

YOTA

Month 2015

The Youngsters on the Air (YOTA) programme is an IARU Region 1 initiative aimed at promoting amateur radio to youngsters as well as supporting young amateurs under the age of 26. The IARU programme is jointly led by Lisa, PA2LS and Tommy, ON2TD. The YOTA programme organises a number of projects; such as the IARU Youth Contesting Programme, YOTA Month and the YOTA summer event, which is held in a different IARU Region 1 country each year.



Operating G15YOTA under supervision in the Priory Academy LSST School shack.

YOTA Month takes place during December, encouraging youngsters to experience amateur radio and get active on the air. Each IARU Member Society is encouraged to organise Special Event Stations within their country, identifiable by a callsign with a 'YOTA' suffix. It gives youngsters the opportunity to get on the air as well as experience practical elements of the hobby, such as antenna building, understanding the fundamentals of propagation and gaining an understanding of basic electronics. YOTA Month also acts as a great opportunity for youngsters who are already licensed to enjoy activating a Special Event Station and be 'wanted' on the bands.

Thanks to Ofcom, we were able to secure the callsign G15YOTA and its regional variations. A large number of requests to host the callsign were received filling 25 out of the 31 days in December, with 13 groups taking part. The participants hosting the stations included; 2364 Squadron Welshpool RAF Air Cadets, No 2 Welsh Wing RAF Air Cadets, Aberystwyth & DARS, Bath University, Durham & DARS, Hilderstone RC, Leicester RS, Mid-Ulster ARC, Priory Academy LSST School ARC, Silcoates School ARC, Stirling & DARS, Workshop ARS and Wythall RC. Throughout the month; air cadets, students, Scouts and Cubs were amongst those invited to take part.

In all, 42 stations from 35 DXCC entities participated and a staggering 83,438 QSOs were made, compared with 37,073 in 2014. QSOs were made from 630kHz to 2.4GHz using the usual modes and also EME, Fast Scan TV as well as satellite operating using 5W and a homebrew Yagi.

An award system, managed by HA8RT with designs by IZ5DIY, encouraged amateurs to work as many YOTA stations as possible. This provided a small competitive element to the event and ensured that YOTA stations attracted a lot of attention, with big pileups. This allowed the youngsters to experience DXpedition and contest style operating, demonstrating the need to work stations quickly and accurately, as well as develop good 'ears' and an effective and well mannered operating procedure.

However, the youngsters were also encouraged to seek more thought provoking contacts and spread the word about the YOTA programme and its aims. To date, 2,110 YOTA awards have been downloaded.

To ensure the logistics of YOTA Month ran smoothly, Yentel, ON3YH and Robin, ONL11943 designed an online logging platform on the YOTA website (go to www.ham-yota.com). Each YOTA station could upload their logs to the secure server regularly. This allowed those chasing the YOTA award or those looking to confirm a contact to ensure that they were in the log. It also meant that the YOTA award could be downloaded when the criteria were met. The log files were automatically synced with *Club Log* at midnight, allowing QSL requests to be handled via OQRS. Thanks to Michael, G7VJR for his continued support.

On the air

Stirling & DARS hosted GM15YOTA for a number of days during December and, on the 6th, Scouts and Cubs from local groups attended the club. The event was aimed at

providing a very basic, but fun, introduction to the world of amateur radio. Thanks to support from Jonathan, MM00KG and Martin, GM0UKI, over 35 youngsters aged 12 and under attended the club with their group leaders and parents. Throughout the day, they learned about CW and how antennas work, as well as having the opportunity to pass a greetings message on HF with amateurs from all over the world. Whilst there were a large number of stations wanting to work the GM15YOTA call, most were very patient whilst the youngsters made their very first QSOs on the air, where they were thrilled that they were speaking to people as far away as the US and Canada. I'm sure we will see many of these youngsters continue to show an interest in radio and hopefully work towards their Foundation Licence!

Steve, G0FUW reported on the activities at Bath University on the 7th December. "On the day, we had fifty youngsters attend from four local schools. The whole group were treated to a short intro and a showing of the new RSGB Youth video. They then had a talk on the history of radar by Prof Chris Budd, G4NGB, OBE. They were set a code breaking exercise to do over lunch and in the afternoon, the group split in two and half did robotics with some of the university staff and half did radio. For the radio, we had a webSDR working on a big screen and a display of posters in one room, whilst we had two Special Event Stations in two other rooms. The youngsters came in to the radio rooms and had a briefing, listened to CQ calls and then passed greetings messages when contacts were made. One station in Norway was a little puzzled when he was asked if he lived near Santa! Between

the two stations, we made about 25 QSOs all over Europe on 20m and 40m. Stations were operated by myself and Dan, MOTGN. In the end, a good day was had by all and some youngsters who would otherwise have never heard of amateur radio had the chance to have a go. Some of the teachers were keen for follow up visits too, so we may have more involvement in the future."

Wednesday 9 December was the turn of Hilderstone Radio Club, who hosted G15YOTA at Wellesley House School for the school pupils, as well as the St John's Margate Brownies.

The club organised a number of activities, from a fox hunt to learning CW, where Len, GOGNQ, Armando, MOPAM and Bob, 2EOATZ did a sterling job getting the pupils and Brownies to send and receive some characters. Bob also managed some contacts on the air using SSB and the pupils were able to send greetings messages under supervision.

James, M6LMS, a member of the RSGB Youth Committee came from Sheppey to assist with the event. James was able to demonstrate PSK using his mobile set up and the pupils were amazed to have conversations with radio operators all over Europe. Matthew, 2EOMAP, also a young amateur, came from Canterbury and his experience as a Scout leader helped with the Brownies. A number of the Brownies had in fact been to two Thinking Day on the Air events and they had come back for more!

The Deputy Head teacher tweeted to Tim Peake that the school was preparing for his school contact, with a picture of Bob on the radio and Tim replied with a 'like'!

Aberystwyth & DARS operated from the 10th-12th and Dave, MWOPRI said, "On the evening of the 10th, a dozen or so demonstrations were set up by club members to showcase the hobby and its activities to invited youngsters. Friday saw more demonstrations, including CW, SSTV, antennas, APRS as well as the display of 100 year old radio equipment, thanks to Aberystwyth University who loaned it. Will, 2WOWOD was able to use the call GW15YOTA under supervision, thanks to the institute's Yaesu FT-991, feeding an EZ-Wire antenna and he made over 50 QSOs. Finally, on Saturday, a small group braved the Welsh December weather and made use of the RSGB's 80m ARDF equipment. They were tasked with locating hidden transmitters around the University's campus, with a little encouragement from the chocolate reindeer that was offered to the winner of the event."

Richard, GW1YQM reported on the YOTA activity at No 2 Welsh Wing RAF Air Cadets and the 2364 Squadron Welshpool Cadets. "GW15YOTA enabled several youngsters from No 2 Welsh Wing ATC (RAF Air Cadets) and other locals to learn about amateur radio, both practically and through some theory.



Some Cubs waiting for the winter Es on 6m at the Stirling & District ARS.



Sgt Ethan Jones working data modes with Flt Sgt Aaron Evans, MW6MFN & Sgt Kieron Evans, MW6CYU from 1251 Sqn, No2 Welsh Wing ATC.

Many modes were used such as SSB, SSTV, PSK31 etc. This proved to be very interesting to the youngsters. I particularly remember one contact they had with a station in California who was working the world at a very high QSO rate. The youngsters explained what the special callsign was all about and he stopped working the world and concentrated on helping the cadets at a much slower rate and asked them some very good questions. It was excellent to break the stigma that is attached to radio as an old dying hobby. We now have a very good number of youngsters wishing to gain their Foundation licence and who are also looking forward to YOTA Month 2016."

Priory Academy LSST School ARC operated in the 16th and Dave, G4DWP said, "The station was active from 8.30am and continued with only short breaks until 4.30pm. Operators contacted 147 stations in 33 countries. In particular, we were thrilled to contact the youngsters manning the German YOTA station in Munich, DQOYOTA, and stations as far away as Virginia and New York. The highlight of the day was when we were called by the YOTA station in St Lucia, J62YOTA. All club members took part, either

operating or keeping a log of the contacts made. It was also great to be joined for part of the day by three ex-students of the school club; Tom, M6TCZ, James, M6JGZ and Jon, M3KFZ who were back in Lincoln for Christmas. The day was a great success."

Planning for 2016

YOTA Month continues from strength to strength each year, thanks to tireless effort of the YOTA volunteers and the support of the amateur radio community. It is reassuring to see youth not only getting involved with amateur radio, but actively take the centre stage and in turn promote the hobby to all age groups. On behalf of the RSGB Youth Committee and YOTA, many thanks to all who took part and supported YOTA Month around the world and we look forward to seeing you in December!

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