

Jamboree on the Air 2008

UK National Report



As the 51st JOTA approached, it was clear that there would be plenty of stations taking part. After all the celebrations last year it might be expected that some might opt out in 2008 while others might have been encouraged to take part again. About a hundred stations registered but others took part using club or personal call signs. It remains an uphill struggle to get them to send in a report. Some stations were featured in the Radio Society of Great Britain members magazine, RadCom, which is good publicity for both Amateur radio and Scouting but not much help to the JOTA coordinator's statistics.

Those stations that did report, seemed to have enjoyed the event. Conditions seem to be improving, making for better international contacts. One station reported that they experienced problems with the German contest. As he was furthest west this may have been a skip issue. Echolink and PSK31 are gaining in popularity. Not surprising since these modes offer good, clear long distance contacts.

It is rewarding to see and hear young licensed Scouts operating JOTA stations some for the first time after only passing the examination a few days earlier. The new training scheme seems to have addressed the old problem of having passed the examination but not having the practical operating experience. These newly licenced operators are very competent. Let us hope they progress to the advanced licence so they can run their own stations in the future.

More stations are using the JOTA/JOTI weekend to run large scale events catering for large numbers of participants and offering a wide range of communication or science based activities. GB2LC at Linnet Clough ran their weekend camp again with over 200 Scouts while GB4TDS ran a one-day event packed full of activities to keep 350 scouts of all ages very busy. Most stations reporting had between 30 and 50 taking part and quite a number include JOTA in a range of international activities. Sleepovers, if not camping outside, continue to be popular and several stations offered outdoor cooking and campfires. Those held at activity centres could also offer abseiling, archery and rifle shooting. One station, GB2CDS Colchester, operated from a tent in a farmer's field but most use Scout meeting places. Several stations mentioned hearing the International Space Station in contact with Scouts.

For the second time we offered a UK JOTA blanket badge based on the official logo as the earlier one had been so popular. We plan to do this every year as it makes up in some part for the lack of badges to be earned for amateur radio activities in the current programme.

Individual Station Reports

GB8CS

Fourteen Scouts and seven Cubs spent a busy weekend combining JOTA with camping and cooking. In addition to badges for communications and radio communications, seven chefs gained their award. The station was active both days and had contacts with Scout stations around the UK and in the Netherlands. They also contacted the Swaziland Scouts.

GB0BWS

This was a combined JOTA/JOTI station. The team started preparations on Thursday but changes in and around their premises meant previous solutions were not always going to work this year. They made plenty of Scout contacts on 80m and had some interesting Echolink contacts with Thailand, Australia and United Arab Emirates.

GB0GDS

This station was active on both days and had some sixty visitors. They had plenty of contacts and had a considerable team of operators. Two of these were newly licensed, MM3XLQ and MM3YGE who had their first experience or real operating. Congratulations!

GB1BOS

The activities on both days were linked by a campfire and sleepover in their hut. There were excellent Scout contacts on both days including a contact with HB9S in Geneva. They also contacted a Yacht, Rebel, adjacent to Plymouth Sea Scouts.

GB2CDS

Thirty Cubs and Fourteen Scouts visited this station which was active on both days. JOTA is often combined with other activities - this station had to share their field with Cycle-cross on Sunday. At least the sheep had been moved elsewhere!

GB2COS

Although their group has changed its name, this station was active again with a varied programme with radio construction and games on the menu. They were visited by the Lord Mayor of Chester. Their station had contacts at home and abroad with some very exotic call signs on their list including Guantanamo Bay, Cap Verde, Djakarta and Jordan.

GB2GCS

Another station visited by the Mayor and Mayoress as well as plenty of Scouts of all ages. The programme offered all sorts of communication activities including Sign Language and Secret Writing!

GB2JAM

This station was active on most bands and were particularly happy with contacts in South African White River Scouts and the Irish Scout Expedition to Swaziland.

GB2LC

Once again Greater Manchester East held their Technology weekend at Linnet Clough. With over three hundred taking part there were plenty of related badges gained. The station had contacts in 28 countries including Japan, Australia and Israel among total of 230.

GB2TSC

The station at Tolmers camp site had a good choice of traditional communication forms including Morse code and Semaphore. The visitors also learn their Q codes and Phonetic alphabet.

GB2WDS

This station had some sixty Scout participants and sixty two went on air to pass greetings messages to all areas of the world.

GB4TDS

This station offered everything for every age group with a staggering 350 taking part. The wide variety of activities, all linked in some way to communications and IT, showed an amazing and imaginative use of various equipment and skills.

GB4YOU

This station at Youlbury Campsite is very dependent on there being visitors to the site and the weather. On good days the youngsters are out in the open air and on wet weekends they discover JOTA! This year was mild and sunny so visitor numbers were down. Still the team made some interesting contacts including one of the team now at University and prevented from taking part for the first time since her Brownie days.

GB5FRR

This station attracted some 35 Scouts and five Explorers. They had a good range of contacts and some seven gained communicator badges. There were other activities on offer including crafts, abseiling, archery and air rifle target shooting.

GB8HYS

Six members of the unit reporting went to visit another unit to experience JOTA for the first time. They seemed to have enjoyed the experience and came away with their communicator badges.

GX0SCR

This Guide station is a regular JOTA participant and always has a well organised and very full programme. Over the years they have seen several of their visitors progress to gain licences. As the event takes place in a private house the enthusiasm and generosity of the Licence holder in welcoming numbers of brownies and guides to invade his home is to be applauded. They were all rewarded with plenty of good contacts.

MC0EVS

This station was disappointed not to have more visitors but those who did take part enjoyed the event and had some good contacts even if the German contest cause some problems. The group is now linking with a group in South Africa, an practical example of the value of JOTA in promoting international friendship.