

2023

– a year in numbers



During a year when the global landscape shifted once more, with conflicts across the world and economic difficulties touching the lives of individuals, we were pleased to see that the amateur radio community continues to thrive. It may have changed shape and adapted with the times, but the RSGB has been there not only to support its members but to defend the spectrum and provide information for all radio amateurs.

Next month's *RadCom* will show in detail the work of the committees and other specialist volunteers, but here we bring you some great things to celebrate, in which RSGB HQ staff have often led the way. The infographic overleaf shows the highlights whilst the fuller story and numbers are shared in the feature below.

RSGB National Radio Centre

The RSGB National Radio Centre (NRC) based at Bletchley Park was open for 351 days in 2023 and welcomed 79,809 visitors. This was more than in 2022 despite the NRC being closed for nine days due to the AI Global Summit hosted at Bletchley Park. The NRC typically has three or four volunteers working most days who, between them, spent more than 9,000 hours explaining and demonstrating amateur radio to visitors. This shows clearly why the NRC plays such a key part in the RSGB's growth strategic priority.

The NRC hosted or supported a number of events last year, including: a 'Build a Morse Tutor' event for youngsters funded by the Radio Communications Foundation; a display of WWII wireless equipment at the Bletchley Park 1940s' weekend; participating in the International Enigma Reloaded event run by the amateur radio club of the Italian Navel College; and two days in December for YOTA (Youngsters on the Air) Month where the NRC had three newly-licensed M7 operators making over 500 QSOs using the GB23YOTA callsign. Videos of the Enigma Reloaded event, including a translation of the CW message, are available on the RSGB YouTube channel at youtube.com/theRSGB and nearly two thousand people have enjoyed watching them already.

We were especially pleased to open the NRC to more than 40 RSGB Convention attendees on the Friday afternoon of the Convention weekend, for whom we also organised a private guided tour of the Bletchley Park Museum.

The RSGB is keen to support clubs and, throughout last year, the NRC continued to offer clubs the opportunity to enjoy a private visit by prior arrangement. The Centre welcomed 12



Pippa, M7PFL operating the GB3RS station for YOTA Month.

amateur radio clubs and 2 cadet/scout troops for evening visits and many more amateur radio clubs visited the NRC during normal daytime opening hours.

Overall, during 2023 more than 3,950 QSOs were made from the NRC using the permanent special event station callsign GB3RS on CW, SSB, FM and digital modes, using both the shortwave bands and utilising satellite communication.

2023 Convention

Whilst the volunteers at the NRC welcome people in person, the RSGB continued its hybrid format for this year's Convention to offer flexibility for those who wanted to take part. We welcomed 450 people to the Convention venue and also provided online content via the livestream for many more across the world. Yet again we had a fantastic line-up of speakers who provided informative and entertaining presentations on a wide range of amateur radio topics.

As in previous years, we offered one stream of content each day via YouTube which gave online viewers a taster of what they could enjoy at the Convention itself. We are reaching and supporting

the wider amateur radio community and making some content available to people who might be interested in finding out more about amateur radio. It also gives us the opportunity to tell non-members about the advantages of membership.

This year we added a registration process for those viewing online. This enabled us to see that 70% of registrants were RSGB members but 30% were non-members, which confirmed that we are reaching and supporting the wider amateur radio community with our high-quality online content.

Looking at the analytics of our livestream viewers, outside of the United Kingdom the highest proportion of people watching were from Canada, the United States, the Netherlands and the Republic of Ireland. However, radio amateurs watched from across the world, including Australia, Chile, Seychelles and Ukraine.

A dedicated team of HQ staff and technical volunteers produced 15 hours of livestream content, including 18 live and pre-recorded interviews, some lively video chats with people in the bar on Friday evening, and presentations for the online attendees to enjoy. Preparing this level of engaging content both for those attending the Convention and those watching online took months of preparation.

During the social media campaign, we shared



General Manager Steve Thomas, M1ACB interviewing RSGB ARISS Coordinator Ciaran Morgan, MOXTD at the RSGB 2023 Convention.

over 50 posts on both X and Facebook, and these reached over 300,000 people across both platforms.

We have released ten Convention presentations so far which were either on the livestream or which fit our strategic priorities of membership, growth, spectrum and licencing. So far, these videos have had over 6,000 views and over 178 likes. Two that have been particularly welcomed by our online audience are the 23cm update and the RSGB EMC Committee investigations into sources of RF electrical interference.

Through the livestream and the presentations released afterwards, we have been reaching and supporting the wider amateur radio community, and making some content available to people who might be interested in finding out more about amateur radio. It has also given us the opportunity to tell non-members about the advantages of membership.

Videos

Our videos and presentations on YouTube continue to be enjoyed by thousands of radio amateurs across the world, and this year we gained a further 1.2k subscribers to our channel. In total, we had 94.9k channel views, which is 14% more than last year.

We curate our content into different playlists to enable people to find more easily the type of content that they want. In 2023 the most popular playlist was our live Tonight@8 webinars which have had 31,394 views so far. This reflected an increase of 9.9% in playlist views and moved it up from being our third most popular playlist in the year before. This playlist also contained the most popular video released in 2023, which was "An entry-level talk on End Fed Half Wave antennas" by Colin Summers, MM0OPX, which had 3,745 views.

Perhaps reflecting the changing amateur radio landscape in which people often don't go to, or don't have, a local club, the second most popular playlist was our "Foundation Practicals: RSGB guide for new licensees". This suite of videos takes new radio amateurs through the basics of setting

up a station, making their first QSO, and so on.

We have always used videos to help support radio amateurs through changing times, and last year was no different. We created an initial video outline of the Ofcom Consultation, followed by two special T@8 webinars featuring RSGB specialists in the different areas affected by the proposed licensing changes. Radio amateurs had the opportunity to ask questions via the live chat. RSGB Spectrum Forum Chair Murray Niman, G6JYB followed this up with a presentation at the Convention, and this whole suite of information had a combined total of 10,602 views as well as many positive and grateful comments.

Being social

During 2023, Twitter became X and the pattern of social media changed as people experimented with different platforms. Despite this, our X profile reached over 14k followers in 2023, demonstrating a steady increase and continued interest in our content. During the year we had nearly 2m impressions on X.

Interaction on our Facebook page has grown significantly during these social platform changes, with a 207% increase in people visiting our page. We also had 904 new page likes, which is a 126% increase on the previous year. Continuing this trend, we had 65.1k post content engagements which is a 239% increase from 2022.

We continue to develop our content on social media and have encouraged people to engage with us through sending in photos and updates for our Photo Friday focus in people. We love to see individuals and clubs engaging with our content and being particularly encouraging of young operators.

Amateur radio in the media

Our media monitoring agency helps us to keep track of mentions in the mainstream media of amateur radio, the RSGB or our special campaigns. In 2023 there were 588 mentions of the RSGB in online/print news, radio and podcasts across the mainstream and

specialist amateur radio media, reaching a massive potential audience of 993,629,331. This is 156 more mentions than the previous year, which is growth of approximately 36% year on year.

We try to reach national as well as local audiences. The Communications Manager worked closely with The Times Science Correspondent on an article entitled "Ham radio tunes in to a new generation" which was published in January 2023.

"The Times article had a potential online audience of over 42 million"

The Comms team focused on local media for National Coding Week (NCW). Activities led by John Hislop, G7OHO at a school were covered by an article in *The Isle of Thanet News*, which has an online news audience of 9,782, and in a BBC Radio Kent radio interview where the station has approximately 206,000 listeners per week.

We work hard to build relationships with media contacts and to provide information for them if they contact us about writing a story. This also means that they are more receptive when we approach them with an idea or a story that we think would interest their audience.

Campaigns

In 2023 the RSGB supported national initiatives such as British Science Week and National Coding Week. As well as encouraging radio amateurs to get involved in sharing wireless communication activities in their local areas, we carried out social media campaigns to raise awareness of the RSGB amongst the wide variety of organisations that were also supporting these initiatives.

Whilst we gained a good number of engagements for our social media posts, our X content was also liked/reshared by high-profile organisations such as the British Science Association. This awareness in the STEM sector is important for our strategic priority of growth.

To give an idea of the reach for each individual campaign, for National Coding Week we shared a total of 14 posts on both Facebook and Twitter, and the Facebook campaign alone reached 43,228 people.

RadCom and supplements

During 2023, *RadCom* continued to provide a diverse range of content covering almost all facets of amateur radio. The year saw the 99th volume of the Society's journal and its authors contributed 255 separate articles on various amateur radio-related articles as well as 41 in-depth reviews of products.

Antenna design and construction is always

an area of great interest among members and 2023 was no different – we included 16 different antenna projects, both large and small, throughout the year. Construction projects are also popular with readers, and 27 were published during 2023.

It was great to see clubs flourishing with activity. The *RadCom* desk was kept busy with the 148 separate reports that were received and published (an average of 12.3 reports per issue of *RadCom*).

As usual, the magazine continued to provide its readers with reviews of books. The 23 books that were reviewed in 2023 included some technical publications and others of general or historical interest.

Reflecting the RSGB's global membership, throughout the year we received many letters and features from members all around the world.

RadCom Basics continued to be popular with amateurs who wished to brush up their skills or increase their knowledge. During 2023, six issues of *RadCom Basics* were published. These included 11 technical articles, 18 features and three reviews. We were pleased to see that this content proved useful to RSGB members, with over 100 more subscribing to receive notification of each issue.

For more technically-minded amateurs, one issue of *RadCom Plus* was published during 2023, which contained three technical articles and one feature. An additional 600 members subscribed to receive email alerts for *RadCom Plus* during 2023, showing their appreciation of this part of the *RadCom* suite.

GB2RS

The Society's GB2RS News service has been operating since 1955 but it continues to develop to reflect the changing nature of the amateur radio landscape. In 2023 it was read on 10 different amateur bands from HF to SHF, and using eight different modes. The podcast at gb2rs.podbean.com continues to flourish, with 350 listeners on average each week.

The RSGB *RadCom* and Comms teams prepared the script for 51 weeks of the year, whilst a dedicated band of 102 volunteer readers delivered 73 separate broadcasts every Sunday, as well as audio and TV on the web. In one year, that's approximately 2,000 hours of unique RSGB news.

Nearly 4,000 members now subscribe to the GB2RS email alert each week, with hundreds more subscribing each year.

Membership

It was great to see that over 1,400 people joined or rejoined the RSGB in 2023. In addition, 14 new clubs affiliated with the RSGB and two clubs returned to affiliation. Whilst we love having new members, we also celebrate those who have been

members for many years – in 2023 there were 135 members who achieved 50 years of continuous membership and a further 70 members who had been loyal members for sixty years! Congratulations to them all.

Books and products

In 2023 we brought the membership more than 30 new products, including 24 RSGB books and merchandise.

By the end of the year, the RSGB shop had invoiced 13,000 items across 255 different products, and we delivered to 55 countries.

Our vouchers proved very popular with over 1,200 being redeemed by members over a large array of RSGB books.

Exams

In 2023, the number of people taking amateur radio exams dropped slightly from 2022, with a total of 2,232 candidates taking either an online or paper exam. The Direct to Full exam is only available online. Of those 2,232 candidates, 1,846 were successful.

A team of 19 volunteer invigilators handled just under 1,500 exam sessions throughout the year, which was phenomenal work.

Whilst many people choose to book their exams online now, there are still many who prefer a club setting. During 2023, 54 unique clubs ran exams with the majority (40) opting for paper exams. There was a total of 121 club exam sessions, with 76 at Foundation level, 35 at Intermediate, eight at Full and two at Direct to Full.

The RSGB Exam Secretary single-handedly administers the whole exam process for each candidate, beginning with the first exam enquiry, through to the booking, and then the creation of candidate info and exams in two separate systems. She is also involved in the smooth communication between candidates, remote invigilators and club exam officials where required, as well as the issuing of results. In addition, she also answers exam enquiries on a range of topics, including special assistance and those with disabilities.

Behind the scenes

Making all of this happen have been our 18 very busy, mostly part-time, staff. They've made and received about 40,000 phone calls, sent and received far more emails than we can count, and been the friendly voice to thousands of new and existing Members, as well as radio amateurs seeking help and advice, both in the UK and across the world. Our team also handled 760 IT Helpdesk support tickets on a range of topics and answered hundreds of calls asking for amateur radio technical advice. Our finance team were also kept very busy, and as part of

their work they processed 103,454 customer payments – these include exams, *RadCom* advertising and trade sales, as well as monthly direct debit membership payments.

“HQ staff made and received about 40,000 phone calls“

Our website had 1,245,653 unique views and we continued to update and streamline information as our activities grew. A particular focus last year was on youth activities so our youth landing page at rsgb.org/youth was given a facelift and we introduced pages on British Science Week and National Coding Week. These all link to *RadCom* features on these topics, so everyone can see how we report and promote things across all our communication channels. We also encouraged individual members and clubs to update their information on the portal and we have seen a steady increase in people doing that.

“we issued 950 free entry vouchers to Bletchley Park and the RSGB National Radio Centre“

We were also delighted to issue 950 Bletchley Park vouchers, giving RSGB members free access not only to the BP museum but also to the RSGB National Radio Centre – a fantastic membership benefit!

The HQ team work closely with, and support, the hundreds of RSGB volunteers without whom the Society would be unable to provide its range of expert amateur radio services. We were delighted to recognise the volunteers' contribution by sending out 690 volunteer badges at the end of the year.

Looking ahead

There are so many great things to celebrate and there are many more that happen, quietly, each day. I would like to thank the RSGB staff for the fantastic work they do and for the positive spirit in which they do it.

As the latest RSGB priorities are discussed at workshops and plans are put in place across the Society, we will focus our work over the coming year to ensure that these priorities are embedded in all that we do, to ensure there is even more to celebrate next year.

Steve Thomas, M1ACB
RSGB General Manager
gm.dept@rsgb.org.uk



2023 - a year in numbers



RSGB National Radio Centre volunteers gave **9,039** hours of their time to welcome **79,809** people across **351** days



588 mentions of RSGB in online/print news, radio and podcasts = potential audience of **993,629,331**



Our website had **1,245,653** unique views



RadCom
255 articles
41 in-depth product reviews
148 club reports

We invoiced **13,000** items across **255** different products and delivered to **55** countries



RSGB Convention: **450** people in person, **15** hours livestream content, **18** interviews

Our YouTube channel was viewed **128,800** times



YouTube

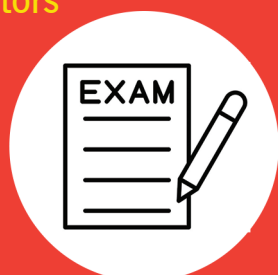
Our Facebook page was visited **63,456** times = 207% increase



We sent out **690** badges to thank volunteers



2,232 candidates took an online/paper exam and **19** volunteer invigilators handled just under **1,500** exam sessions



Over **1,400** joined/rejoined the RSGB and **16** clubs affiliated/reaffiliated



Nearly **4,000** members subscribe to the weekly GB2RS email alert