



Girlguiding UK

THINKING DAY ON THE AIR REPORT

18 & 19 FEBRUARY 2006



THINKING DAY ON THE AIR 2006

It was nice to have so many new stations on air this year, and to especially to hear so many members of Girlguiding UK who are also licensed radio amateurs. Thank you to everyone who made this such a successful event and sent in a station report to enable me to produce this annual report. There were at least 58 UK stations taking part, but I only received reports from 24.

As usual, for the third weekend in February in Great Britain, the weather was cold, although we were spared the snow of previous years, so some stations were able to offer outside activities as well as the normal inside ones.

Using Amateur Radio to contact others around the world is interesting due to its unpredictability. You never know who you are going to speak to and where. Apart from the fact that people in other continents could be asleep whilst we are having our lunch, the radio signals we send out need to bounce off the ionosphere to be heard on the other side of the globe.

The ionosphere is a term for the space above the atmosphere (in fact, 60-300 miles above the earth's surface) which reflects some radio waves back to earth. Just where the signal will be bounced back to earth depends on several factors. Firstly, it depends on the angle at which our radio signals get reflected. A signal, that leaves our antenna and gets reflected say, 10 degrees away, will end up coming back to earth a mere 700 miles away. If we could manage to make that reflection 50 degrees our radio signals would come down about 3500 miles away (or say New York). Of course we might be lucky and our signals might hit the earth and be reflected back up again and so our signal might appear both at New York and Rio De Janeiro (about 7000 miles away), the third bounce might just find the Pacific just beyond Japan and it would take a fourth 50 degree bounce to get us round the world to New Zealand. Of course, with each bounce our signal gets weaker and weaker.

Also, different parts of the ionosphere react differently during different times of the day. Radio amateurs know when 'bands will be open' for long distance work and which bands will be best for keeping the radio signals within the UK to maximise the number of Girlguiding UK contacts.

One particularly interesting time of day is local sunrise or sunset. At these times radio waves will reflect very well only on the 'greyline' - that is, those places along the globe that are also experiencing local sunrise or sunset. Imagine the sun lighting the earth, half of the world is in daylight and the other half is experiencing night, but there is a circle which runs right around the globe of places for whom daylight is just about to start or end - the greyline.

Just to add one further complication, the other major effect on radio propagation is ... (no -not the weather) the number of sunspots on the sun. In this age where so much is understood, sunspots are still a bit of a mystery. However for the last 150 years scientists have been aware that sunspots vary between maximum and minimum with an 11-year cycle. Sadly 2006 is at the bottom of such a cycle so currently radio propagation is poor - which explains why we had so few Guiding contacts with Girl Scouts in the USA or Canada this year. However, the forecast for 2010, the Girlguiding Centenary, looks very promising.

Unfortunately, only a few countries have Guides (or Scouts) who take part in TDOTA - the message of this fun event has yet to spread. I will be representing Girlguiding UK at the European Radio Interested Scouts Seminar in Oslo, Norway this June and will be 'spreading the word' throughout Europe. If anyone has any contacts, Guiding or radio, in other countries, please tell them about TDOTA or let me have their contact details. This year, I understand, there were stations operating from Canada, USA, Holland, Iceland, Japan, Denmark, Malaysia and it would be great for our centenary if we could have both 100 UK stations and 100 countries taking part.

Our thanks go to all the radio amateurs and clubs who provided the use of their equipment and expertise for this event. From the comments on the report forms I know they enjoyed Thinking Day on the Air as much as the girls.

2006 station reports

The Training and Activity centres, Foxlease, Netherurd and Broneirion, had TDOTA stations as part of the "Right Here, Right Now" World Thinking Day Celebrations. These were centred round the 'rights of a child' with the opportunity to visit the radio station being classed in the right to learn.



Bert G4XBZ

M0ACL operating GB2FOX with Brownies from Kent

GB2FOX FOXLEASE, LYNDHURST, HAMPSHIRE. Over 150 girls from across the south of England were able to visit the station sometimes more than once, although line dancing was a bigger draw on Saturday evening. All girls passing greetings messages were given a certificate based on the station QSL card to use towards their Communicator Badge. Everyone was given a 'Guides on the Air' participation patch. [QSL cards are postcards exchanged as a confirmation of the radio contact.]

GBONGG NETHERURD, SCOTLAND. Another 'excellent weekend according to Sheila Cairns, Centre manager. Two days of yoga, first aid and fusion dancing, and of course, contacting other training centres.

GBOGIW BRONEIRION, POWYS, WALES must have had the most important visitor, in Cathryn Brooker, Chief Commissioner for Wales, who passed a greetings message to Foxlease. With 400 Rainbows, Brownies and Guides on site the girls only had a short time with the radio, but still managed to speak to the other two training centres.

GBOGLE GIRLGUIDING LEICESTER EAST

More than 200 members from all sections enjoyed many activities during their 3 hour slot. Each participant had a comprehensive workbook to guide them through activities which included making straw radio towers, Morse code bracelets and Morse code oscillators. They could design QSL cards, 'phone a friend' with tin can phones and speak to Guides in other counties.



Sue Hodges

Guides at GBOGLE receiving Morse code

GB0HDG HORSHAM, WEST SUSSEX

Brownies from Horsham Division took the opportunity to gain their Communicator badge. They were given demonstrations of Slow Scan TV and were able to pass greetings messages to 9 UK TDOTA stations and VA1YL, Canard Guides in Nova Scotia, Canada.

GB0SKG PAISLEY, RENFREWSHIRE, SCOTLAND had great fun trying out Morse code, tin-can phones and learning to use a computer. Six Guides and their leader are hoping to study for their Amateur Radio Foundation License.

GBOSWG SOUTH WOODHAM FERRERS, ESSEX

Guides and Brownies managed to send 59 messages during the weekend including ones to Katie, M3XPO. Katie is a Brownie near Dover in Kent and was operating from her home station. Although they didn't manage to speak to a Guide station abroad they did speak to W2LOP, a Scout Camp in New Jersey, USA. The Girlguiding Essex County Commissioner was one of many visitors to the station, and as on previous years, a Guider, was able to make her promise 'on air' to Liz G0RJX at GB4YOU, Youlbury.

GBOWDG WOODBRIDGE, SUFFOLK. A first time station put on by local Radio Scouts with many years JOTA experience. As well as passing messages by radio participants, this one day station used the internet to pass messages to Guides in New Zealand, Australia, Africa and Canada. They also enjoyed Radio Orienteering and "Hat Cam" - a mobile camera on a hat with a radio link which allowed a team indoors to guide a blindfolded person outside to collect objects.



Malcolm G4CXT

Hat-Cam in operation

GB1ASG TYDESLEY, MANCHESTER. These Guides included crafts and quizzes with amateur radio to gain the Communicators badge. They also had fun sending Morse code with an Aldis lamp.

GB1FDB DORRIDGE, WEST MIDLANDS. First Dorridge Brownies had a competition to design the QSL card and enjoyed passing messages to MS0FNR, Halkirk Brownies in north Scotland. The group were pleased to have a photo published in their local newspaper.

GB2HEG HAMPSHIRE EAST GUIDES used amateur radio as part of their World Thinking Day celebrations. They practiced Tai Chi and Morse code (not at the same time!) and made tinned pizzas.

GB2HGB TWICKENHAM, MIDDLESEX operated Saturday afternoon and used a 2-metre radio connection to Echolink to speak to GB4SGG, St Martin's Guides on Guernsey in the Channel Islands. Girls were given certificates for successfully completing a Morse code test.

GB2LGB OBAN, ARGYLL, SCOTLAND Brownies and Guides experienced sending Morse code using a laptop computer and playing a phonetic alphabet game. The station operated for 4 hours on Saturday and used the 40-metre band to make contact with six other TDOTA stations. Everyone had so much fun they have already booked for next year.

GB2MHG MARKET HARBOROUGH, LEICESTERSHIRE were 'on air' from 2 to 4 pm on Sunday afternoon when Guides worked towards their Communicator badge.

GB2UGB ULVERSTON, CUMBRIA operated on Sunday morning working GB0HDG, GB2FOX, GB2GLE and hearing many other stations including PA6TD from Holland. All this using only 10 watts of power from a car battery, with a 50-foot wire antenna at 25 feet above ground.

GB4SMB SAFFRON WALDEN, ESSEX used PMR 446 licence free radios to practise QSOs [contacts] before passing messages contacting stations between Guernsey and Scotland. They also had contact with TDOTA stations in USA and Austria.



GB4YOU YOULBURY SCOUT ACTIVITY CENTRE, OXFORD. Having overcome the health and safety concerns of the mast and guy ropes (at a campsite!), the station made many contacts including USA and Holland. The highlight was hearing a Guider from GBOSWG, South Woodham Ferrers make her adult promise to Liz, G0RJX.

GB8BG BEACONSFIELD, BUCKINGHAM managed to get a photo and small article in local newspaper. Brownies and Guides had the opportunity to gain World Guiding and Communicator badges whilst Senior Section members completed various Octants. As well as contacting many UK TDOTA stations, Beaconsfield used VHF and Echolink to contact Australia.

GX0SCR CATERHAM, SURREY. Because one group failed to arrive Abigail M3JGJ, Belinda M3BYL, Laura M3LRA and Sophie M3SOF were pleased to get the opportunity to speak to Helen VA1YL (the Canadian TDOTA Co-ordinator) and her Guides for 45 mins and W2YD a Girl Scout Troop in New Jersey, for 25 mins. The CatRad team had their expertise tested to the full this year, with the weather set to be cold, 4 to 6 degrees C and wind and heavy rain forecast and the heating failed - not to be repaired until Sunday. Then Saturday morning a relay failed in the main HF radio. With 90 mins to go until the girls arrived Paul G4APL found a replacement part and fitted it, thus enabling a contact into Canberra, Australia. Of course none of the visitors knew of the pre-event panics!



Paul G4APL

Abigail M3JGJ talking to Helen VA1YL

GX3BRS BURY, LANCASHIRE. Whitefield Brownies enjoyed the station as part of their World Thinking Day Celebrations on Sunday afternoon. The activities ranged from origami to Spanish lessons, but no time to practise what they had learnt with a Spanish radio station.

GX3WSC CRAWLEY, WEST SUSSEX. As this was the first year 'on air' for this station everyone was pleased to speak to GB2FOX at Foxlease. They also designed the station QSL card and hope to make some international contacts next year.



GX4CDD NETHERTHONG, WEST YORKSHIRE was operated from the church, so only on air for Saturday, but their wire trap dipole antenna woven amongst the trees of the churchyard worked very well. All the Guides had a chance to pass on a greetings message and the operators appreciated the plentiful supply of coffee and bacon sandwiches. An unusual site for the 6-metre antenna was on a mag-mount blue-tacked to the lead of the stained glass windows. Another first time station which is keen to take part again next year, (nothing to do with the bacon sandwiches!!).

GX4WWR ALTON, HAMPSHIRE was part of a Pack Holiday. When the 40-metre band wasn't breaking the internet connection girls were able to take part in the Guide internet chat. They also had a local radio DJ provide them with a Saturday night disco.

MSOFNR HALKIRK, CAITHNESS, SCOTLAND operated Sunday afternoon with a demonstration of Slow Scan TV. The Brownies designed QSL cards and had a visit from the County Commissioner.

VA1YL CANARD, NOVA SCOTIA, CANADA
 'no blizzard this year - that helped!' Everyone
 from three groups had a chance to speak to
 Guides somewhere.

Fred VE1FA



*Helen VA1YL, Canadian Guides on the Air
 co-ordinator*



Helen Dickie

Making a Morse oscillator at GBOGLE

Malcolm G4CXT



Morse code practice at GBOWDG

Tina Skippings



*Georgina waiting to pass a greetings message
 at GX3WSC*

Thinking Day on the Air 2007 will continue to be the 3rd weekend in February - so make a note in your diary for 17 & 18 February. Also, for those of you who can't wait to have another go, Jamboree on the Air (JOTA), which is organised by the World Scout Bureau but also open to members of WAGGGS, takes place on the 3rd full weekend in October, so in 2006 it will be 21 & 22 October.

As it is nice to exchange QSL cards quickly from this event it is worth ensuring that the person who applies for the callsign should have their details available in the RSGB (Radio Society of Great Britain) call book, so that everyone has an address for direct QSLs.

This is a list of members of Girlguiding UK whom I am aware hold an amateur radio licence. There are probably many more; it would be nice to know who they were and maybe keep in contact throughout the year.

2E1CJZ Zoe, Guider, Leicestershire
G0RJX Liz, Guider, Oxfordshire
G0RKG Rowena, Guider, Oxfordshire
G4XED Sue, Guider, Bristol
G6AJF Beatrice, Guider, Middlesbrough
G8NMO Doreen, Guider, Oxfordshire
G8WWO Jennifer, Guider, Lancashire
GW0XYL Jen, Guider, Powys, Wales
M0ACL Liz, Guider, Hampshire
M0MLG Michaela, Y/Leader, Oxfordshire
M1EXO Sandra, Guider, Leicestershire
M1FGO Amanda, Guider, Devon
M1LMJ Lucy, Guider, Hampshire
M3BYL Belynda, Guide, Caterham
M3KXI Chloe, Ranger, Leicestershire
M3LNY Linden, Guide, Oxfordshire
M3LRA Laura, Guide, Caterham
M3JGJ Abigail, Guide, Caterham
M3SOF Sophie, Guide, Caterham
M3XPO Katie, Brownie, Kent
M5AFY Sue, Guider, Northampton
MM3GQR Stella, Guider, Oban, Scotland

I would be especially interested to hear from anyone who would like help to set up a station at one of the Activity centres so that we could have them all on air for TDOTA 2007.

I would also be interested to hear about any camps or activity days at which you use amateur radio during the year. I will be operating GB2HWG - Hampshire West Guides - from our County International camp from 29 July to 4 August. As well as running HF and VHF stations, we will be organising a treasure hunt using PMR446 licence free radios and making flashing LED badges. The station will operate at various times, but primarily in the evening, so listen for us near the Scout frequencies 3.740 and 7.090.

Don't forget that there is a participation patch which can be used for any Guides on the Air event. The badge is available from Girlguiding UK Trading Services, code number 2148, price 70p each.

Mrs Liz Jones M0ACL

Girlguiding UK TDOTA Coordinator
Programme Team, Girlguiding UK,
17-19 Buckingham Palace Road, London SW1W 0PT

email: liz@guides-on-the-air.co.uk