



**Girlguiding UK**

*girls in the lead*

# THINKING DAY ON THE AIR REPORT

17 & 18 FEBRUARY 2007



## THINKING DAY ON THE AIR 2007

Unfortunately only 14 stations sent in reports this year (less than half of the actual number of UK stations taking part) so merely counting numbers does not reflect the fun and wonder of the event. It was nice to hear new groups arranging stations for the first time and to receive some positive comments from both radio amateurs and Guiders. Obviously the more stations that operate the more varied the experience for the girls. This could be increased if more countries would participate. So if anyone has contacts or influence with Guiding units across the country or around the world, suggest they give amateur radio a try. Don't wait for next year, try taking part in JOTA - Jamboree on the Air on 21/22 October 2007.

As this year is 100 years since Lord Baden-Powell started the Scouting Movement, a Radio Scouting Award has been running since January with certificates for contacting or listening to Scout or Guide stations or operators. Full details can be found at [www.scouting100award.org/detail.htm](http://www.scouting100award.org/detail.htm)

Many of the participants in TDOTA this year should have been able to collect the fifteen points needed for the Bronze award.

Ease of hearing distant stations depends on many factors, the radio equipment being used (particularly the aerial), the location and the ionospheric conditions. Skilled radio amateurs try to optimise their stations but are at the mercy of the the ionosphere. The ionosphere is affected by the sun (for the curious, by the number of sunspots on the sun, which varies from low to high in an 11 year cycle). Currently conditions are at their worst and many TDOTA stations commented on the poor conditions making contacts hard to hear and long distant contacts impossible. On the plus side - it gets better now for the next ten years or so!

Technology is always advancing and many stations are now using Echolink to achieve high quality long distance communication. Imagine hundreds of radio stations around the world all connected by the Internet. Using Echolink via radio just means making a contact with your local link station and your voice is automatically relayed onto the Internet and will pop-up at some other radio link station somewhere else in the world. Don't worry it doesn't have to be entirely random - if you have a computer you can see lists of other Guide or Scout stations and their Echolink 'address' so request that your link station connects you directly to one of them. In fact, if you are a licensed radio amateur then you don't even need a radio! You can access all of the link stations directly from a microphone attached to your Internet-connected PC and be talking to other amateurs across the world (they might be on the radio or, even just using the computer themselves). Again for the curious, this technology is called Voice over IP (VOIP) and is exactly the same technology employed in Internet phone calls such as Skype.

It was interesting to read in the reports of some different activities being enjoyed at TDOTA events. One which I'm sure all the girls in Colchester enjoyed was Morse code words written in sweets. Using Smarties/M&M's for dots and cut up strawberry 'laces' for dashes girls could make words in icing on foil covered boards. A further activity could be to use Rich Tea or Morning Coffee Finger biscuits covered with icing and sweets to make up Morse code messages or names. I'm sure those with long names will love making one biscuit for each letter of their name!!



Caroline Humphries

## STATION REPORTS

### **GB0IHG - Highworth, Wiltshire**

All girls attending the Brownie Sleepover Weekend were able to use the radio, and begin to work on their Communications Badge. They combined the event with Easter crafts and activities including cake making and an Easter Egg hunt. Jane McNeil, North Wilts County Commissioner, found time to visit the station. A simple intercom unit (made to an old JOTA design) was used to allow the girls to practice passing messages before venturing on air.

### **MX0KSC - Keighley, West Yorkshire**

Guides from West Yorkshire North County were given the opportunity to take part in TDOTA with a Communications Day at Keighley Starcentre in Keighley College. Whilst gaining Go-for-it Communicate and Communicator Badge the Guides had the chance to use PMR radios, make cup phones, learn the phonetic alphabet and play code games.

### **GB0NB - Halifax, West Yorkshire**

Andrew and Richard, two local radio amateurs, attended meetings at 1<sup>st</sup> Northawram Brownie Unit for four weeks prior to TDOTA weekend. They told the Unit about Amateur Radio and TDOTA and helped the girls practise passing messages using PMR walkie talkies. The event was a success with everyone gaining their Communicators badge. The station managed to work five other UK TDOTA stations as well as radio amateurs in USA, Hungary, Russia and Spain.

### **GX0SCR Caterham, Surrey**

Caterham Radio Group have had a long association with 9<sup>th</sup> Caterham Guides and this year was the 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of 'Talking to the World', which resulted in Belynda (M3BYL) designing the now annual badge. The group give Guides and Brownies the chance to take part in TDOTA in February and JOTA (organised by the Scout Association) in October. Therefore some of the Guides have attended between 10 and 21 events. Three Guides who all hold Foundation Amateur Radio Licenses, Abigail M3JGJ, Sophie M3SOF, and Belynda M3BYL, did an excellent job running the VHF (local contacts). They kept the main log and assisted the Brownies and Guides in sending and receiving messages.

### **GB0VOM - Thirsk, North Yorkshire**

The Vale of Mowbray District attracted nearly 100 visitors to their station which operated both on Saturday and Sunday. Rainbows, Brownies and Guides had the opportunity to make, mobile phone bookmarks, radio ritas and peace doves or to play phonetic alphabet games. Brownies gained their Communicator badge and everyone completed clauses of World Guiding badges. As well as a visit from their Division Commissioner the station had a visit from a Trefoil Guild member who used to be a radio operator during the war. The station worked eight of the UK TDOTA stations as well as radio amateurs across Europe, and were pleased with the contact into Slovenia using PSK31, which is a data mode, rather than voice.

## GB1KGG - Killearn, Glasgow

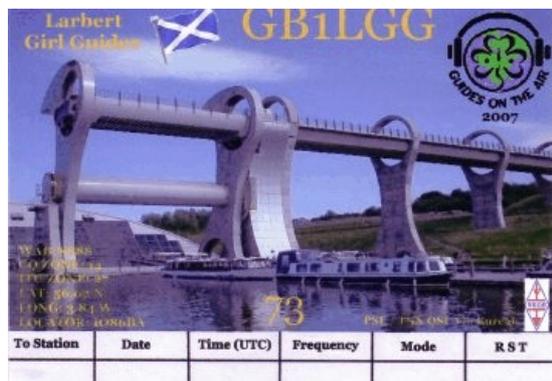
Guides and Brownies had an enjoyable day contacting UK and Canadian Guide stations as part of Go-for-it Communicate during their World Thinking Day event.



Susan Beck

## GB1LGG - Larbert, Falkirk

Larbert Division reported that the Morse bracelets were a huge success at their first ever event. Guides and Brownie had the opportunity to participate in the logging and mapping of contacts. Whilst using HF to contact other TDOTA stations in UK and Canada, they reported 'three fantastic Echolink contacts into New Mexico, Tennessee and California' using 2 meters. Their card confirming contacts (QSL card) depicts the Falkirk Wheel, the worlds first and only rotating boat lift.



## GB2BDG - Blackburn, Lancashire

Blackburn Division Guides had an enjoyable day contacting Belgium and Germany as well as local stations.

## GB2FOX - Foxlease Training and Activity Centre, Hampshire

As in previous years Foxlease had an TDOTA station as part of their Thinking Day weekend.

Brownies and Guides designed and made the stations QSL cards whilst waiting for their turn to pass greetings messages to one of the other Guiding stations contacted over the weekend. After talking on the radio each girl was given a participation certificate to use towards their communications badge.

Unfortunately the station were unable to contact any of the Canadian stations, but did speak to the one in Holland PA6TD/J.



Caroline Ford

## GB2TSC - Tolmers Scout Camp, Herts

2<sup>nd</sup> Harlington Guides were able to use Morse buzzers and practice semaphore, British Sign Language (BSL) and Makaton whilst visiting the station. Although they were only able to contact GX0SCR in Caterham during the weekend they were able to hear an Italian coast guard station in Valletta, Djorba Island off the coast of Africa and a station in Brazil.

### **GX3CO - Colchester, Essex**

Lexden Heath District were pleased Colchester Radio Amateurs could provide a station visited by the Mayor and Mayoress of Colchester; the Mayor holds an Amateur Radio License and the Mayoress a Guide Guider. The many girls visiting the station were able to make contact with stations in the UK, Netherlands and Canada. They also had time for craft activities whilst working towards Communicator Badge. Kevan Pugh from the radio club reported that the club would be keen to take part next year and 'seeing the girls faces light up when they chatted with other Guides about their hobbies and pets gave us all a real buzz'

### **GX3WSC - Crawley, West Sussex.**

1st Broadfield Brownies made QSL cards to send to the stations members of Crawley Amateur Radio Club made during their two hour operation on Saturday. As well as contacting GB4SUN they managed to talk to Jim, DF0VK in Dortmund Germany and Terry KG8CI in Battle Creek, Michigan, USA.

### **GB4SUN - South and Upper Norwood, Surrey**

Nearly 120 Rainbows, Brownies and Guides visited this station during the two days it was on air. The station contacted six other UK TDOTA stations giving everyone a chance to exchange greetings messages. Both Brownies and Guides were able to work towards their World Guiding Badges, whilst the Guides also gained their Communicator Badge. Guide, Maura Barber who has the Amateur Radio call sign M3URA was part of the team lead by her father Stuart, G6CJR, who enabled the girls to also experience Echolink. One of the many activities during the weekend was making earrings from resistors.

### **GB4YOU Youlbury Scout Activity Centre, Oxford**

Liz G0RJX and Micheala M0MLG were able to complete the Bronze section of Radio Scouting Centenary Award. Good computer connections allowed the station to use Echolink to contact numerous stations worldwide. Micheala had a long contact with Michelle in Australia. Both are Young Leaders with Brownie Units, and both licensed radio amateurs; hopefully they will continue their contacts.

Unfortunately we only received one overseas station report.

### **PA6TD/J. Netherlands**

Edwin, PA3GVQ writes 'I must say I enjoyed every contact, but the contacts with M3URA (Maura) and M0MLG Michaela where quite special. It's nice to hear young guides, getting there amateur radio license and be quite active with thinking day'

The longest contacts they had was with MX0NSR (7 messages/45 minutes) and GX3CO (14 messages/1:15 hours).

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.



2008 TDOTA will be 15 & 16 February

2007 JOTA Jamboree on the Air will be on 20 & 21 October and will be the 50<sup>th</sup> in the Scout Associations 100<sup>th</sup> year, so why not put on a station and work some more contacts for the Radio Scouting Centenary Award.

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