

# Thinking Day On The Air

By Paul Lewis G4APL

February 2007

## TDOTA 2007 preface

First of all welcome to the Guide and Brownie Leaders that may be reading the CatRad and Caterham Guide's TDOTA 2007 report.

This year's event was again organised on the third weekend of February. We had been notified of around 26 Guide groups operating from Amateur Radio Special Event or Club stations in UK and 13 in the rest of the world. So let's see if we can locate some of them on the Amateur Radio short wave frequencies.

The Girlguiding UK Association now issue a GOTA (Guides On The Air) badge. 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 over radio (wireless) and computer communications.

There are two radio events that Guides and Brownies can join in. February is Guides Thinking Day On The Air (TDOTA) and Guides On The Air (GOTA).

This event is now co-ordinated to run on the third weekend of February. October is Scouts and Girl Scouts (Guides) Jamboree On The Air (JOTA)

Both events are world wide, and run over a period of 48 hours from midnight Friday to midnight Sunday.

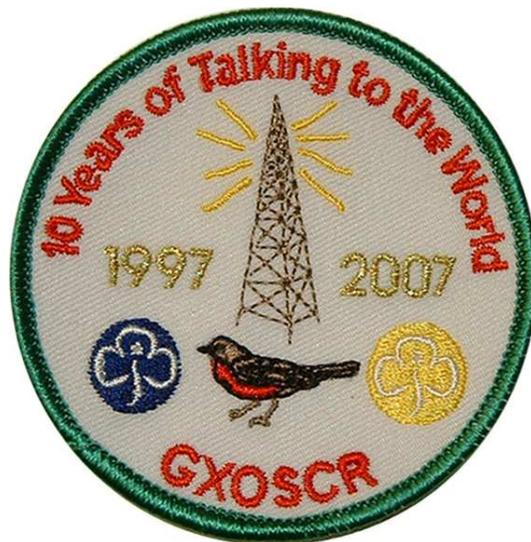
The JOTA event is the largest of the two. The first Jamboree On The Air was held in 1958. This years event was run over a 48 hour period over

the weekend, supported by Radio Amateur's worldwide. Sending and Receiving Greeting Messages. Meeting other Guides and Scouts over the Amateur Radio Airwaves on the Short Wave bands (High Frequency) as well on the VHF (Very High Frequency) bands using the various modes available.

## Caterham Radio Group 9<sup>th</sup> Caterham Guides Celebrate 1997 – 2007 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

This is the 21<sup>st</sup> time that Caterham Guides and Brownies have held their 'Radio Communications day' event at the home SKY-WAVES of Ann and Paul Lewis who hold the Radio Amateur Callsigns G7BSF and G4APL..

This year celebrates the special relationship that the



Robin 9<sup>th</sup> Caterham Guide leader at rear far right with 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Caterham Brownies. Guide Radio Amateurs left to right. Abigail M3JGJ, Belynda M3BYL and Sophie M3SOF

Caterham Radio Group has with the 9<sup>th</sup> Caterham Guides being the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary. As a result during the previous Autumn. Robin had commissioned a competition for her Guides who hold an Amateur Radio licence, to design a one off badge. Resulting in the badge designed by Belynda 9<sup>th</sup> Caterham Guide (M3BYL). Illustrating the Brownie and Guide badges, Robin (Guide Leader), Amateur Radio aerial tower and the Caterham Radio Group Special Event Club Callsign GX0SCR.

As one can expect, some guides have revisited the CatRad event 10 to 21 times. For example Robin(21)

Sophie (M3SOF)(14), Abigail (M3JGJ)(8) and Belynda (M3BYL)(21) Later as 'helpers' each Brownie or Guide requires about four hours to complete the tasks.

Brownies visiting for the first time are working towards their Radio Communicator Badge.

First time Guides work towards their Communication in the Community and Get on the Airwave badge as well as completing the tasks for the certificate.

Second time guides work on additional tasks and assist the operators in running the station. Third visits, starting to get the hang of Amateur Radio assisting the other Brownies and Guides. They may then be interested enough to apply and join a Radio Amateur Foundation Course run by other clubs.



9<sup>th</sup> Caterham Guide leader with her Guides. Radio Amateurs Left to Right Abigail M3JGJ and Susanna 7<sup>th</sup> Caterham Guides, Belynda M3BYL 9<sup>th</sup> Caterham Guide.

In January Paul e-mailed Radio Society of Great Britain (RSGB) 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. Also to requested to get some publicity on the Sunday RSGB News Broadcasts.

#### Preparation

As we approached the weekend, the weather was improving and expected to be drier. Will it be warm and dry enough to fire up the Barbeque?

Paul took a couple of days annual leave, so that the house could be re-arranged and the aerials checked out. The aerials and HF, VHF radios were checked out with a couple of overseas contacts. The tower supporting the aerials was raised to enable sending and receiving strong radio signals.

By Friday evening, the house was set-up.

Paul checked out the Short Wave band conditions on Thursday and Friday. It was not looking too good as the radio propagation was variable. There seemed to be some disturbance of the ionosphere as well as being in the low part of the 11 year cycle. On the Saturday Solar Flux index reported as 73 and the K index K3= Unstable .

#### The Event

Saturday 17th February 07:45 all the four PC's the guides would be using are powered on and checked out.

Paul switched on the HF (High Frequency) short wave transmitter at 08:00GMT. Went on the air had a short contact with a Ukraine station. Followed by a nice contact with a station located on the East coast of the north island of New Zealand. Ann G7BSF in the mean time was assisting in getting the visitors settled in.

At 08:30 Janette 9<sup>th</sup> Caterham Guide Leader (Robin)

was in catching the early worm. Managed to join Paul and speak to Maurice ZL2MF in New Zealand before the others arrived.

The CatRad TDOTA team John G8MNY, Bryan G0SYR (who again took some annual leave so that he was available), Annabel 2E1PAL

At 09:00 or soon after, Brownies, Guides and two Leaders (Brown Owl). 9<sup>th</sup> Caterham Guides including Radio Amateurs. Belynda M3BYL, Sophie M3SOF, Abigail M3JGJ (7<sup>th</sup> Caterham), 1<sup>st</sup> and 4th Caterham Brownies 16 for the morning session.

Paul passed the control of the HF station over the Bryan and Annabel to continue on 40 Metres. In the



Robin showing the guides how to lookup country prefixes

mean time the Brownies were preparing their Greeting messages in another room at the start if their four hours of tasks.

At 13:15 GMT we moved to the 20Metre (14MHz) band. Paul tuned up the valve transmitter and turned the HF beam forwards Canada and Bryan spoke to Helen VA1YL Canard Guides at 13:16 and again at 13:55 when Robin was able to speak to Helen while we waited for the twelve 9<sup>th</sup> Caterham Guides to arrived at 14:00 for the afternoon session. We noted Helens signal was heard over the next five hours where Helen was our last HF contact at 18:00GMT,

After our first contact with Helen, the HF beam was pointed East to speak to 9K2CQ in Kuwait. A CQ (Seek You) responded with a contact with VK5PDL in Port Adelaide South Australia via the short path.

Thinking Day On the Air stations contacted on HF



**Caterham Radio Group TDOTA Support Team**  
Left to Right from Rear.  
**John G8MNY, Bryan G0SYR, Paul G4APL**  
**Ann G7BSF, Robin 9<sup>th</sup> Caterham Guide Leader, Annabel 2E1PAL**  
**Abigail M3JGJ, Belynda M3BYL, Sophie M3SOF**



**Caterham 1<sup>st</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Brownies advising John G8MNY**  
**how the directional radio aerials on the globe of the world**  
**send the signals from England to Australia.**

short Wave Amateur Radio bands were:-  
GB2AGG Angus Girl Guides Forfar Scotland  
GB1KGG Killearn Girl Guides  
VA1YL Canard Guides Nova Scotia (3 Contacts)  
GB4SUN South and Upper Norwood South London

Countries worked.

Ukraine, New Zealand North Island, Italy, Eire,  
Nova Scotia Canada, Kuwait, Estonia, Create,  
Germany, Spain, Scotland, Northern Ireland,  
France, Sicily. England  
USA  
Connecticut, Massachusetts, Virginia, Philadelphia,  
South Carolina

The HF band conditions were not good, as mentioned earlier. We can confirm that the signals had a lot of fading and conditions were unstable.

The VHF Station went on air with the Guides and Brownies at 09:35 and closed at 18:00 GMT. Ann G7BSF made the first couple of contacts when the "The Ladies" Abigail M3JGJ 7<sup>th</sup> Caterham Guide Sophie M3SOF, Belynda M3BYL Caterham 9<sup>th</sup> Guides took over. Where assisted by Ann G7BSF and Paul in the background as and when required.

The three Guide Radio Amateurs did an excellent job running the VHF station. Keeping the main log, check logging and assisting the Brownies and Guides in sending and receiving greeting messages.

The TDOTA stations worked were  
M3PEO/P Banstead Scout HQ  
GB7SUN South and Upper Norwood South London  
GB2TSC Tolmers Scout Campsite Cuffy Hut

VHF Messages sent 132 Messages Received 18  
VHF Stations contacted 18 some more than once  
HF Message Sent 17 Message Received 11  
HF Stations contacted 32

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. Though Paul did find them chilling out on the three networked PC's in the other 'rest' room.

As on previous occasions, when the Brownies and Guides arrived, they had to prepare greeting Messages.

Phonetic Alphabet testing was carried out by Paul, John and Ann.

No activity in the technical area this time.

The Brownies and Guides had to participate in one of two discussion sessions covering propagation and radios, aerials, comparing different handheld transceivers (including a very old brick mobile phone) and a home made transmitter and receiver lead by John.

The Guide Leader (ROBIN) and 7<sup>th</sup> Caterham Guide Susanna did a brilliant job of looking after the Brownies during the day. Assisted the Brownies and ensured that the paper work was being completed to enable them to gain the Guides on the Air badge, Special 10th anniversary, Brownie, Guide GOTA and Communicator Badge.

Midday, the weather was sunny and dry with a slight cool breeze. Paul got out the gas barbeque and set that up in the garden. Cooking the food assisted by Ann and Susanna. While Paul was cooking some Brownies needed to be signed off by Ann.

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

All those that attended the TDOTA station completed all the required tasks towards their Brownie or Guides Communicator Badge and the Caterham Guides Radio 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Communication badge by 18:30 GMT

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

The number of Guide, Brownie visitors that came to the event was 28

9<sup>th</sup> Caterham Guide Leader (Janette ROBIN)  
2 Leaders Brown Owl 1<sup>th</sup> Caterham Brownies  
1 Young Leader 4<sup>th</sup> Caterham Brownies  
11 from 9<sup>th</sup> Caterham Guides  
5 from 1<sup>st</sup> Caterham Brownies  
6 from 4<sup>th</sup> Caterham Brownies  
2 from 7<sup>th</sup> Caterham Guides

Supported by CatRad Radio Amateurs G0SYR, G4APL, G7BSF, G8MNY, 2E1PAL/M3PYL, Caterham Guides M3BYL, M3JGJ, 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. Annabel went out to chill out at a night club.



Chilling out for well earned rest in the rest room after the morning session. Front to back  
Belynda M3BYL 9<sup>th</sup> Caterham Guide,  
Susanna, Abigail M3JGJ 7<sup>th</sup> Caterham Guides



Susanna 7<sup>th</sup> Caterham Guide assisting a Brownie in learning the phonetic alphabet before being tested.

Thank you all, Guider's,  
Guide Helpers and the  
CatRad TDOTA Team  
JOTA 20th October 2007  
<http://www.theskywaves.net>