

# The Rally at WOBURN

The annual Radio Society of Great Britain National Mobile Rally made its appearance at Woburn Abbey in Bedfordshire on Sunday 6 August, right on cue. As I hadn't been to the Rally for a couple of years, the first thing I noticed was the savannah-like aspect of the rolling parkland, dried to the colour of dust by the favourable

what we found wasn't junk at all, and much of it — mostly accessories and computer bits and pieces — was boxed. There were a few useful looking bits ready for either reconditioning or stripping down, though; not at dirt cheap prices, either. We heard our name being bandied about: "Ham Radio Today project, read it in

in/homebuilt ecology. But wherever two or three are gathered together, the debate on whether black boxes are the death of true amateurism crops up sooner or later.

Some dealers feel the same way. Naturally, it depends whether they depend for their livelihood mostly on components, mainly on shiny boxed items, or whether they also have a mixed ecology. I'll come back to that later.

As might be expected at the mobile rally, the components and accessories market was represented more comprehensively than the black box market, but there were plenty of both about. G3YZW picked up a set of solar cells for charging a 12V battery for just over a tenner, a set of rechargeable batteries (which represent a kind of addiction to people who come to believe in them) and holder and spent some time conversing about a toroidal inductor in the hope that it would be suitable for a 12V 10A switched mode power supply.

We were pleased to see MuTeK showing off their range of linear transverters and amplifiers. MuTeK was taken over a year ago after much planning by Mike Dorsett when four-

## *The Editor grabs backpack and engineer and goes to see what is happening at the Abbey.*

weather we've been having. No wellies needed for the main marquee.

The second thing we noticed was an official with a handheld trying to clear two vanloads of dealers off the property in lieu of £27ses which had apparently not been paid earlier in the day. The vanloads were severely protesting that they would cheerfully have paid their £27ses in the morning had they been asked for them, but didn't feel like doing so at lunchtime, and further seemed indisposed to go anywhere. Funny, because we understood that all the spaces had been pre-booked. The hapless official mentioned Park Staff firmly and tried to herd the audience away from the tempting piles of salvage, but it drifted inexorably back in behind him. We decided that this was a trade dispute, and that no-one was going to dot anyone on the nose, and went in search of some junk ourselves. In the evening the vanloads were still there. We never found out what became of the £27ses.

Chris Lorek's book," — Street Cries of Old England, no. 401 — and sidled up to see if we could extract some home truths (which we call "market research"). And we did, too. Perhaps the most significant one — which I raise here because it continued to manifest itself in other, practical, ways during the day, could be called "People either love Black Boxes, or they don't".

Let me explain hastily that I don't believe that this is a real-life situation. Most amateurs run a mixed bought-

MuTeK offer the chance to customise the black box to your own requirements.

### **Street Cries**

In the junk dealers' tent, most of

