



## Chasing the DX!!

'Chasing a DXpedition requires a certain amount of commitment!' writes Wythall Radio Club member Tim Beaumont MØURX. 'A little studying of what the team's priorities are, a close eye on the propagation to decide your best band choices and a little bit of luck along the way!'

Here's his report of chasing 3B7A operating from the tiny island of Saint Brandon in the Indian Ocean.

'Saint Brandon in the Indian Ocean was last activated 11 years ago in 2007 when we had similar low sunspot conditions. It was clear that the priority for this year's team was to work the West coast of North America, so I knew that during that window they did not want to hear me or any other European calling.



So to contact 3B7A on high frequency (HF) I was going to have to work them either early in the afternoon or later afternoon around tea time. With no sun spots and a Solar Flux Index of just 67, it doesn't get much worse than that! Any QSO was going to be a bonus!

The team's first day on the island, Friday 6<sup>th</sup> April, mainly involved setting up. So by the time they were on the air they were mainly using the lower frequency (LF) bands, and I have no antennas at this time for LF. Saturday morning I had seen them spotted on [DXCluster](#) on 20m, 17m and 15m, but nothing was heard here. I was quite surprised as the Indian Ocean is not a hard direction to work from England.

By midday on 17m phone 3B7A just came out of the noise very quickly to a strong 59 signal, but the rest of Europe was closer and stronger to their location. I think I managed to find a

quite spot in the pile up, which is not easy to judge as I was not hearing the EU stations in the pile up.

After some calling and patient listening the operator came back to me.. "MOURX 59" YES! That is St Brandon in the log book. Now I went on to 15m as I knew that very soon the team would be concentrating on North America so I didn't have much time to work them on this band, but it was just a wall of EU stations and very few G stations heard worked. Sure enough 3B7A turned their attention to North America so it was time to get a coffee, do some housework and wash the car.

I came back after a couple of hours and they were still working North America on 15m phone. Then silence.... Just a brief "3B7A - stand by 5 [minutes]" .... I set my split up 8 KHz and poised my foot over the radio foot switch, ready for them to get back on air.

It seems an age and I wondered if they had just changed bands or mode? I decided to stay put... then "3B7A listening all stations 5 to 15 up". The adrenaline starts pumping.... "Mike Zero Uniform Radio X-ray" hoping that the DX was also listening on the frequency I was calling.... "MOURX you're 59" I reply quickly "59 TU [Thank you]"

Wow, it doesn't often happen like that, right place right time and luckily the pile up was sleeping at the re-start. By 6pm 3B7A's HF signal quickly dropped and was lost for the day.



On Sunday morning I listened on 20m but nothing, the same on 12m. To be honest I was not expecting 12m or 10m to come into play, but you just have to check band conditions, if you are lucky and catch a brief opening you have a chance. Anyway I went out for a while that day so my station closed down.

Sunday 15:00 hrs - I arrived home just in time for 3B7A on 20m to start working North America only, so with the radio on monitoring, it is time to watch TV with a F1 race in Bahrain.

I check back at 16:30 hrs and still NA only. Sadly I see a G station on the DXcluster commenting that the team are only interested in collecting USA dollars. Unfortunately some people seem oblivious to the short opening from 3B7A to the West Coast, and patience is needed.

A short while later and all went silent, the same pattern as yesterday. I sit back in the shack and warm up the amplifier, all set. *"3B7A listening up 5 to 15 for everyone now"* I call, but wait - I have no transmission (TX). What's going on? I look at the radio, try to see what is wrong, Mic gain okay, power okay, ALC okay... still no TX... Then I notice that I have pressed BK-IN for CW [Morse]. Ouffff!! - depress the button, now I have voice TX.. I listen to the pile up, find a space again 8 up from the DX... *"Mike Zero Uniform Radio X-ray"* I thought I heard *"URX 59"* I was caught by surprise then, so not sure if that was me, I call again, *"Mike Zero Uniform Radio X-ray TU 59"*. Wow - I get the reply *"MOURX 59"*.

3B7A Website: <http://www.saintbrandondx.com/en/>

3B7A Team Photos: <http://www.saintbrandondx.com/en/photos-dxpedition/#prettyPhoto>

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