

Thinking Day On The Air

By Paul Lewis G4APL

February 2003

TDOTA 2003 preface

First of all welcome to the Guide and Brownie Leaders that may be reading the CatRad and Caterham Guide's TDOTA 2003 report.

This years event was organised on the third weekend of February. Which has also been co-ordinated with the North American Guides and the rest of the world.

We had been notified of around 50 Guide groups in North America were active this weekend. This is very good news for our guides.

The UK Guiding Association now issue a GOTA (Guides On The Air) badge for participation in TDOTA. This event is a first step of gaining an insight to the some of the various aspects of communication via wireless, be it a mobile phone, analogue or digital television.

Since January 1st 2001. The RadioCommunications Agency (RA) has instigated a Foundation Licence. Which covers the basic knowledge, minimum requirements to get started in Amateur Radio. This course is about 12/15 hours of intensive instruction of theory and practical, with a test at the end. You may have encountered some of the topics while at junior school. Most students past. Some Amateur Radio groups run this course over two long days, or spread over several weeks. Later the student can progress further by taking further courses to gain the Intermediate Licence, then work towards the Full Licence. Gaining access to more facilities as they move up a stage.

There is lot of support from the Caterham Senior Guider's for the Radio Communication Days using Amateur Radio to communicate around the United Kingdom and the rest of the world. Sending and receiving Greeting Messages with other

Guide groups and Radio Amateurs.

Early January, Paul G4APL started reviewing the TDOTA 2003 paper work and making the required changes. Contacted the Radio Society Of Great Britain (RSGB) that the Caterham Radio Group (CatRad) would be active again and to included in the TDOTA UK official list of active stations.

Preparation

The updated paper work was passed to Janette 'Robin' to co-ordinate the Caterham Guides and Brownie companies during February.

The Thinking On The Air 2003 (TDOTA) for the Caterham Guides and Brownies was held on Saturday 15 February 2003 at the home and Ann and Paul Lewis, who hold the Radio Amateur Callsigns G7BSF, G4APL, Annabel Lewis 2E1PALM3PYL and Belynda age 9 M3BYL 9th Caterham



Brownies prepare QSL cards, decoding secret phonetic messages.



Brownie listening intently with Bryan G0SYR to the HF signal before sending her Greeting Message

Brownie. This was the 13th time the Caterham Guides and Brownies were at Ann and Paul's home for their TDOTA & JOTA.

The Amateur Radio Callsign used for the event was again GX0SCR, the Special Event Callsign of the Caterham Radio Group.

Thursday, Friday 13, 14 February, Paul took some annual holiday off work. The weather forecast was for a high pressure and frost over the UK and we would not be expecting very strong winds and snow.

Paul checked the aerials then raise the tower supporting all the aerials. Rearranged the house for the separate work area's required.

By late afternoon Friday, the house was set-up and the VHF, HF and LF transmitter and amplifier had been tested on air. John G8MNY arrived around 19:00 hours with the extra equipment so that all was ready for the 25 Guides, Brownies and Leaders expected the following day.

Last thing Paul sent an Email to the GOTA Canadian Guide co-ordinators to advise them that all Systems were GO and hopefully we would find some of them over the air waves.

The Event

Saturday 15 February 06:15 all the PC's the guides would use and equipment switched on and checked out. Paul found that some forms had not been printed, so set about finishing off some more paper work required for the event. Paul fired up the HF (High Frequency) Transmitter on 20 metres at 07:45 hours on the 20 Metre band and the first contact was made with a station on the Gold Coast Australia via the radio Long Path. Followed by station in Japan, and Melbourne Australia. Conditions were reasonable.

The CatRad TDOTA team Mike G3TWJ, John G8MNY and Bryan G0SYR arrived at 08:15 hours, Trevor G7BWE was expected around lunch time to assist Paul with taking photographs.

Janette (Robin) 9th Caterham Guide Leader arrived at 08:55 just before the first Guides, Brownies.

Paul handed the HF station control over to Mike and Bryan who continued on 20 metres where our station was in constant demand with stations all over the world. With our Brownies and Guides listening, sending and receiving greeting messages.

At 15:00 UTC we changed frequencies to 21Mhz and again were in demand until 19:30 by overseas stations queuing up to work and talk to our young lady visitors.

The VHF Station went on air with the Guides and Brownies at 09:40 Ann G7BSF who was getting over a heavy cold until 18:00.

The Packet Radio PC's (2) were connected into the Caterham Radio Group's TCP/IP server that would hopefully provide the Guides one of many contacts all over the world as well as working other Guides within the UK (Hopefully).

In the event only not many stations were active The Convers system was used throughout the day by our guides talking to each other on the two PC's, with the odd interruption when a station dropped on channel for a chat.

In the technical area one Guide who was on her second visit, was taught how erect the aerial outside and to build the crystal set instructed by Bryan

The Brownies and Guides had to participate in one of two discussion sessions covering propagation and radios, aerials, comparing different handheld transceivers and a home made transmitter and receiver by John.

They had to prepare greeting messages and were taught the correct procedure on how to send the greeting message over the Amateur Radio airwaves, and be able to respond to follow up questions.

Phonetic Alphabet testing was carried out by John. It was noted that the Brownies need much more preparation time before the event.

The Guide Leader (ROBIN) and Guide helpers (second or more visits) Zoe 9th (2), Laura 9th (3), Natalie 9th (4), Sophie 9th(6) assisted the Brownies and ensured that the paper work was being completed and that all the required tasks were carried to gain the Radio Communication Badge and Certificates.

Lunchtime, Ann and Paul fired up the Barbecue in the garden on a nice sunny freezing cold day.

The Guide helper Natalie and Belynda took the orders and Paul did his best to ensure the food was burnt to an edible enough state before being consumed by those present. (working lunch for the Amateur Radio Operators in between overs due to the demand)



Guide sending her greeting message over 2metres

During the day Robin and her Guides and Brownies spoke to or listened to all the stations we contacted.

As the HF conditions were good and we were being called. We decided that the HF station would stay on 20 metres. So that our Guides and Brownies could speak and listen to overseas contacts. The ensuring pile up of stations trying to call our station for a contact kept us busy for the rest of the day

Here is a list of countries contacted

Australia (Gold Coast, Melbourne, Tasmania, Adelaide)
Christchurch New Zealand, Japan, Philippines,
Chiangmia Thailand

Europe (Germany – Berlin, Frankfurt, England, Toledo
Spain, Helsinki Finland, Oslo Norway, Romania,
Northern Island, Italy, France, Scotland,

South and Central America (Haiti, Columbia, Havana
Cuba)



9th Caterham Guide Sophie decoding a Morse code message with Mike G3TWJ



Brownie concentrating on her QSL card.

North America (Rhode Island, Boston, New York,
Washington, Ohio, Texas, New Hampshire, West
Virginia, Indiana West Texas, Connecticut, North
Carolina, Pennsylvania.

Canada (Ontario, New Foundland, Montreal, Quebec)

Paul was watching the time waiting for Canadian Guide stations to come on air as they are a minimum of 5 to 11 hours behind us, difference between the East and West coast of North America e.g. 3pm UK time would be 10am East Coast time.

Conditions were good, we finally heard Helen's GOTA VE2GGQ Pointe Claire, Quebec Canada at 17:38 UTC in the pile up at the time the Canadians guides had all gone for lunch. Our guides and 3 Brownies Laura, Sophie, Suzanna, Anastasia and Abigail (the only one still here) spoke to Helen (VE2YAK).

At 18:06 we were called by GOTA station VA3GGC

London Ontario Canada. Where Robin, Sophie, Laura spoke to Guides Jessica, Katelyn, Kelsey (9yrs old), Beth, Sheila, Evie (leader) Suzanne (leader) Kathy (leader)
We continued working stations until 19:15. as by that time all our Guides had left.

55 stations were contacted on the HF (14,21Mhz)
31 Messages Sent, 10 received

On VHF 2 Metres 9 stations were worked including
Messages sent 66 received 5

All those that attended the TDOTA station worked towards their Radio Communication badge or Certificate. Completed all the required tasks by 18:00

The number of visitors that came to the event were 24, which meant that the Brownies and Guides had a good time.

1 Guide, Brownie, Rainbow Leader (ROBIN The_Boss)
1 Wise Owl 1st Chaldon Brownies
1 Guide Leader 1st Chaldon Brownies
1 Guide Leader 1st Caterham Brownies



Brownie during the phonetic alphabet test

1 Guide Leader 5th Caterham Brownies

6 from 9th Caterham Guides
1 from 1st Caterham Brownies
1 from 4th Caterham Brownies
3 from 5th Caterham Brownies
1 from 9th Caterham Brownies
5 from 1st Chaldon Brownies
1 from 1st Chaldon Guides
1 from 2nd Whyteleafe Brownies

Supported by 8 Radio Amateurs G0SYR, G3TWJ, G4APL, G7BSF, G7BWE, G8MNY, M3BYL, 2E1PAL/M3PYL (came in after work to assist, plus all those Radio Amateur's that came on during the day and gave our TDOTA station a call to make our event successful.

The evening ended with all the team helping Paul put the house back together, then sitting down to the usual meal.

After the event Paul spent a few evenings going through and analysing the logs to prepare this report and write out a QSL card for each of those Guides, Brownies and stations that we spoke to.

Some snippets from Paul's Internet Emails

"We caught you! Just as you were finishing up for the day though! Talked to Mike and a few girls and Guiders. Guider Jeannette would like to do some sort of "program" swap with Canadian Guider Suzanne."

"Hi Everyone,
Thanks for the great GOTA contacts! I forgot to mention on the air the mailing address for the QSL cards. PLEASE QSL via my own call VE3IGK. Kathy Munding VA3GGC Cleardale District Girl Guides London, Ontario, Canada"

"Oh.... next year please?
Hope you had a good day :o)
Joanne (VE1FQ)"

"HI, Paul! I did work your station. I think conditions were not good for the most part. I often heard stations working stations I couldn't hear. We listened on & off for over half an hour before 1700 while GX0SCR chatted with an OM in Texas. I tried often to break in, but no go. Finally I took my girls elsewhere to try & we talked to an OM in Cuba. Then they had to go for lunch. 73 Helen"

"Paul, Heard you often but couldn't raise you. Norm VE3VY"

Several other messages were they are just starting as we are packing up.

Thank you all, Guider's, Guide Helpers
and the CatRad TDOTA Team

JOTA 18 October 2003



Paul G4APL with Natalie and Belynda M3BYL preparing lunch to the Guiders and Radio Amateurs



Happy Guide Hanna 1st Chaldon completed all the tasks successfully



Ann G7BSF operating 2metres with the Guiders and Brownies waiting to send their messages