

The Radio Communication Foundation (RCF) has been around for 15 years now but we are still often asked questions such as “what is the RCF?”, “what does it do?” and “what is its relationship with the RSGB?”. This article is intended to help answer those questions.

RCF is a Charity
 The RCF was set up as a charity to encourage and make the most of donations and legacies made by radio amateurs. Income is entirely from donations received from radio amateurs and related organisations. Being a charity allows us to claim Gift Aid to maximise the benefit from donations at no further cost to donors.

The strategy of the RCF is quite simple: to bring the benefits of radio to young people; and to encourage the use of technology.

The charity is run by a board of volunteer Trustees. All but one of the current Trustees are radio amateurs and between them they have a wide range of experience of radio communications and wireless technology. Some work, or have worked, in the RF industry, some are ‘just’ amateurs, but all have experience in senior management positions.

RCF Projects
 Some of the projects we have funded are quite small with costs of just a few hundred pounds, others run into the thousands. We are keen to do more and are always open to applications for funding from projects that support our aims.

One of our regular commitments has been to sponsor two or three Arkwright Scholars every year. We have seen a number of our scholars take up amateur radio as a result of our association and several are now studying electronics at university. Some of their stories are on our website.

Linked to our association with the Smallpeice Trust and the Arkwright Engineering Scholarships we have been funding Connect Days, which are open to all Arkwright Scholars, not just those we sponsor. The idea is to show how amateur radio can help formal education through learning new practical skills and experimentation.

This year’s event took place in March with 16 scholars from across the UK coming to Bletchley Park for the day. They were each given a Foundation Licence textbook two weeks ahead of the day and asked to study it before the event. On the day they were split into four groups of four and

The Radio Communications Foundation

By way of a follow-up to our In Focus feature in the June 2016 PW, Steve Hartley GOFUW has an update on the RCF’s activities.



Fig. 1: RCF Trustee Professor Cathryn Mitchell MOIBG with the 2019 RCF sponsored Arkwright Scholars, Harry, Samir and George

cycled around activity sessions to complete all of the practical assessments. In the afternoon they sat the exam and all 16 passed. The RCF funded the books and exams, the RSGB provided access to the National Radio Centre, assessors and invigilators and Bletchley Park provided us with classrooms; a real team effort.

Scholars from previous events have gone on to pass all three amateur radio exams and to champion amateur radio at university.

Another regular commitment is the RCF support for the prizes awarded to university students by the UK Electronic Skills Foundation (UKESF). Every year the UKESF awards prizes for the best undergraduate projects and the RCF sponsor the prize for

the best RF project. Last year’s winner was **Jonathan Rawlinson MOZJO**, who says he would not now be working in the satellite industry had it not been for his discovery of amateur radio leading him to an interest in electronics. Jonathan has since helped out with another RCF event in support of British Science Week.

RCF and British Science Week
 Last year the RCF Trustees thought it would make sense for the charity to sponsor something specifically aimed at schools and British Science Week seemed to provide an



excellent opportunity to do that. Working in collaboration with the RSGB’s Schools Link project team the idea was to support a number of events centred on the building of a simple radio, suitable for first time builders.

The RSGB managed to secure the support of ten clubs/groups/individuals who had links to schools to run a pilot event in 2019. Walford Electronics had supported a similar event in support of **Tim Peake’s** Principia mission and agreed to build on that experience by providing the radio kits. In all, around 150 Spaxton radio kits were distributed around the various events.

Some events were simply a kit building workshop, others incorporated other radio activities, but the universal feedback was that it was a great success. The challenge now is to build on this year’s pilot and see how many schools we can get involved in 2020 and beyond. We are looking to promote the event through conferences and seminars but a number of schools who could not take part this year have already signalled their desire to join in next time around.

The RCF and the RSGB
 The RCF and the RSGB are two separate organisations but there are some overlaps and many links that are important for the collaborative projects outlined above. Most of the Trustees are members of the RSGB; as radio amateurs that should

not come as too much of a surprise. Our Secretary is an RSGB employee; **Jackie Tite** is the RSGB’s budget manager and is an ideal person to keep the RCF’s finances in order.

We maintain close links with RSGB HQ staff and its volunteers. We could not deliver anything like as much as we do without them. The RCF has money but few people to make things happen. So, being able to work with the likes of **Martyn Baker GOGMB** and his team at the National Radio Centre along with **Steve Smith MOUEH**, the Schools Link Project Leader, provides us with willing and able volunteers to staff our projects and that allows us to deliver our charitable aims.

Two Sides to RCF Funding
 You can help the RCF in two ways. You can donate to the charity fund to help us do more or you can seek funding for your projects that help us deliver our aims.

If you would like to give to the RCF, you can do that through the RSGB shop or via the RCF website or you can donate up to £10 by sending a text message ‘RCOM25 £10’ to 70070.

The Trustees are always looking for new ways to deliver our aims and if you need funding for a project that would help us do that, please do not be shy in seeking our help. Further information about the RCF can be found at: <https://commsfoundation.org>



Fig. 2: Some of the Arkwright Scholars at the 2019 RCF Connect Day. Fig. 3: Three young radio builders at Sandringham School during British Science week. Fig. 4: One very proud radio builder at Bletchley Park during British Science Week.