

Radio Scouting

Why Radio Scouting?

Many ask, “What has Amateur Radio got to do with Scouting?”

Historically, Scouts were involved in Amateur Radio from the start. The first Scout troops were formed in 1908 and amateurs started experimenting with radio well before the First World War. A number of Scout troops, for example the 1st Arundel and the 3rd Altrincham, held transmitting licences in the early 20s. Baden Powell was of the opinion that wireless was an excellent interest for boys and encouraged them to take it up. He saw that it would be an essential form of communication for use in emergencies. Some troops even had mobile stations using their trek carts, in addition to the equipment in their Scout hut

The World Scout Jamboree at Sutton Park in 1957 was the first Jamboree to have an amateur radio station. Alan Dennis, G3CNV had approached the main directing committee of the Jamboree at Imperial Headquarters who, after due consideration gave their enthusiastic approval, adding, “It must be the biggest

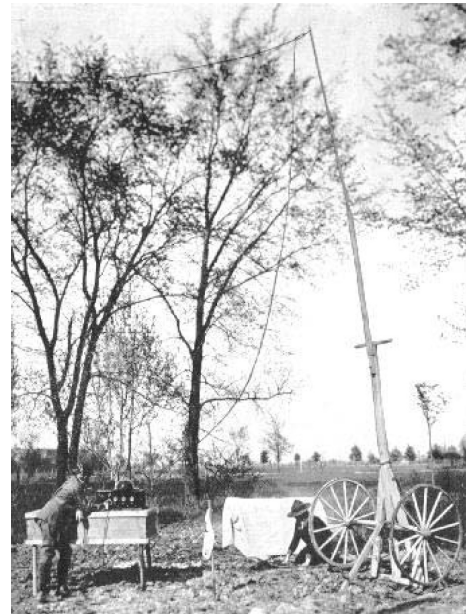
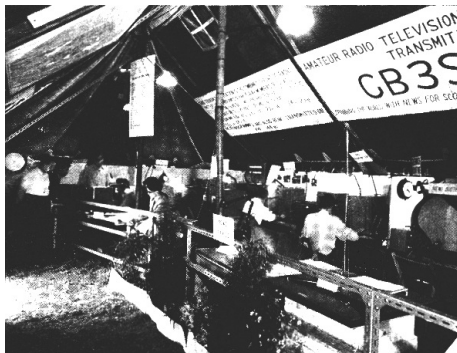


FIG. 168.—KNOCKED DOWN, THE TREK CART FORMS A TABLE, A SHELTER, AND AN AERIAL MAST.



and best station possible”. It gave Scouts attending the Jamboree the opportunity to pass messages to less fortunate Scouts at home around the World. Following the experience at the Jamboree, it was decided to try to continue using amateur radio to enable Scouts to greet Scouts in other countries and the idea of Jamboree on the Air (JOTA) was formed. JOTA grew steadily until it became the largest event in the Scout calendar with 500,000 worldwide. The growth in computer communications has led to a similar event, Jamboree on the Internet (JOTI), on the same weekend each year.

Every World Scout Jamboree since 1957 and many smaller camps have had an amateur radio station where the participants could talk to other Scouts, for example here at Eurojam, 2005. They show how amateur radio can be used to present the international aspect of Scout programme. Radio waves do not stop at national borders and so given reasonable conditions one can make contact with people in other countries during an international evening. It is an opportunity for Scouts to use their language skills and they frequently plot the contacts on a World map learning the location of many countries in the process.

There are quite a number of other ways in which amateur radio can be used to present the Scout programme.

The old adage about radio aerials is “the higher the better” which might be interpreted as a pioneering project challenge. The Dutch Scouts certainly do.



Each year they arrange a competition for the highest radio tower for JOTA. In 2006, the Willibrordus group in Gemert built a wood and rope tower 46 metre high just for the weekend.



Radio Orienteering where one looks for transmitters hidden in the woods encourages the Scouts to use their map reading and compass skills without any of the usual complaints. Their natural competitiveness usually means that they get plenty of exercise as well.

Scouts sometimes wonder why they have to learn the phonetic alphabet because the quality of telephone connections is so good now. However, they quickly find that it is essential in order to pass information without error when using the radio in difficult conditions.



Scouting Burg, Welschen Meerhoven Eindhoven, Netherlands – JOTA 2006.

Although the radio amateurs use voice communication when they have Scout visitors, many will happily send and receive Morse with any Scout who wishes to practice for Signaller badge. Most youngsters know three letters – SOS – and the letter M because their mobile phone announces the arrival of a message with SMS (Short Message Service).

Making a simple electronic kit is often a Scout's first introduction to soldering and electronic circuits.

Radio Scouting is not something that is added on to Scouting but a way of presenting the Scout programme in novel ways that catches the imagination of the youngsters.

