

# Thinking Day On The Air

By Paul Lewis G4APL

February 2006

## TDOTA 2006 preface

First of all welcome to the Guide and Brownie Leaders that may be reading the CatRad and Caterham Guide's TDOTA 2006 report.

This year's event was again organised on the third weekend of February. We had been notified of around 35 Guide groups in UK and 11 in the rest of the world are expected to be active. So let's see if we can locate some of them on the short wave frequencies.

The Girl guiding UK 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, data and computer communications

There is lot of support from the Caterham Girl guiding UK units 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.

During January later than usual. G4APL reviewed the TDOTA 2006 paper work and passed copies to 'Robin' 9th Caterham Guide Leader.. In January Emailed the UK Guide coordinator as Radio Society of Great Britain (RSGB) are no longer responsible for issuing special event Callsigns as this been taken over by OFCOM. To advise that the Caterham Radio Group (CatRad) would be active again and to be included in the TDOTA UK and World official list of active

stations.

## Preparation

The Thinking On The Air 2006 (TDOTA) for the Caterham Guides and Brownies was again to be held at SKY-WAVES on Saturday 18th February 2006. Hosted again by Ann and Paul who hold the Radio Amateur Callsigns G7BSF, G4APL, Annabel 2E1PAL/M3PYL and Belynda M3BYL 9th Caterham Guide. This was the 19<sup>th</sup> time the Caterham Guides and Brownies were at Ann and Paul's home for their Radio Communications Day.

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

As we approached the weekend, the weather was getting colder 4 to 6C. Forecast of a wet Saturday, will it be warm and dry enough to fire up the Barbeque. Will see later in the



7<sup>th</sup> Caterham Guide M3JGJ Abigail talking to the Canadian Guides at VA1YL.



Robin 9<sup>th</sup> Caterham Guide leader at rear with her 9<sup>th</sup> Guides and 4<sup>th</sup> Caterham Brownies. Far left M3BYL Belynda, Front Right M3SOF Sophie M3JGJ Abigail

day

Thursday, Friday 16, February, Paul took some annual leave from work so that the house could be re-arranged and the aerials checked out. The House Central Heating failed on the Thursday. The British Gas Board engineer's service company classified it as not urgent, and did not come and fix the boiler until Mid Sunday Morning. As you can guess it was a bit chilly. The aerials and HF, VHF radios were checked out with a couple of overseas contacts. The tower supporting the aerials was left at its current height. As we were expecting a lot of rain and gusty winds over the weekend.

By mid Friday afternoon, the house was set-up with the revised layout.

Paul checked out the Short Wave band conditions on Thursday and Friday. It was not looking too good as the radio propagation was nearing the 11 year cycle. Solar Flux index reported as 79.

### **The Event**

Saturday 18th February 07:15 all the four PC's the guides would be using and checked out.

Paul switched on the HF (High Frequency) short wave transmitter at 07:30GMT. Noticed that a relay had failed and kept the power amplifier switched on. Another crisis. Decision had to be made. Run on low power. Diagnose the problem, locate a spare relay, Take the transceiver out, remove both covers, replace and rewire relay before the Guides arrive at 09:00. As Paul had a Kenwood HF transceiver that is used for the automatic GB7CIP PACTOR HF Mail Forwarding. That transceiver could be used as a last resort, in the event Paul failed to repair the Yaesu FT101ZD. At 08:00GMT Paul having located a suitable Relay he had tested. Decided to repair the radio. DON'T PANIC! In the mean time, Ann G7BSF was assisting in getting the visitors settled in.

The CatRad TDOTA team Mike G3TWJ, John G8MNY, Bryan G0SYR (who took some Annual Leave so that he was available), Ted G7OBF arrived around 08:30.

Janette (Robin) 9<sup>th</sup> Caterham Guide Leader arrived at 08:45 just before the seven 9<sup>th</sup> Caterham Guides including Radio Amateurs. Belynda M3BYL, Laura M3LRA, Sophie M3SOF, Abigail M3JGJ (7<sup>th</sup> Caterham) and four 4<sup>th</sup> Caterham Brownies.

Paul had repaired the Transceiver by 09:30 and handed the HF station control over to Mike and Bryan who started up on 40 metres. While Paul went and got a well deserved cup of tea. With the Brownies and Guides listening, sending and receiving greeting messages over the four hour sessions.

At 13:45 GMT we changed frequency to 14MHz Paul tuned up the valve transmitter and turned the HF beam forwards the Far East and Oceania and listened around the Guide calling frequencies. Mike put out a CQ (Seek You) call, and was called by Tex in Canberra the capital of Australia via the short path. Signals RS59 both ways. Robin had a nice chat with Tex. The contact lasted 15 minutes. Where their local time was 1AM in the morning.

Thinking Day On the Air stations contacted on HF short Wave Amateur Radio bands were:-  
GB2AGG Angus Girl Guides Forfar Scotland  
GB2BDG Blackburn Division Guides Blackburn

Lancashire

GB5AG Ayrshire Guides Ayr Scotland

GB2LGB Lorn Guides and Brownies Oban Argyll Scotland

PA6TD/J Netherlands Guides and Scouts Rotterdam Netherlands

VA1YL Canard Girl Guides, Canard Ontario Canada

VO1GGC Carbonear District Guides, Cartonear New Found Land Canada

W2YD Girl Scout Troup 303 West Orange New Jersey USA

Countries contacted, Germany, Scotland, England, Belgium, Wales, Eire, France, Netherlands, Rumania, Canberra Australia. Ukraine, USA, Canada.

At 14:00GMT, Robin was disappointed that the 8 brownies from two Brownie units did not turned up for their afternoon Radio Communication Day. These 8 places could have been filled by other Caterham Brownie units known to have been desperate to attend.

In the event, this allowed the three Licensed Guides, M3LRA, M3JGJ, and M3SOF to have excellent contacts on their own. They talked to other guides at VA1YL Canard Girl Guides, Canard Ontario Canada managed by Helen VA1YL 45 Minute contact. W2YD Girl Scout Troup 303 West Orange New Jersey, Mark W1YD ex G7LTT 25 Minute Contact. With Paul standing in the background monitoring and giving guidance if required.

By 17:00 GMT the band conditions were getting difficult and signals weaker. The station was closed down

The VHF Station went on air with the Guides and Brownies at 09:30 and closed at 17:00 GMT. The Ladies Sophie M3SOF, Laura M3LRA, Belynda M3BYL



**Left to Right M3LRA Laura, M3SOF Sophie, M3JGJ Abigail chatting to the Canadian Guides at VA1YL**

Caterham 9<sup>th</sup> Guides, Abigail M3JGJ 7<sup>th</sup> Caterham Guide were assisted by Ann G7BSF in the background when required. Annabel 2E1PAL was online remotely from another PC keeping an eye on the Convers network traffic via the gb7cip.ampr.org International gateway server.

These guides had to establish the radio contact and assist the Brownies and Guides to send and receive their greeting messages. Between them they operated the VHF 2 metre station. As none of the expected Brownies arrived for the afternoon session. The three Guides M3LRA, M3SOF, M3JGJ moved to the radio shack. While M3BYL kept a listening watch on 2 Metres in the event another Guide Station started up in the afternoon to assist them. No further guide stations were heard in the Home Counties.

The only TDOTA station worked was GB8BG Beaconsfield District Guides.



4<sup>th</sup> Caterham Guide Elizabeth working on a task.

Messages sent 27 Messages Received 2

The four network computers connected to the amprnet (AmateurPacketRadioNETwork) chat server network.. did not get much attention from the guides as there were no Guides on the network this time round.

When the Brownies and Guides arrived, they had to prepare greeting messages.

Phonetic Alphabet testing was carried out by Ted and Ann.

In the technical area John and Bryan observed the guides building the Crystal Set.

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 lead by John.

The Guide Leader (ROBIN) and Guide helpers (second or more visits) assisted the Brownies and ensured that the paper work was being completed and that all the required tasks were carried out to gain the Guides on the Air badge, TDOTA Certificates and progress towards the Brownie, Guide Communicator Badge.

Midday, the weather was still dry, though cold. Paul got out the gas barbecue out in the garden. It was cold standing cooking the food and passing inside to Ann and Abigail who put the meal together. Paul soon noticed the very dark skies to the West. Felt the temperature drop and moisture on his face. Paul speeded up the cooking. While Paul was cooking some Brownies needed to be signed off and Annabel came to the rescue, taking over the cooking. Later on it rained for the rest of the day.

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

30 Stations were contacted on 7MHz(LF) and 14MHz (HF)  
25 messages sent, 24 Received

On VHF 2 Metres 9 stations were worked including  
Messages sent 27 received 2

All those that attended the TDOTA station worked towards their Certificates, Guides on the Air Badge Completed all the required tasks towards their Brownie or Guides Communicator Badge and the Caterham Guides Radio Communication badge by 18:30UTC

While all this activity was going on, Paul took the occasional photographs to be used in this report.

The number of Guide, Brownie visitors that came to the event was 13.

9<sup>th</sup> Caterham Guide Leader (Janette ROBIN The Boss)  
7 from 9<sup>th</sup> Caterham Guides  
4 from 4<sup>th</sup> Caterham Brownies  
1 from 7<sup>th</sup> Caterham Guides

Supported by CatRad Radio Amateurs G0SYR, G3TWJ, G4APL, G7BSF, G7OBF, G8MNY, 2E1PAL/M3PYL, Caterham Guides M3BYL, M3JGJ, M3LRA, M3SOF plus all those Radio Amateur's that came on during the day and gave our TDOTA station a call to make our event successful.

After tidying up the house, Paul, Ann, Belynda, John and Bryan ended the evening sitting down to the usual Chinese meal and a well earned rest.

Thank you all, Guider's,  
Guide Helpers and the  
CatRad TDOTA Team  
JOTA 21st October 2006  
<http://www.theskywaves.net>