

## **The Elvaston Castle Radio Rally - “all good things .....”**

On Monday 7<sup>th</sup> April 2008 the committee of the Nunsfield House Amateur Radio Club, organisers of the Elvaston Castle Radio Rally, took the very difficult decision to cancel the Rally. It was a decision taken with much sadness, whereby the heart said continue, but the head could not countenance the risks associated with continuing. So why, after 38 successful years, have we been forced to take this sad but inevitable decision?

The Rally started in 1970, in days when enthusiasm and participation in amateur radio were high, the age profile young and people keen to attend rallies for many reasons. This enthusiasm enabled the rally to grow to one of the largest in the country, attracting at its peak well over 12 thousand people.

Unfortunately over the last few years the rally has been increasingly exposed to issues that will be familiar to many businesses. This is a key point to understand because, although run by volunteers, the rally was in effect a ‘business’ that cost a lot to set up and had to make some profit to survive.

In its earlier days the rally worked on a ‘safe’ business model whereby all of the costs were covered by the start of the Rally day. This was achieved through the income from the traders, on site caterers etc. This meant that no matter how ‘bad’ the day may be in terms of weather and attendance we would not lose money.

Unfortunately over the last 10 years we have been increasingly squeezed in all the main directions associated with its running:

- Increasing costs of site hire, marquee hire and insurance
- Added costs of Health & Safety and security
- Access to online sites, ebay etc made rallies less attractive for that ‘difficult to get’ purchase
- Difficulty in attracting sufficient traders, resulting in a problem of scale
- Falling attendance. Last year saw some 3000 people attend, a fall of over 75% from better days. Indeed falling attendance has been a trend for a number of years.
- Falling numbers to set up and organise the rally

The result of this is that for many years now the rally has been entering the day increasingly in deficit. It has relied on the monies taken on the day to cover costs, not just provide any profit. Last year this reached the stage where bad weather (much like that from mid June onwards) would have resulted in a significant loss.

This then brings us back to the decision to cancel the rally. In making a final assessment of this years rally before committing to significant outlays, the numbers simply did not add up. All of the above trends were continuing, and the financial risks we were taking were deemed unacceptable. We would be risking the rally taking down the whole of the organising committee & the associated radio club. These were deemed unacceptable personal risks.

We can only say again how difficult this decision was. Many of the people involved have been there since the first rally and have a lot of emotional attachment to it. The rally has seen some great days, possible during a ‘heyday’ of amateur radio. Sadly times have changed and the rally has, in some respects, followed the trend of amateur radio itself.

Finally we would like, for one last time, to thank all of those who have supported us over the years. We will always look back with pride on the 38 years of rallies, and hope you all have fond memories of attending. If you wish to leave any comments, please use the guest book on [www.elvastonrally.co.uk](http://www.elvastonrally.co.uk).

CL & SK!

Andy Barker, G8IYZ.

On behalf of the Nunsfield House Amateur Radio Club, organisers of the Elvaston Castle Radio Rally.