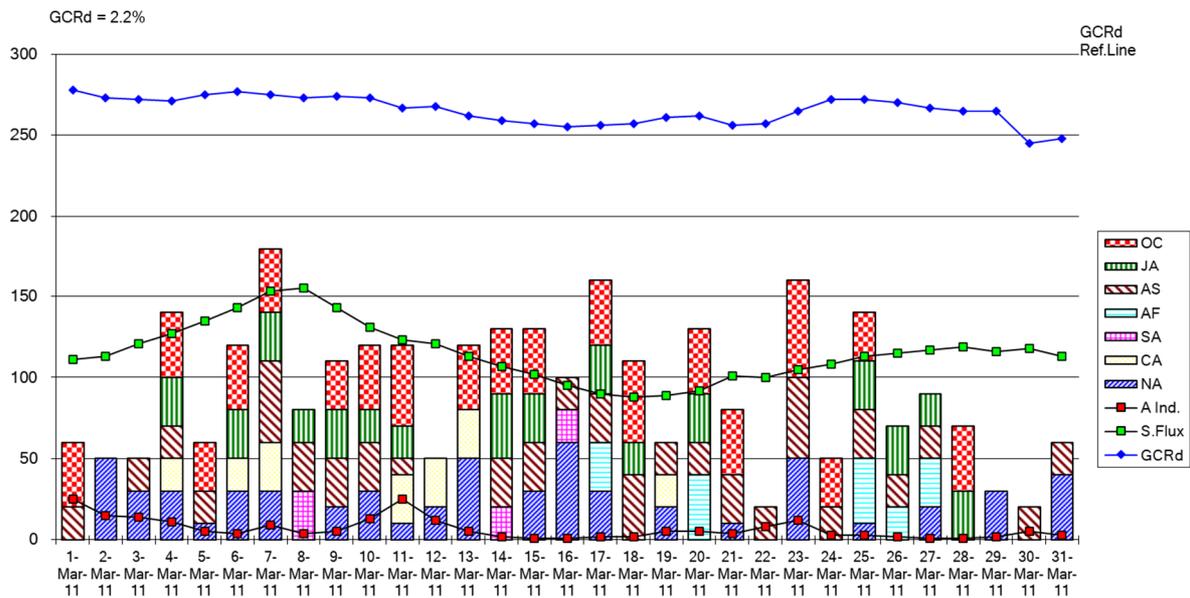


March 2011 : T30RH - Western Kiribati - by Jacek SP5DRH.

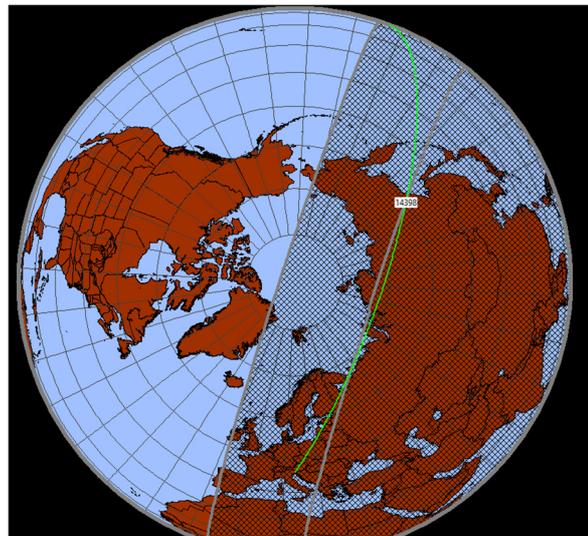
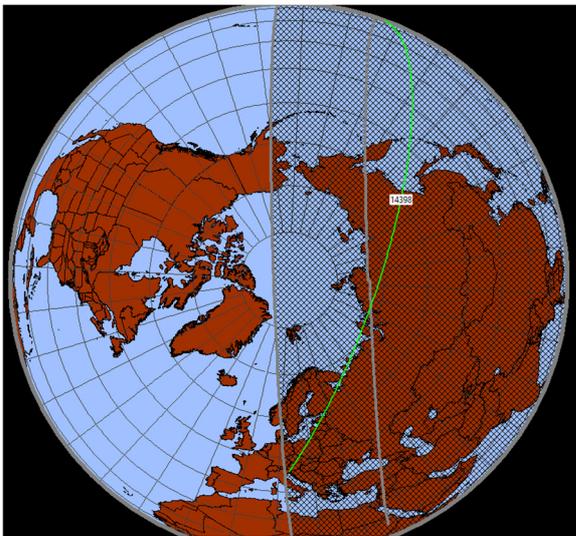
by Pierluigi "Luis" Mansutti, IV3PRK

In March 2011 the friends Jacek SP5DRH and Jacek SP5EAQ headed again to the Central Pacific for a DXpedition to West Kiribati with T30RH callsign and, as expected, this has been an outstanding Topband operation by SP5DRH, with priority to Europe. Unfortunately, propagation conditions have been not good enough for such an extremely tough path. We were already on the steep rise of Cycle 24, with solar flux reaching 150 and subsequent storms disturbing the geomagnetic field, specially in the auroral oval situated between Europe and Central Pacific.

Daily 160 m. DX conditions from IV3PRK - March 2011



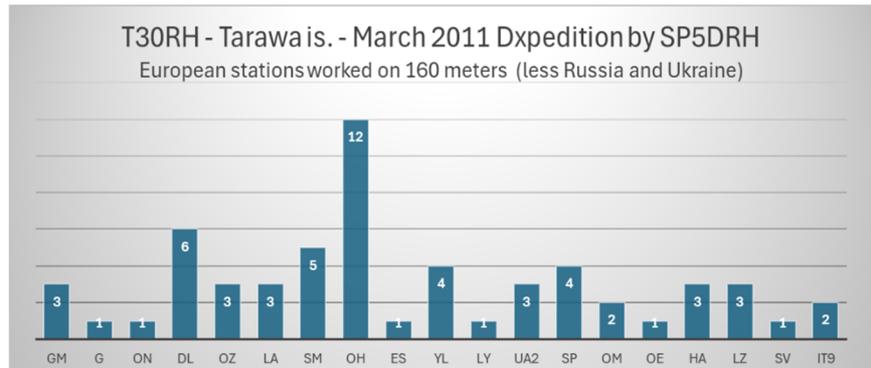
The operation took place, from March 1 to 17 on Tarawa atoll, grid loc. RJ61NJ, at 14.400 km. and the great circle bearing of 26 degrees. Thus, my only possibility of a contact was in the common darkness time between my sunset - 17.10z (left picture) - and T30 sunrise - 18.30z (right picture).



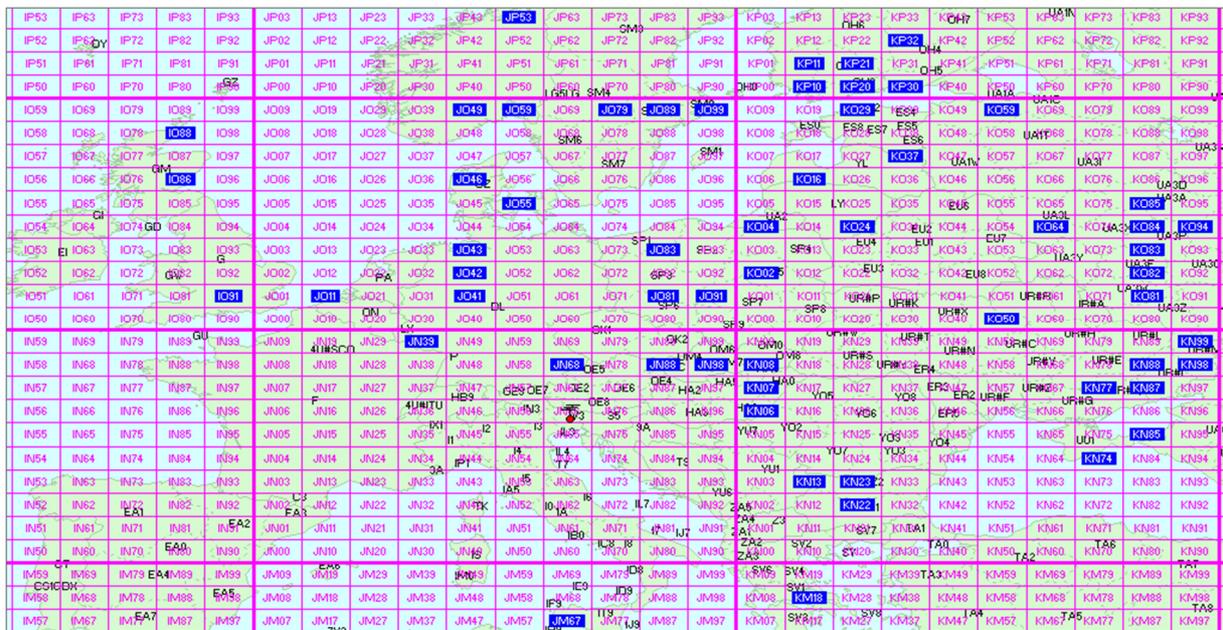
I have been listening every day for all the time (being retired since a few years), but I never heard a whisper from T30, nor a pile-up as usual, just some lonely calls – from time to time – and even some incredible RST message sent... not a beep here!

Nonetheless, real QSOs were made under exceptional conditions - spotlight propagation - that appeared to favour certain regions in Europe, although neither myself nor my neighbour benefited from these openings.

Jacek have been CQing on 160 meters every night - until his sunrise - and made 111 contacts with Europe. He kindly sent me the log, from which I extracted the detailed data and made this graph, without dupes and the prevailing Russian and Ukraine stations of zone 16.



Then, after ordering with their own grid square, I built the following DX Atlas map, which can be compared with the same ones for [3D2KJ](#) and [ZL8X](#) previous DXpeditions in that area.



These are all the QSO's detailed day by day - with the distance and the expected great circle bearing in degrees - trying to see how the spotlight propagation moved across Europe:

March 3 (Solar Flux 121 – Ap Index 14): 20 QSO's with LA (13.200 km, 19 degr), SM, OH (12.700 km, 32 degr), UA, UR (13.000 km, 53 degr); first one OH1LQ at 16:23 and last one OE3GCU (14.200 km, 28 degr.) at 18:30.

March 5 (SF 135 – Ap Index 5): 11 QSO's with UA3, UR, SP5EWY (13.600 km, 32 degr) at 17:57, OM3PC and OM5RW (14.000 km, 32 degr) at 18:35.

March 6 (SF 143 – Ap ind. 4): 13 QSO's with UA3, UR, OG1X at 16:32, SV3RF (14.800 km, 40 degr) at 17:59 and YL2SM (12.900 km, 36 degr) at 18:23.

March 8 (SF 155 – Ap ind. 4): 9 QSO's with LA, OH, OZ, YL, SP2FAX at 17:12, DL8QS (13,800 km, 24 degr), DL5RBW (14.300 km, 24 degr) and HA9RE (13.900 km, 33 degr) at 18:31.

March 9 (SF 143 – Ap ind. 5): 19 QSO's with UA3, UR, OH, SP, DL8WN (14.300 km, 18 degr) at 17:57 and OZ1LO, OZ7YY, OZ1LXJ (13.500 km, 19 degr) at 18:15.

March 10 (SF 131 – Ap ind. 13): 10 QSO's with UA3, UR (13.400 km, 51 degr), OH, LY (13.300 km, 35 degr), GM3POI, GM0GAV, GM3YTS (13.700 km, 3 degr) and G3PQA (14.200 km, 7 degr) at 18:33.

March 11 (SF 123 – Ap ind. 25): only 3 QSO's with RA1AOB (12.600 km, 40 degr) RV3LO (12.900 km, 44 degr) and ES1QD (12.800 km, 34 degr) at 18:28.

March 12 (SF 121 – Ap ind. 12): 4 QSO's with UR (13.400 km, 52 degr) and HA8JV (14.100 km, 34 degr) at 17:56 and dupe at 18:25.

March 13 (SF 113 – Ap ind. 5): 7 QSO's with UR (13.400 km, 44 degr) LZ (3 stations 14.300 km, 41 degr) at 17:47 - 18:07, IT9FGA and IT9FCP (15.300 km, 29 degr) at 17:50 - 17:52, on the southern coast of Sicily without any Rx antenna - just a ¼ wave sloper Tx ant. 13 m. high!

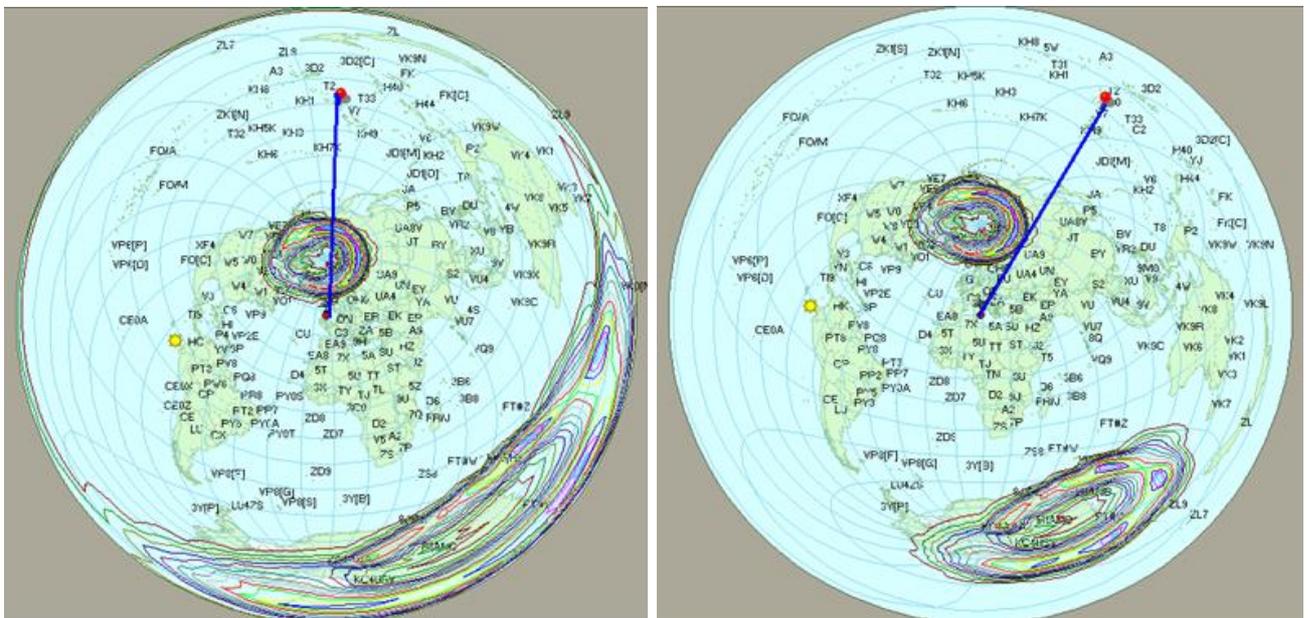
March 15 (SF 102 – Ap ind. 1): 15 QSO's with UA3 and OH; the first was YL2GD at 16:18, then DK2PH and DL8YHR (14.000 km, 18 degr) at 17:54-18:03, Steve HA0DU (14.000 km, 33 degr) at 18:09, and the last one to finalize, John ON4UN (14.000 km, 13 degr) at 18:16.

From now on, with lower numbers, there should have been better conditions...

These two DX Atlas images illustrate the challenge of contacts with central Pacific crossing polar cap.

Left: The great circle path from GM3YTS to T30 passes through the aurora oval - possibly skewed.

Right: The great circle path from IT9FGA to T30 runs easier along the edge of the aurora oval.



As already said, I have been listening on Jacek's frequency every day from my sunset until West Kiribati sunrise and never heard a whisper, but I was not concerned too much, as even my better equipped neighbours with long Beverages and 4-square arrays were unable to work him.

The path from S50U (in my same grid square JN66, but with long Beverages in a quiet mountain location) is 14.400 km at 26 degrees, from S51V (more eastern) is at 29 degr., from I4EAT 14.600 km, at 25 degr. and from E74AW 14.500 km at 30 degrees: they appear to be not tougher than several of the above-mentioned ones. Operators are experienced Topbanders with above average stations and locations, but this time we all have seemed to be covered by a big black cloud and no spotlight managed to pierce it. This is the mystery and the challenge of 160 meters !

A few days after coming home, Jacek posted the following comments on Topband Reflector:

«As in 2009 on Fiji, we put a lot of attention to 160m band. First results: total number of QSOs made was close to 13k, while on 160m 960 QSOs. Among those 960 QSOs we noticed more than 60 QSO with Europe (excluding Ukraine and European part of Russia). Due to very bad propagation on low bands (especially on 160m) the number of QSOs on 160m was much lower than we expected.

Propagation wasn't our supporter as it was in case of Fiji project. Aurora on level 10, solar wind over 600, made kind of horror on 160m. Furthermore, "Passat wind" (*it is a specific wind blowing east to west in the tropics*) blowing 24/7 was making it very difficult for any antenna to work. Same wind destroyed several times

our TB antenna. Sometimes it was blowing with 7 in Beaufort scale (SP5EAQ is also yacht captain, so he knows when he says «it's seven»).

But these were not the only troubles; two of places booked on Tarawa did not suit our needs, so since we had come to Tarawa, we started to look for better place. Finally, we landed in the same place where N1MEC and OK guys as T30R were transmitting from, on small island called Abatao.

So with USA was 450 QSO (including KV4FZ, KH6, KH2, KP4), with JA-250 QSO, Asiatic Russia 35-QSO, European Russia 67 QSO, Ukraine 22-QSO, OH-14 QSO, DL 5-QSO, OZ-5 QSO, SM-5 QSO, YL-4 QSO, SP-4 QSO, HA-4 QSO, LA-3 QSO, LZ-3QSO, GM-3 QSO, OM-2 QSO, IT9-2 QSO, 4X4-2 QSO and one QSO with OE, ON, G3, A4. No QSO with PA, E7, S5 where, we know, are a few powerful stations. The most fascinating was morning when logged within few minutes GM3YTS, GM3POI, GM0GAV and G3PQA.

As equipment I was using 18m. tall top loaded vertical with CWS adapter with two resonated radials along to the lagoon shore, K3 with HK 1,1KFX and micro-HAM USBIII interface. All QSOs were received using transmitting antenna, there was no space for any RX antenna. Level of noise was fantastic low as S=0, S=1 but atmospheric crashes noise was from S=7 to S=9 plus 10dB!

Without 100HZ filter I was not able to read any station, well maybe only the strongest ones. The noise level did not allow to speed up rate and pushed me to keep my speed on level 16-18 WPM. As I said on web page, I don't like "tail ending", not many operators know how properly use this tool. In most cases they make QRM only. Other problem was with all these "fast guys", sending to me calls with speed of 30 WPM. What's more each of those "speedy Gonzales" was dropping his call one time only. They made me sick; they were causing additional QRM only. I do understand, when station is calling with, say, 16 WPM, is trying to say «same speed to me, please». I don't fill like a CW best operator but can read faster than 16 WPM but in this situation, when collecting calls was taking minutes, higher speed just destroyed your attention and your rhythm. All QSO's are already load on LoTW.

I am not fully satisfied with results of this DX-pedition but still have hope that made few Guys happy with new ones. So, if you don't mind hear you from another strange place.

73

Jacek SP5DRH/T30RH »

Yes, let us remain optimistic for greater success in the next DXpedition. However, it appears that the current progression of the solar cycle may not benefit our preferred band for several more years.

June 2011

Luis IV3PRK