



Sixteen happy Arkwright Scholars after learning of their Foundation exam passes.

RCF Arkwright Connect Day 2019

On Saturday 30 March we ran our fourth RCF Arkwright Connect Day at the RSGB National Radio Centre at Bletchley Park, when chosen young people get the chance to complete their Foundation licence in just one day.

These events are part of a wider programme of activities for Arkwright Engineering Scholars, organised by the Smallpeice Trust. They are truly team efforts with inputs from the Radio Communications Foundation (RCF), the RSGB, the Smallpeice Trust and Bletchley Park.

The Arkwright Scheme

Arkwright scholars are selected via a rigorous process involving an exam, a project and an interview. Those who are selected are sponsored through their A-level studies by companies, charities or individuals. The RCF is one of the charity sponsors.

Sponsors are encouraged to make their resources available to scholars to provide them with a wide range of engineering experiences.



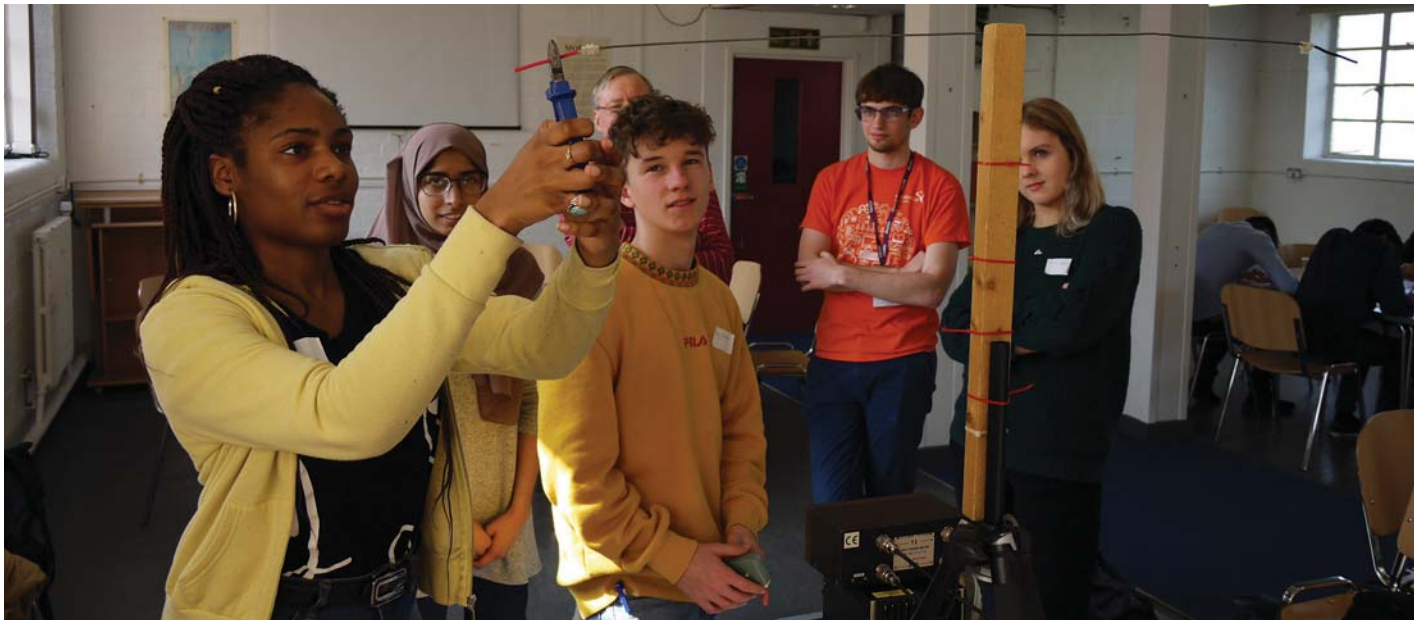
Eleanor making her first HF contact from the NRC.

RCF/RSGB Connect Days

Access to the RSGB National Radio Centre (NRC) was seen to be about the only resource we could offer but the Arkwright organisers wanted scholars to be active rather than simply visiting a museum. Following some head scratching we hatched the idea of getting them to do home study and then host a day of Foundation licence assessments and exams. The Smallpeice Trust would look

after the scholar administration, RCF would pay for the books and exams, the scholars would get themselves to Bletchley Park, RSGB volunteers would help with the assessments and exams and Bletchley Park would provide classroom facilities. Parents would be taken off on a guided tour whilst the youngsters get stuck in to the hard work.

The first of our events took place in 2016 and proved very popular. The links between amateur



Emma with Farheen, Harry and Ella tuning a dipole under the watchful eye of Peter, MOSWN.

radio, electronics, university study and careers in radio engineering have been highlighted at each event. Trevor Gill, G8IBO, is a Trustee of both the RCF and the Smallpeice Trust and he gives a short talk on his experience of amateur radio and his career in the telecommunications industry.

Feedback from attendees has been excellent and Arkwright/Smallpeice have used our Connect Day as an example of good practice in their brochures – see RCF website. Several attendees have gone on to do all three radio amateur licence exams and to study electronics at university.

March 2019 event

This year we had good mix of boys and girls, some travelling many miles to attend the day; for example, Alex came all the way from Edinburgh. We witnessed some great on air operating with clear and confident first time local FM VHF contacts and SSB HF contacts with Cyprus illustrating the differences between the different modes and propagation.

Peter Barnes, MOSWN assessed the station assembly and antenna tuning and then gave them advice based on his experience in choosing a university whilst incorporating amateur radio into his studies. Peter is an ex-Arkwright scholar, an RSGB YOTA Team Leader, and President of the Swansea University ARS. Dom Smith, MOBLF, from the Camb Hams, did a similar job and covered the Morse assessments whilst Dan McGraw, MOWUT, another young amateur, showed them how VHF contacts work. Dan was one of the very first RSGB YOTA team members and now works in the RF industry.

Martin Atherton, G3ZAY cannot claim to be a young mentor but provided excellent guidance and supervision on the NRC HF set up and was our Registered Assessor for the day. Anthony Duggan, GOLAX gave the scholars' parents and

some siblings a VIP tour of the Bletchley site; he is an NRC Volunteer and official Bletchley Park Guide. Again, the feedback from that has been excellent.

Exam time is always a nervous part of the day. With 16 candidates we had four invigilators; two RCF Trustees, one NRC/Bletchley park volunteer and an RSGB Youth Team member. On this occasion all 16 passed and some wanted to claim their licences there and then – great to see such enthusiasm!

The scholars went away with a goody bag, put together by Mark Allgar, M1MPA, RSGB Commercial Manger, and the RCF provided each scholar with a Walford Electronics Spaxton receiver kit, as used in the RSGB Schools Link project for British Science Week.

Poppy James from the Smallpeice Trust came to see what was involved and to take some photos. This was Poppy's first visit to one of our Connect Days and she had this to say "What a fascinating and unique experience for our scholars to have the opportunity to participate in! It was great to see these young engineers express such passion and interest in radio engineering and take the first steps to achieving an amateur radio licence – this Connect Day has opened new doors and reaffirmed their interest in this area."

Was it worth it?

All in all, it was a very successful day, so much so that we are looking to repeat it later in the year; the March date was over-subscribed by over 100%.

Thanks go to all of those involved but in particular to Martyn Baker, GOGMB, (our man at Bletchley Park) who negotiated with the Park's education team to ensure everything ran like clockwork, and to Alan,



Farheen sending Morse for the first time – quite appropriate to do that at Bletchley Park.

5B4AHJ, for being the patient HF DX for the on-air QSOs.

Websearch

- Smallpeice Trust: www.smallpeicetrust.org.uk/
- Arkwright Scholarships: www.arkwright.org.uk/
- RCF: <https://commsfoundation.org/radio-communications-connect-day/>
- RSGB Youth: www.rsgb.org/youth
- NRC: www.rsgb.org/nrc

Steve Hartley, G0FUW,
 RCF Trustee and RSGB Legacy
 Committee Chairman
legacy.chairman@rsgb.org.uk