JOTA REPORT FROM ROB and MAEVA October 2018

Well, the first JOTA for VK2ARL and VK2MWL, and what a weekend. We arrived at the Brunswick Heads Girl Guides Hall on Friday afternoon and set up the radios. We used the go box with the IC7300 for HF, the ICOM 2730 on UHF, and the Ailunce HD1 for DMR.

There were eight girls attending and after a little initial reticence, one decided to try the DMR. First call? The Netherlands! This sparked the interest of the rest, especially once they had looked at the world map and seen how far the call had gone. ARL checked QRZ and showed the photo of Erik (with a K). Next call? Malta with again a photo being retrieved from QRZ. Two hours later after calls to various Australian locations we had to end the session as it was time for their evening routine.

Saturday saw the arrival of two very young guides from Ballina so we now had 10 children in two groups of five. There was a bunch of calls to various spots, initially to Norway then mostly Australia, the Philipines and New Zealand, firstly by SSB but then back to DMR as it was a lot clearer for the girls to understand. The highlight of these sessions was when one girl spoke to Marie, at JL2JOTA, the NZ organiser of JOTA NZ! On SSB 40 metres today we spent about an hour chatting to a group of scouts at Cotter Dam just out of Canberra. The older girls were very impressed.

All in all, we were impressed with the enthusiasm shown by the girls. Many questions were asked about how radios work and what sort of people use them! There were also sessions on the phonetic alphabet and morse code which they all seemed to enjoy.

Altogether, we put in about 10 hours of radio time in 5 sessions logging 55 calls. Each time a session ended the girls asked if there would be more. Talk about keen. For us, the highlights would have to be speaking to Marie in NZ, speaking with an Australian boy living in Norway, and speaking to a young lad in NZ who is still at kindergarten.

This was an interesting experience for us, one that we would happily repeat.