

JOTA 2008 at 1st Aranda Scout Group

Reported by:

Clayton Gumbrell (Penguin)
Joey Scout Leader, 1st Aranda Scout Group
and Amateur Radio Operator (VK1TKA & ZL3TKA)

At 1st Aranda Scout Group (Canberra, ACT Australia) we had our own JOTA station for the first time ever. JOTA (and JOTI) is a world wide event involving Scouts groups all over the world communicating by Amateur Radio and over the internet. In 2008 this event ran over the weekend of 18 – 19 October.

Our JOTA station was based at our Scout hall, beside the Aranda Oval. As well as radio, the weekend included dinner and a campfire on the Saturday night, and a sleepover (in tents) for the Cubs and Scouts. It was a great success for all concerned.

All sections (Joeys, Cubs and Scouts) got involved with the technical side of the JOTA station. In the week proceeding JOTA the Joeys and Cubs helped build the 'ladder line' for the radio station antenna. On the Saturday the Scouts built and hoisted a 14m mast built from tent poles. This supported the centre of the antenna and ladder line. Fishing lines were cast over suitable trees to support the ends of the antenna system (a simple dipole).

Arrangements were made to borrow an internet connection from 'Greening Australia', who are located next to the Scout hall. This was to allow us to also participate in JOTI, as well as to be connected to 'EchoLink' (a system to link amateur radio stations over the internet). Due to time constraints we were unable to get the JOTI stations operational. However the 'Echolink' system was operational and provided a number of good contacts that the youth members enjoyed.

The JOTA contacts started early Saturday evening. The first contact was to New Zealand when the Joeys spoke with a Kea leader in Lower Hutt - Keas being the equivalent group to Joeys in this country. This was in fact to the Kea group that I had been part of in New Zealand. Contacts continued late into Saturday night and on Sunday morning. We spoke to stations in New South Wales, Queensland, South Australia, Tasmania, Finland, Great Britain; South Africa (including to some ACT Scout leaders

visiting that country), Canada and the USA. Many of our youth members enjoyed speaking to other Scouts – some of them at great length!

Sunday morning also provided the opportunity for some high-tech communication with a pass of the Amateur Radio space satellite 'AO-51'. With a hand-held radio transceiver and home built beam antenna we were able to talk to two stations in New South Wales.

Other activities over the weekend included radio battleships (playing the game 'battleships' using UHF CB radios) and a GPS treasure hunt. These were also enjoyed by the youth.

All those involved thoroughly enjoyed the JOTA weekend. The radio contacts were good, and the 'Echolink' system provided a good supplement to these. Not having JOTI access did not prove to be a problem as there was plenty happening elsewhere.

Overall we had 4 Scouts, 10 Cubs, and 6 Joeys attend the event, supported by 4 leaders. Some other Scout family members also joined in. We also had a visit from Neville Tomkins (ACT Chief Commissioner) and Allan Dean (ACT Commissioner, Program Support) – in fact their visit could not have been better timed as it coincided with some of our best contacts!

I would like to thank Greening Australia for their support in the use of their internet connection. I would also like to thank the leaders and youth members of our group that made this event a success. And of course JOTA would not work without other stations to communicate with, so thank you to all those throughout the world that participated in JOTA.

Further information about our JOTA event, including photos, can be accessed through our JOTA website at <http://clayton.isnotcrazy.com/jota>

We are looking forward to JOTA 2009

Yours in Scouting
Clayton Gumbrell (Penguin)