

Visit to Radio Vanuatu

by DSWCI- 0480 George Brown, Scotland

At the end of November 2001 I visited the headquarters of Radio Vanuatu while on holiday in Port Vila.

Vanuatu is a "Y" shaped chain of 83 islands running north and south in the Coral Sea 2,500 kilometres north-east of Sydney (Australia), 2,000 kilometres north of Auckland (New Zealand) and 800 kilometres west of Nadi (Fiji). Port Vila is located on the south-west corner of the island of Efate which is roughly at the join of the legs of the "Y".

The headquarters on the west side of Port Vila contained administration offices, radio and television studios and facilities for producing programmes. The station is on the air from 19.00 hours until 11.15 hours UTC Monday to Saturday and from 19.00 hours until 10.00 hours on Sunday. The Vanuatu is 11 hours ahead of UTC. Most of the programmes are in the national language of Bislama, which sounds like English since 85% of the vocabulary is English based. There is a daily relay of Radio Australia News and Pacific Beat at 20.00 hours UTC and BBC World Service news at 22.00 hours UTC except Sunday. A daily relay of news in French from RFI is broadcast at 21.00 hours UTC. In addition, there are broadcasts of programmes produced by Radio Australia, the BBC and VOA in English and RFI in French at various times.

The transmitter site is on Emten Lagoon about 5 kilometres south east of Port Vila. The site houses a transmitter building containing two short wave and one medium wave transmitter and their associated antennas. The programmes are broadcast on short wave from a 10kW two channel Energy Onix Broadcast Transmitter Model HF-10K-2 tuned to 4960 and 7260 kilohertz. The signal is fed via coaxial cable to dipole antennas directed north and south to the islands in the group.

7260 kilohertz is used from 19.00 until 06.00 hours UTC, switching to 4960 kilohertz at 06.00 hours UTC until the end of the transmission. If one of the channels develops a fault, as happened on 7260 kilohertz while I was there, the other frequency acts as the standby. There is a standby transmitter tuned to 3945 kilohertz, but this is currently out of service because of shortage of spare parts to make it operational, and the date for its return to service is unknown.

The station will answer correct reception reports with their QSL Card. The organisation had not returned to normal operation last November after the journalists strike in the earlier part of 2001 and some of the locally produced scheduled programmes were not on the air. Consequently, I recommend that you address your reception report to the Radio Technician, Willie Daniel. Willie is familiar with the verification of reports, although he was unable to locate the stock of cards while I was there. However, he is fully occupied keeping the studio and transmitting equipment operational as well as presenting the occasional programme, so don't expect a prompt reply. The station appreciates the inclusion of a self-addressed envelope and return postage costs. If you can obtain postage stamps, the cost of a 20 gram letter by air to Europe is 135 Vatus, the current exchange rate is approximately 200 Vatus to One Pound Sterling.