

# Feature

## Youngsters On The Air 2014



The UK Team flying the flag in Finland with IARU Region 1 President, Hans, PB2T

**INTRO.** The decision to participate in the IARU Region 1 Youngsters On The Air event in Finland was taken by the RSGB Board back in January. That led to a flurry of activity to select a Team and a Team Leader – and to do all of the admin. Details of the UK Team selection were covered in the May 2014 *RadCom*.

The level of interest shown in YOTA Finland indicated that a parallel UK event might be a good idea and a small organising committee was formed from amongst the RSGB's young members. Both events took place in July with the UK Team spending a week in Finland and the UK event running over the weekend the Team were away.

**YOTA FINLAND.** The international YOTA gathering took place in Virrat Finland from 15-22 July and was organised by SRAL, the Finnish Amateur Radio League. Fifteen EU countries took part sending teams of four youngsters with team leaders. How did it go?

Jonathan, MOJZO, reported that Summits on the Air was a very popular part of the international gathering. "Some of the YOTA teams were given the chance to visit the tallest point in southern Finland (Kiiskilanmaki, OH/JS-016) and 'activate' the summit, either with their own callsign prefixed OH/, or using OG3X under supervision. This was enjoyed by many as there were also some very nice views from the summit and we had the opportunity to explore the surrounding countryside. For those not interested in SOTA, there was a

trip to Scandinavian Weekend Radio that coincided with the SOTA trip. Located in Virrat city, this radio station is the only MW and SW broadcast station in Finland.

"Throughout the week time was allocated to amateur radio related presentations. They included how to find and solve interference (Team PA); using computers in amateur radio (Team EA); and Amateur Radio Astronomy in the Ku band (Team UK).

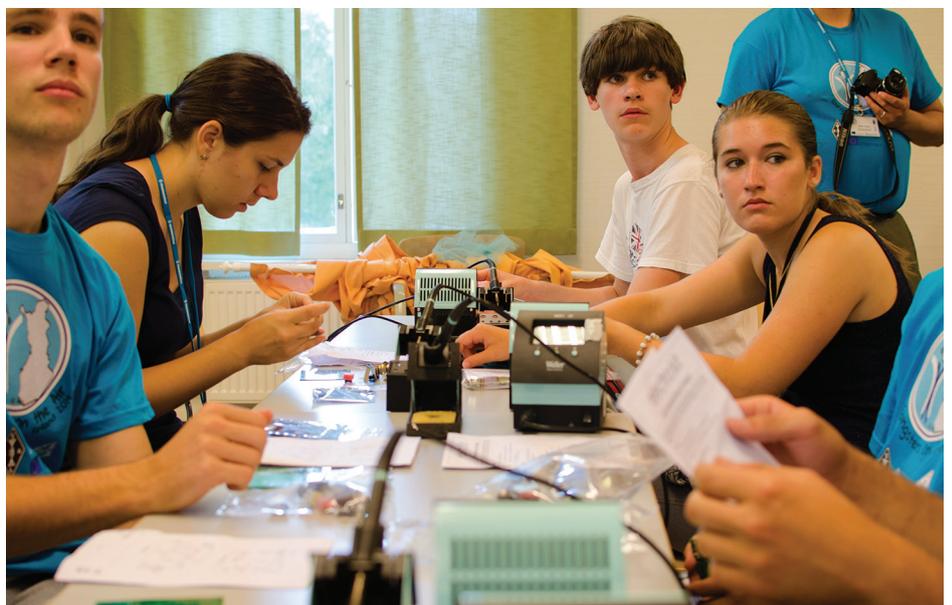
"There were contests over the week, both on- and off-air. A 2m FM contest was organised by team LY and an off-air

contest was run by team ES for fun and to give those without amateur licences some contesting experience. The contesting style was as normal, ie serial number, signal report and QSO number, but for the off-air contest the QSOs took place over AF rather than RF (ie shouting). This was a lot of fun, especially with the high QRM! There was also an ERTC Contest; which was a mock of the real WRTC contest. This was run on a virtual RF software programme, known as *Hamsphere*. The programme only requires a laptop, internet connection and headset and simulates a real RF environment (QRM etc). Team UK came 6th out of the fifteen groups that took place in the *Hamsphere* contest.

"We also participated in activities to help improve our emergency communication skills and we had chance to build either a CW practice oscillator or 2m Slim Jim antenna. Finally ARDF was an especially fun activity. All of the YOTA teams were given training on how to use the receivers and what to listen for. Once ten foxes were set up on 80m around the campus the teams were 'let loose' to try and find them all. This was extremely fast paced and very enjoyable. Ricky, MW6GWR and Team Leader Gervald, G0GNF, placed an excellent time that saw them gain 5<sup>th</sup> position overall.

"Many contacts were made by the OH2YOTA special event station that had been set up on site. There was a dedicated 160/80m station, a station for 40/20/15 and 10m, as well as a 144MHz and satellite station. The 40-10m station used an impressive Yagi array on a 36m mast.

"We made a lot of new friends from all across Europe who we hope to stay in contact with. I would definitely recommend YOTA 2015 to other young members of the amateur radio community in the UK. We learnt a great deal about the hobby and



Some of the European delegates getting ready to build a Morse practice oscillator.



Ricky, MW6GWR, operating the OH2YOTA special event station.

experienced many different cultures from all around Europe.”

Adam, MM0KFX said, “YOTA Finland was absolutely fantastic. It was definitely the best trip I’ve been on in a long time and it was nice to meet other young people. I’ve made quite a few good friends, including some great contacts in high places; it’s not every day you get to chat to the IARU Region 1 president!

“I think the formation of a Youth Committee is crucial. The momentum is definitely in favour of youth activities, but the RSGB Board and its committees can only do so much. Clubs need to get more active and advertise themselves to young people. It needs to come from the ground up. But, big events like YOTA will grab people’s attention!

“Throughout the week, we had a number of team building exercises organised by various countries that helped to break the ice and get people talking to each other at the start of each day. When we had free time, we could take the rowing boats out into the enormous lake, have a walk through the woods or take a trip to the sauna, which is a well renowned Scandinavian pastime! We also had a camp fire at the lake in the evenings, where people could gather round and socialise, whilst trying to avoid the swarms of mosquitoes! The inter-cultural evening was also a huge success and I’ve managed to hook all of the European teams on Irn-Bru and shortbread!”

The UK Team Leader Gervald, G0GNF, was blown away; “I must highlight the superb operating skills of the team, leading to very high contest placings in the two virtual and one real contests. I would like to say how well run it was and how friendly all the 60 young people were. But more importantly how the UK delegation was continually praised for its punctuality, good

manners, enthusiasm, competitiveness, good operating standards, technical expertise and everything expected of ambassadors for the UK and also for the RSGB. The boys really did lead in every field.”

Look out for the UK YOTA Team at the RSGB Convention in October, where they will be presenting everything they got up to in greater detail and will explain why the future looks bright for young people involved with amateur radio in the UK and what we can do to encourage further participation by youngsters.

Finally, we must all thank Marilyn at RSGB HQ for admin support and for working through the European Commission bureaucracy to help make it all happen and to SRAL Team in Finland for making it a great success.

**YOTA UK.** With many young members disappointed at missing out on the Finland trip the Board agreed that a UK event should be held too. This took place at the home of the Wolverhampton ARS and whilst it was much smaller than the Finland event, it was equally busy and enjoyable. Thanks go to all the club members who helped out over the weekend.

The Camb Hams provided the gear and mobile shack for the Special Event Station, GB1YOTA, which gave those in attendance a chance to have a go at working pile-ups despite having to dodge the thunderstorms.

Tom & Jimmy Read explained all about SOTA Awards and many of the delegates had a go at making and testing portable 20m vertical antennas. Thanks to Richard at SOTABeams for making up the kits for Tom’s aerial design; kits are now available to buy (see New Products on page 14).

Pete, 2E0SQL gave presentations on digital modes and using satellites and Rob, MOVFC gave an inspiring talk on some of the DXpeditions he has taken part in. The Bath Buildathon Crew guided youngsters through the Intermediate Practical Assessments and three sat the exam at the event. No fewer than eleven RSGB Centenary receivers were built on the Saturday afternoon.

Vaughan, MOVRR, demonstrated his BBQ skills by feeding the mass gathering and there was much socialising and comparing of experiences as young amateurs.

Sunday saw a dozen youngsters trying out ARDF in Baggeridge Park under the guidance of the RSGB ARDF group and some portable operation from the park. Nick, M6NJR, came first in the ARDF event, finding all five hidden transmitters well within the time.



Youngsters from fifteen European countries gathered in Finland and made some new friends.



YOTA was organised by young members, for young members. Steve, GOFUW with the YOTA UK organisers (L to R); Mike, 2E0MLJ, Marie-Ann, M6UWS, Dax, M6DAX, Jenny, M6HFA and Rachel, M6S00.

The Camb Hams and a few of the delegates kept the SES pile-ups going with some budding contest operators learning the ropes under expert supervision. Unfortunately, thunderstorms prevented a direct QSO from YOTA UK to YOTA OH.

Five young members met with GOFUW every week using Skype to make the arrangements for YOTA UK and they awarded prizes during the weekend (thanks to Mark at the RSGB Book Shop for the prizes):

YOTA UK Award (overall participation):  
James Monahan, 2EOJPM  
Kit Crown Award (receiver building):  
Jamie Drinkell, M6JLD  
Champion Award (exam score):  
Alice Champion, M6NYK  
Hot Metal (new to soldering):  
Nick Ravenscroft, M6NJR



ARDF featured at both YOTA events and was a very popular activity.

Lightening Award (excellent bulb circuit work): Sarah Hopkins  
CQ award (SES operating):  
Jamie Williams, M6GDI  
Digi Award (contribution in digi-modes session): William Davies, MW6WOD  
DX Traveller Award (longest journey):  
Mike Jones, 2E0MLJ

Comments about the weekend were all very positive.

Rachel, M6S00 said "Thank you for a brilliant weekend! The ARDF went well, as everyone seemed to enjoy the challenge. I also thought making the DC circuit was very good as everyone helped each other and were proud of their achievements."

Marie-Ann, M6UWS said she liked the fact that she got to meet other young radio amateurs around her age. "I would be really interested in taking part in a DXpeditions. One thing maybe for next year, more time on ARDF? And a RAYNET talk? I would be happy to do one."

Jenny, M6HFA was really impressed



Some of YOTA UK delegates building and testing their DC circuits.

with the general feeling of the weekend; she said, "I think it's a credit to RSGB to have these young people involved. I really enjoyed the practical sessions. I thought they went particularly well because of the level of peer-to-peer learning, which I think a lot of the participants enjoyed as well. I think it is a really good way of showing the diversity of the ways to be involved in radio it would be good to try to make accommodation on site or very near, and some sort of activity for the evening."

Was it a success? I think the feedback above speaks for itself. Will we do it again? I really hope so; the young organisers and delegates were certainly all up for a repeat in 2015.

**WHAT COMES NEXT?** The TX Factor team came to film the UK event and interviewed many of the delegates so look out for a feature on their online TV programme and a promotional film that clubs can use to show to young people who are interested in what amateur radio has to offer.

December is YOTA month and we are intending to have some kind of club based event across the UK. Local clubs need to start thinking about how they can contribute.

The idea of a YOTA DXpedition seems to be gaining support. Whilst it will be limited to somewhere in the UK, due to international restrictions on Foundation and Intermediate Licence holders, it is generating much excitement.

YOTA 2015 is a definite possibility, both international & UK events. We are waiting for confirmation of the location of the International venue and we have no fixed ideas on where the UK one might be, but it needs to be central to make it as accessible as possible.

Probably the most talked about proposal to come out of the YOTA activity is the formation of a Youth Committee to make it all happen. It is early days and we are not sure how this will work but it seems to have widespread support from individual members right through to the IARU. Watch this space!

Hopefully, these YOTA activities will show young members that there are real benefits in maintaining their membership and that the Society really does care about them. If those messages are spread throughout the amateur radio community it is hoped that more young amateurs will be encouraged to join the RSGB and help shape and secure its future.

#### WEBSEARCH:

YOTA: [www.ham-yota.eu/](http://www.ham-yota.eu/)  
Wolverhampton ARS: [www.wolverhamptonars.co.uk/](http://www.wolverhamptonars.co.uk/)  
Camb Hams: [www.camb-hams.com/](http://www.camb-hams.com/)  
SOTA Awards: [www.sota.org.uk/Awards](http://www.sota.org.uk/Awards)  
SOTA Beams YOTA Antenna Kit:  
[www.sotabeams.co.uk/20m-ground-plane-kit/](http://www.sotabeams.co.uk/20m-ground-plane-kit/)