

2022 a year in numbers

Feature

As we all adjusted to more normal levels of activity after the restrictions of Covid, we were delighted that during 2022, radio amateurs and clubs started meeting more frequently and enjoying amateur radio together.

Next month's *RadCom* will show in detail the work of the committees and other specialist volunteers, but here we bring you an overview of the continuing amateur radio success story we have seen over the last year, 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 hybrid Convention

We held our first hybrid Convention last year, which saw hundreds of radio amateurs meeting in person and thousands enjoying a snapshot of the lectures via two days of livestreaming. The Convention brought together a fantastic line-up of speakers who, between them, provided expert technical presentations as well as clear explanations about how to get started in different aspects of amateur radio. The Special Interest Groups who joined us also put on a great display and chatted to hundreds of people during the weekend.

A strong team of technical volunteers and HQ staff produced 15 hours of livestream content, including live and pre-recorded interviews 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.

Our livestreams have now been viewed 6.7k times and the individual presentations we have released in the weeks since the Convention have had over 9,000 views.

We have also begun to release some Convention presentations into our Members' portal as a benefit of membership, so Members can see the presentations before everyone else on YouTube.

Our viewers come from a wide range of countries across the world, including the UK and the USA, Canada, South Korea, Mauritius, Malaysia, South Africa, Japan and many countries across Europe.

Videos

Our YouTube channel continues to grow both in content and subscribers. We are delighted that in 2022 we started reaching new audiences with our videos – our analytics show that between 2021 and 2022, there was a 130% increase in female viewers and a 252% increase in 13-44-year-olds viewing our videos.

Being social

All of our social media platforms gained new followers in 2022 and we saw a lot of lively discussions and information sharing. Our Facebook group for new and returning licensees now has 1.1k members and continues to be a supportive environment for people who are starting out or getting back into amateur radio. Our tweets in 2022 had nearly 1.5 million impressions, the number of people who looked at our Facebook page increased by 45.2% whilst the number who saw any of our posts, photos and videos on Facebook rose by 32.4%.



General Manager, Steve Thomas, M1ACB being interviewed live at the RSGB 2022 Convention.

Amateur radio in the media

Last year saw a significant number of articles, interviews and TV programmes where amateur radio was mentioned. We were approached by the BBC to help with amateur radio content for programmes such as "The Secret Genius of Modern Life" and "Countryfile", and we also helped the BBC Data Team to translate a Morse Code message in relation to the war in Ukraine.

The RSGB Communications Manager wrote a three-page feature in the February edition of *RadCom* that outlined just some of these examples and suggested how we can all work together to raise the profile of amateur radio in the mainstream media even more. You can read that on page 52 of the February edition.

Tonight@8

Our popular monthly webinar series, which began during lockdown, continues to inspire people about different aspects of amateur radio. Topics covered in 2022 were as varied as the story of Jodrell Bank, through to HF on holiday, Log4OM and 100 years of BBC technology and innovation. The availability of the presentations on our YouTube channel means that even if people aren't able to watch on the night, they can catch up afterwards – and thousands do just that every week.

RadCom

Over the year, *RadCom* magazine went from strength to strength. Together, our authors and contributors wrote over 160 separate articles on various subjects related to amateur radio. We reviewed 38 individual items in detail, published 72 technical articles and 55 special feature articles. The magazine is popular around the world and is enjoyed by readers in over 110 different countries. Many of those members wrote letters to us and we printed 135 of them in *The Last Word* during the 2022 year. We also helped the Membership find new homes for their old equipment by publishing 313 Members' ads.

RadCom Plus continued to provide high-level technical material while *RadCom Basics* was enjoyed by those who are seeking to broaden their knowledge of the fundamentals of amateur radio. During 2022, *RadCom Basics* included nine technical articles, five features and two reviews. *RadCom Plus* included four technical articles and three features and gained over 800 new subscribers.



Some RSGB Convention attendees being hosted at the NRC.

GB2RS

GB2RS news is read on ten different amateur bands and eight different modes. Each Sunday, 108 volunteer newsreaders deliver 73 separate broadcasts, as well as web versions. In one year, that's approximately 2,000 hours of unique RSGB news shared with the amateur radio community. Over 3,500 people subscribe to the email version of the GB2RS news script to ensure they don't miss out each week.

Exams

After the unprecedented numbers taking amateur radio exams in 2020 and 2021 things returned to more normal levels in 2022 with a total of 2,548 candidates taking an exam either online or on paper. Of those, 2,111 were successful.

A team of 27 remote invigilators handled just under 1,200 remote exam sessions which was extraordinary work on their part.

Slightly over 32% of those that sat the Foundation level exam went on to sit the Intermediate exam with 68% of those taking the Full level exam.

Fifty unique clubs offered exams for 203 candidates in 2022 with the majority opting for paper exams rather than online. The total number of club exam sessions was 58 at Foundation level, 20 at Intermediate and nine at Full level.

Awards

Many radio amateurs still enjoy aiming for awards and it is notable that of the general RSGB awards, 27% were issued to non-UK stations last year. As part of the RSGB's Jubilee celebrations, the Awards Manager issued 197 certificates for 'Award70' whilst 41 were issued as part of the Commonwealth Games 2022 awards.

EMF

As the amateur radio licence now requires all amateurs to check compliance with EMF exposure limits, the EMF team continued to be busy answering questions and providing guidance material to help radio amateurs to comply. In 2022 the EMF helpdesk team handled 100 cases and answered thousands of emails whilst the online EMF calculator received 21,425 hits on the website.

Books and Products

It is important to keep updating our products and services and last year we produced over 20 new RSGB products. The RSGB sales department processed over 11,500 book and product orders, sending them to around 50 different countries.

We also reopened sales to the EU in May after changes to EU VAT rules had stopped us shipping there. We have now delivered to over 20 of the 28 countries in the EU.

Membership

Whilst numbers have stabilised a little after the peaks during the pandemic, we are delighted that over 1,400 new people joined the RSGB in 2022 whilst a further 400 re-joined. The Society's total membership is now higher than it was back in 2011.

RSGB National Radio Centre

The RSGB National Radio Centre (NRC) based at Bletchley Park saw good visitor numbers, despite being closed throughout January due to Covid and some additional periods of closure for maintenance. NRC volunteers welcomed 72,797 visitors over the 326 days the Centre was open.

The NRC has a mix of three or four volunteers working most days who, between them, spent 6,820 hours explaining and demonstrating amateur radio to those who visited the Centre.

The NRC hosted or supported a few events last year, including: a 'Build a Radio' event for youngsters funded by the RCF; a special event to celebrate the Queen's Platinum Jubilee; a display of WWII wireless equipment at the Bletchley Park 1940s' weekend; and two events in December for YOTA (Youngsters on the Air) month. We were especially pleased to open the NRC to RSGB Convention attendees on the Friday afternoon prior to the Convention, when we also gave them a private guided tour of Bletchley Park.

A particular highlight in 2022 was when NRC Volunteer Steve, 2E0YBJ managed to make a direct 2m FM contact with NA1SS on the ISS from the GB3RS station – the QSL card is now proudly on display in the NRC.

The RSGB National Radio Centre continued to offer interested amateur radio clubs the opportunity to enjoy, by prior arrangement, a private evening visit.

Behind the scenes

Making much of this happen has been our very busy, but small, staff of just 18 people (eight full time and ten part time). They made and received 44,111 phone calls, sent and received more emails than we can count, and have been the friendly voice to thousands of new and existing Members, as well as radio amateurs seeking help and advice.

Our website received 1,489,062 unique visitors and we updated and added to our information, particularly in areas such as University Corner and School Zone.

Hundreds of volunteers were also crucial to the success of the Society, helping in their areas of expertise to enable us to cover the breadth of amateur radio. We recognised their valuable contribution by sending out badges to 662 volunteers at the end of the year.

Looking ahead

As life becomes more familiar and we can meet with fewer restrictions, we are all still finding a way of connecting that feels comfortable and achievable. We are certainly seeing many clubs move towards a hybrid way of meeting, as we did as a Society for our Convention in October. The current cost-of-living concerns are also leading us all to continue meeting more online than we might perhaps like.

However, amateur radio is still thriving, and I know that there will be some great opportunities for all of us to discover more about amateur radio in the coming year. The RSGB is committed to supporting new and existing radio amateurs, and to introducing amateur radio to a wider audience via the mainstream media whenever we can. Let's make 2023 the year in which we try something new, support other radio amateurs and decide to share the benefits of amateur radio with the people in our local communities.

Steve Thomas, M1ACB
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