



Just a few days before we departed our homes for the VP6R Pitcairn DXpedition, our team leader, Ralph, K0IR, had a medical emergency and was unable to go. Ralph asked me if I could step in and lead the DXpedition. I agreed. In just a couple days, I was nearly up to speed with the details and negotiations of the planning. Most people, including most DXpedition team members, can never fully comprehend ALL of the details involved in planning a major DXpedition. It isn't just plans, but contingency plans and contingency plans for contingency plans, etc.

Having led and co-led several DXpeditions and this time expecting to be "just" a team member, I was stunned by the details and plans that Ralph had mustered. Years of planning went into it. With just hours before departure, I felt comfortable that if there was ever a DXpedition on "auto-pilot," this was it. Several of us had assignments and responsibilities, and from the time we left our homes, everything went nearly flawlessly, thanks to Ralph!!!

Glenn Johnson, W0GJ
Expedition leader



The VP6R DXpedition was the "resurrection" of the failed 3Y0Z Bouvet DXpedition a couple years earlier. A majority of the team had been on that ill-fated trip. Our major equipment suppliers, DX Engineering, Flex Radio, and ACOM amplifiers still had faith in us and most graciously supported us again!

The logistics chain is quite complicated and detailed. DX Engineering supplied the majority of our non-radio equipment. It had been sent to Atlanta, Georgia, where we repacked it into a container to ship to Chile. The container was repacked on board the Betanzos and weathered the trip to Bouvet, to South Africa and back to Chile. Then things were repacked and shipped to Peoria, Illinois, for storage. Then repacked into a container for New Zealand, then stuffed onto the Braveheart, and then onto Pitcairn Island and transported to Andy Christian's home to await our arrival. The DX Engineering team had done such a good job of labeling and organizing things, that it made assembly of things all too easy after "shuffling the deck" so many, many times. The amazing 160M custom made vertical antenna sang like no other DXpedition 160M antenna in history! The falling-derrick masts for the yagi's that I helped design, were really easy to erect and withstood hurricane force winds.

Flex Radio provided upgraded radios from what had been shipped for Bouvet. Everyone loved their performance and using the Maestros with the Radiosport headsets. ACOM provided their bullet-proof amps again with a smile. The K5GK yagis were amazing and of course, the Spiderbeam poles supported a lot of vertical antennas. The LBS receiving antenna system was nothing less than spectacular on the low bands!

The only "ugly" part of the DXpedition was that from about the fourth day, it took 3-4 days for a cyclone to pass by. We had some damaged antennas, but fortunately, were easy to repair. We can attest to the fact that Pitcairn Island claims to have "the world's friendliest mud!" It is SO sticky and SO slippery.

Our fantastic team of twelve had been a team of fourteen only days before leaving home. Ralph had a medical emergency and stayed home. With only 4-5 days before leaving home, it was impossible to find a replacement at the last minute who could leave home and be gone for nearly 5-6 weeks! George, N4GRN, was looking so much forward to this trip and while boarding the Braveheart in Mangareva, he slipped and kissed the deck a lot harder than he had expected. He fractured several ribs and a shoulder blade. He did make the trip to Pitcairn, transferring on a stretcher. Unfortunately, his pain and pulmonary status were worsening and he was evacuated by a supply ship leaving only three days after our arrival. He made it home and is now all but recovered.

Even though we are at the very bottom of the sunspot cycle, we ended up with over 82,000 contacts and the first ever EME and 60 Meter contacts from Pitcairn. This was almost exactly the same number of contacts we made from the VK0IR Heard Island DXpedition in 1997 at the bottom of that sunspot cycle. At the time, that was a record number of contacts for a DXpedition.

We were surprised by the number of contacts we had on the higher HF frequencies! We were the first ever DXpedition to use exclusively FT8 for digital, nearly 30% of our contacts, an even a greater number than our SSB contacts! The world is changing! We had a great number of callsigns unique to only the FT8 mode, proving the value of weak signal modes, particularly at the bottom of the sunspot cycle.

It was a special privilege to work many hours at the old radio site where Tom Christian, VR6TC, and others worked from Pitcairn in years gone by. At 900 feet above sea level, the 360-degree view was nothing short of breathtaking.

We had a lot of fun working our pileups and it was obvious that those who worked us were having fun, too! We want to thank everyone who worked us for making this DXpedition not just successful from a numbers standpoint, but for the FUN and ENJOYMENT we all share in the greatest hobby in the world!

Our team members came from many different countries, occupations and backgrounds. Each contributed to the overall success, working as a team during setup, operating and during take-down. I am honored to know and have worked with each one. Some I have been with several times, some for the first time. Indeed, friends for life!

As can be seen by the pictures in this book, Pitcairn is an incredibly beautiful place. The people are even more beautiful, helpful and friendly. I had read many books about Pitcairn, the mutiny of HMS Bounty and stories about Fletcher Christian who led the mutineers and Polynesians to settle there. History came alive and most of the landscape rang true to my mental pictures after reading these books. Talking and working with the Pitcairn people was an honor I'll never forget. We thank them for their incredible hospitality and opening their homes and lives to us, to make the VP6R the most incredible DXpedition I have ever been on.

PITCAIRN ISLAND
73 and best DX,
Glenn Johnson, W0GJ
by

CAPT. F.W. BEECHEY R.N. F.R.S.

1825.

Latitude } of the Village 25° 3' 37" S.
Longitude } 130° 8' 23" W.
Magnetic Variation 1884 increasing about 1' annually.

1000 500 0 1000 2000 3000 4000 5000
Scale of feet



Price Sevenpence



180
sand & rock

N 29° W. mag. 7 1/2 miles.

