Tales from the South Pacific
Lord Howe Island Dxpedition VK9LA

A personal account of 10 days on a small island with 15 other Amateur Radio Enthusiasts.

With apologies to James A Michener

23 March to 3 April 2009

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Introduction

Late in 2008 I received an email from a friend pointing me to a website which was looking for operators to travel to Lord Howe Islandin 2009 for a dxpedition. Ever since I can remember I have wanted to go on a dxpedition; the travel, adventure, new experiences and new friends all coupled in with the fascination of the hobby of kings; Amateur Radio (late nights, antenna erections, pileups and rare DX)! This opportunity was perfect; it lined up with my personal circumstances; timing, availability and being reasonably close to home it did not require a long-haul flight. Also, and perhaps most importantly, the dxpedition organising group, the Oceania DX Group (ODXG) was enthusiastic to have “first timers” join some of the more experienced operators for this trip.

And so the dxpedition began to take form under the guidance of the ODXG and dxpedition leader, Bill VK4FW. A diverse team was assembled comprising 16 operators (along with four partners) from three continents and five countries. We also had great diversity in the skills and experience of the team members, with some being die-hard dxpeditioners, and some, like myself, being dxpedition first-timer. We had computer experts, antennae experts and folk with extensive operational experience on our three modes of operation; SSB, CW and RTTY. The call-sign VK9LA was already allocated to ODXG and preliminary agreements were in place for two suitable sites on the island.

It is more than fair to say that all 16 operators shared a common set of desires:

- Have fun;
- Work lots of DX – play lots of radio;
- Make new friends and
- Experience an exotic location

VK9LA promised to offer just that, and more.

This story is a brief account of this dxpedition from the eyes and ears of a first timer. The team was made up of the following operators: Tony IZ3ESV, San K5YY, Bob N2OO, Lance N2OZ, Stan SQ8X, Peter SQ9DIE, Victoria SV2KBS, Tex VK1TX, Luke VK3HJ, John VK4IO, Catherine VK4VCH, Chris VK5CP, Jay W5SL, John VK5PO, Bill VK4FW and Chris VK3QB.

Lord Howe Island

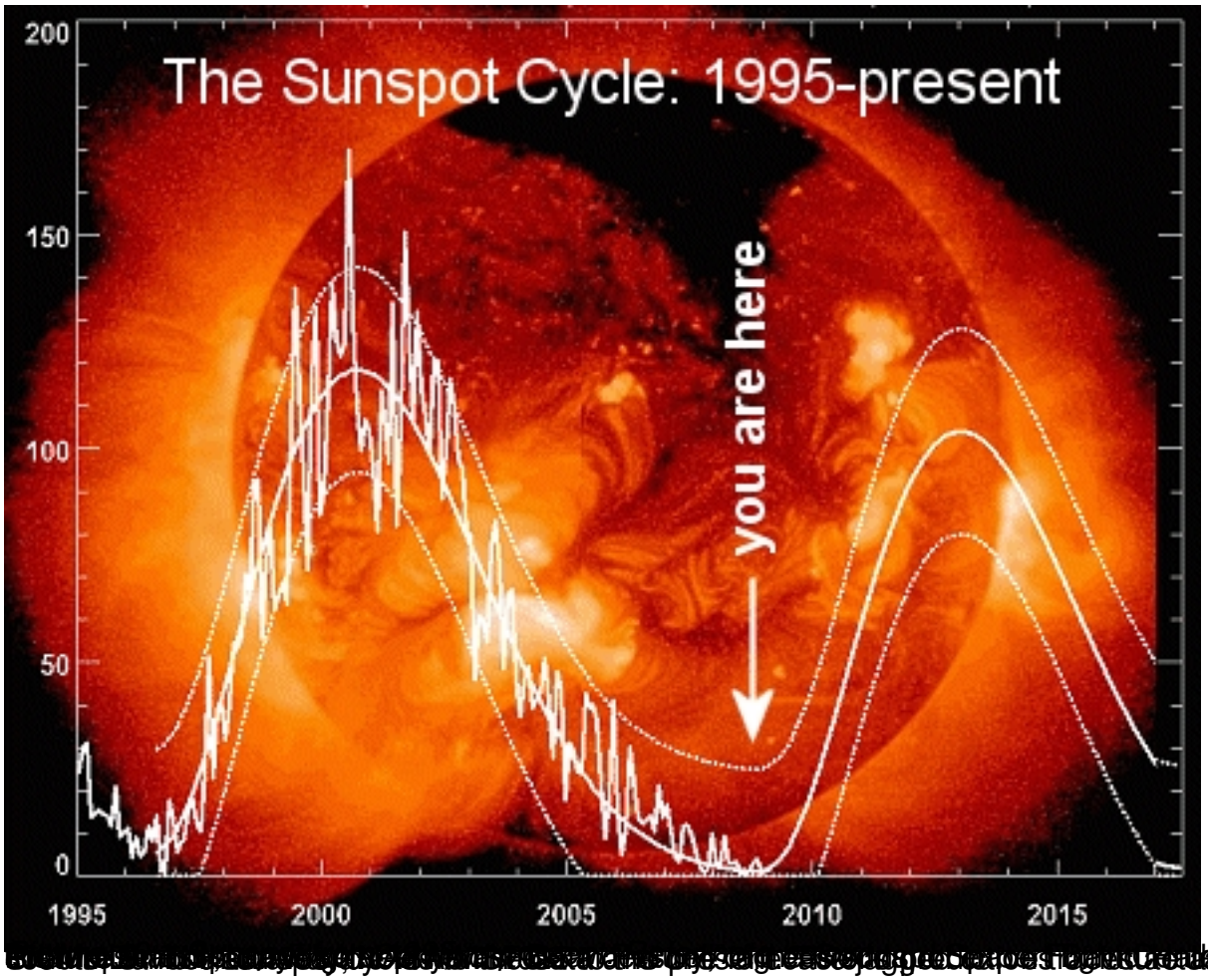
Lord Howe Island (LHI) is located in the South Pacific, approximately 700kms east of mainland Australia, and is widely regarded as the most beautiful island in the western south Pacific region. It is the closest island getaway from Sydneyand is less than two hours flying time from Sydney and Brisbane. It is one of just four island groups to be inscribed on the World Heritage List for the global significance of its natural beauty and heritage. There are approximately 350 permanent residents and no more than 400 tourists on the island at any one time. These limitations are largely set down by the World Heritage Listing guidelines.

Flights to the island have strict baggage limitations which are governed largely by the aircraft used to service the island, the de Havilland Canada Dash-8, seating about 32 passengers and allowing only 14kgs of checked baggage per passenger. The runway is likely the limiting factor here, as it is only 1,005 metres in length, located on the flattest section of the island which is probably only 1,100 metres wide! The airport was constructed by Australian Army Surveyors in 1975, prior to that the island was serviced by flying boats.

Those with some experience of dxpeditions will quickly realise that these weight limitations would have made any serious dxpedition with 16 operators a virtual impossibility. Hence the ODXG arranged for most of the equipment to be shipped to the island one month before the event.

[redacted]

[redacted] VK9FLHL – Des, the owner of the Blue Lagoon Lodge
[redacted] equipment sent via ship
[redacted] America
[redacted] bands
[redacted] with 42 radials
[redacted]


The Sunspot Cycle: 1995-present
you are here
200
150
100
50
0
1995
2000
2005
2010
2015