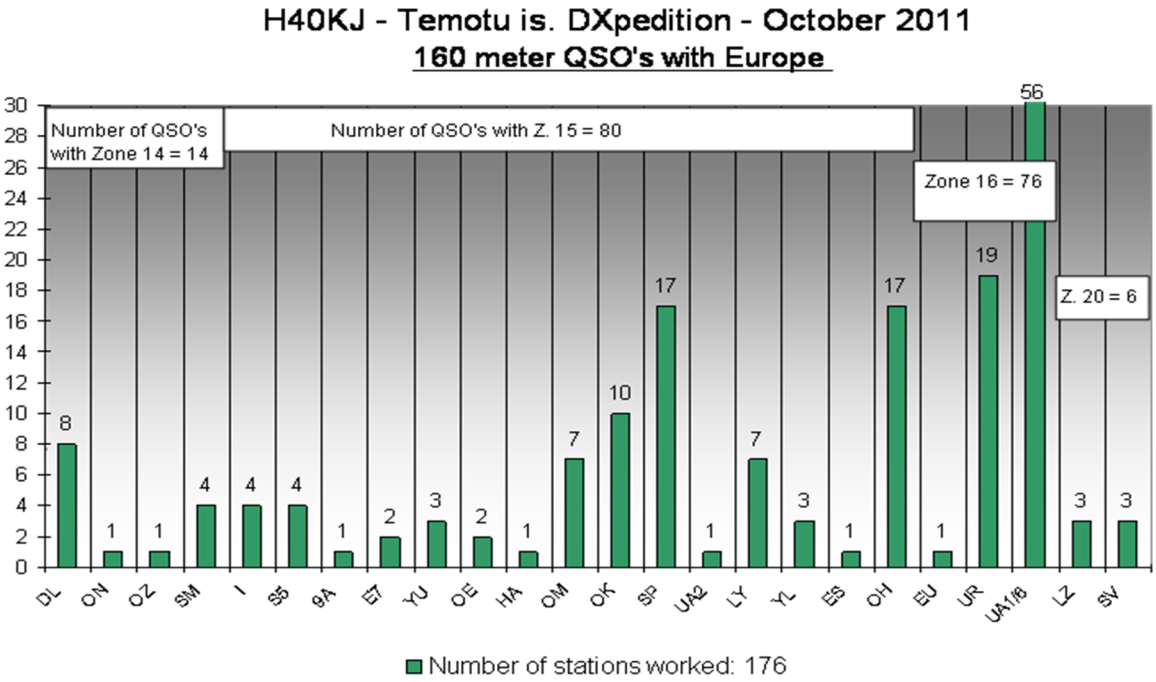
This graph shows, divided by their zones, all daily European QSO's, for a total number of 198, dupes included, three quarters of them with north and eastern Europe.



I was always there but heard Jacek only on Oct. 17 at 18.15z with 449 for two minutes - just a call - and then, on Oct. 20 at 18.20z with 339… yet not enough for calling!

My neighbours, east and west of me, worked him the first day, Oct. 10, between 16.30 and 16.55, while not a whisper here. But all using well known established low-band club stations with long Beverages in quieter or rural locations: S50U and S54E (in my grid square JN66) up on the Slovenian mountains - I4EWH and IK4WMA (JN64) in a country farmhouse in the lowlands, making it tough for me to compete, despite all my attempts with new DHDL receiving antennas!

The next graph shows the number of stations worked in each European country.



And this is the long comment posted by Jacek on the Topband Reflector a few days ago:

Hello Top Banders,

Traditionally (it's third time already) after completed this time Temotu DXpedition, would like to share with TB community my notices and experience gained on that trip.

First of all, let me remind you some background. In Oct 2010, together with my friend Jerzy SP3BQ was trying to reach Temotu with strong willing to activate this entity on 160m band. Unexpected, huge plane delay on our first stage of trip ruined whole project. We noticed remarkable loss, just one ticket was refund, rest of payments done to hotels and other airlines were lost.

But it only pressed me twice stronger to get this entity active on 160m. Having deposit paid for Ngarando Resort (Ngarando - local name for Pigeon Island) to take decision was easier.

After Tarawa DXpedition no one of my partners Jerzy SP3BQ or Jacek SP5EAQ could come with me. As a trip to Pigeon Island is pretty complicated, I decided better to go there alone, than with a person I don't know and can't lay on him. This of course made all project even more expensive than before and limiting my capability to carry more equipment. Needless to say, could not get everything with me, I might need on the island.
Putting my foot on this small Island I found that was not the empty space which can be seen on GOGLE map! there is a lot of different buildings, and space available for antennas is limited. I mean 160m antennas! … for other bands like 30/20m and up it is perfect. Part of the island is almost like jungle. Northern shore is not reachable for any kind of antennas. Width of Island accessible for work with antennas is never wider than 20 meters but is still occupied by different buildings.
Vertical with TOP HAT was out of the question, no chance to spread TOP HAT! too much palms trees around interfering with wires. The elevated radials had to be bended few times to have them hanging 3 meters over the ground. Radials took some of 1/2 length of island size.
Top Hat wires were connected together and extended to length of quarter wave, and used all like an inverted L quarter wave long. In the middle of the Island is Cemetery with graves of Ben Hepworth, island owner, parents. So, there was no space for 4SQ to put it on. I simply could not put the antenna on someone house door!
Concerning receiving capabilities, everything I can say is the worse situation I met. Thought Tarawa was bad, but here on Temotu I was dreaming about Tarawa situation. First of all, Ben is using on the island a solar battery system for energising whole resort. But system works on 28V DC and has a converter to 230V AC, wow! s7-8 on S meter on 160m!
Then, since I was on the island there was no one night without storm, raining and lighting. Every single night. Sometimes during a day too. With this triggers noise, K3 manages very well, but with triggers noise and statics and strikes all together no radio can manage, signals were ringing strongly making copy them more and more difficult.
I started experiments with Pennant, but the end point of the pennant was as close as 2 meters from the end of one of the 160m radials. It could not work properly. I noticed however small improvements, but only in the case of EU direction. So whole operation on 160m was like a very hard work.
So final results are not amazing, 575 QSO on TB within 12 days of activity, 235 with Asia, 200 with Europe, 128 with USA and 12 with Oceania.
Difficulty of receiving shows the case of Bill W4ZV; his signal was relatively strong with no QSB, but to make me sure about his call sign took me seven minutes!!! Only thing I was sure from beginning was W4, rest of the call, just two letters were unreadable, ZM, ZF, MF could copy this in many ways. So W4ZV is an easy call, but what you say about WB6RSE??
Fast transmitting was killing readability of signals, QSB was painful in answering to the station, happened many times, in next over station did not exist!
Shocking for me is also the fact how many Europeans can be find in my log against USA, this is first time that I logged more EU than USA! Who can explain why is that? maybe because East coast was not reachable for me in most nights? This part of the world for Europe is really tough!
I know that all these explanations will not satisfy those who spent long hours in the shack and finally did not work me.
But here, on the island, even table and chair were so uncomfortable, that after 20 minutes I started feel pain in my back! and during whole DX-pedition I never slept longer than three hours. Sleeping in a day was almost impossible, hundreds of birds screaming loudly all-time long!
Anyway, it was very nice experience, and I am happy I decided to go there.
Best Regards for all of you,
73
Jacek SP5DRH/3D2KJ/T30RH/H40KJ

November 2011 Luis IV3PRK