

## I was young once....

I joined the RSGB Board 16 months ago and have been Chairman for the last year. The most often asked question of Board members can be paraphrased as 'What is the RSGB doing to encourage more young people into the hobby?' Indeed, whilst writing this, Headquarters received another letter on the topic. The RSGB Board is clear that we must take action, which is why we are making some initial proposals, consulting with the Membership and seeking further ideas and suggestions.

It is very clear today that the majority of youngsters are inexorably attached to their mobile phones, tablets and PCs, so we need to consider this as part of our proposals. Secondly, we have to recognise that many of us became interested in amateur radio at school, then lost interest and, in my case, took it up and lost interest again before becoming active again on retirement. In the first 37 years that I was licensed, I was active for probably about one third of the time. In the last ten years I have been active virtually all the time. With many things to distract young people it is no different today – my point is that we should attract youngsters to the hobby but not become too 'precious' if they lose interest. If a percentage pick up the hobby in later life then that must be considered a success.

There can be little to equal the thrill of hearing your first signals on a radio receiver that you have built yourself, perhaps followed by a contact with your first transmitter that you constructed. In the early days of wireless the ability to make your own receiver (and later transmitter) was controlled by means of a licence as it was realised that, unlike the manufacture of other 'electronics', there was potential to cause interference over very large areas. This is the crucial difference between making 'electronic' items and equipment that may be 'a deliberate radiator'.

In more recent years we have been allowed to purchase and use approved radio equipment in unlicensed form as there is little scope to change its characteristics or antennas such that it can cause interference. This is the biggest differentiator between radio amateurs and those who are interested in other forms of experimentation with electronics (typically these days those involved in what is termed a Hackspace or a Maker Faire). The radio amateur is allowed to make their own equipment or modify existing wireless equipment in the



knowledge that the licence they possess is a guarantee of their competence to use that equipment such that it does not cause interference. This is a unique aspect of amateur radio, has been this way for a long time – and it works!

The introduction of the Foundation licence moved away from this enviable situation by actually stopping those radio amateurs from building their own transmitting equipment and

allowing them to use only approved, ready-made, transceivers until they progressed to the Intermediate level. In one simple move the incentive to learn how to build and adjust amateur radio equipment was lost and with it that vital attraction to amateur radio – the sheer pleasure from self-learning. We thus have potentially lost a whole new generation of technical radio constructors to the detriment of amateur radio and, it has to be said, UK plc.

We should seek to re-introduce this incentive by giving newcomers a taste of the thrill of using equipment built by themselves. Those who are licensed as radio amateurs can and will, in most cases, move on from simple equipment to more advanced designs. They will contribute through publishing and socialising these design ideas and, with that, contribute to the sum knowledge of UK plc. Importantly, they will be more incentivised and enjoy amateur radio at an early stage.

We are suggesting action in three areas:

### NoVs FOR FOUNDATION LICENSEES?

The merging of hardware and software technology has enabled many new forms of amateur communications and this trend continues with the availability of new computing platforms and programming styles. There are now many 'Apps' developed to run on tablet computers ranging from foxhunting systems that integrate GPS with mobile internet access to mapping databases through to Apps that provide software defined radio (SDR) on simple hardware. The expected release of new VHF spectrum by Ofcom at 146-147MHz, and possibly more later at lower VHF frequencies, gives amateurs the ability to use such Apps for person to person communications that would have been 'science fiction' when many of us started. John Regnault, G4SWX, the RSGB VHF Manager, is looking for volunteers who can collaborate to develop such 'Apps', taking them beyond their current capabilities and in

particular broaden the appeal of the hobby to younger people. As much can be gained through the 'fun of finding things out' and self-build, the first proposal is to offer the Foundation licensee the option of applying for a specific variation of their licence, to allow them to experiment with some limited receive and transmit design/construction that could encompass hardware, software and systems engineering. We might consider this in new or underutilised parts of the VHF spectrum. Ofcom and the RSGB are both keen to maintain licence progression for those for whom it is appropriate, so the terms of such an arrangement might need to be set so that the 'taster' is just that and provides the right amount of interest to encourage the person to progress to his/her Intermediate licence.

**JUNIOR LICENCE?** Living on the East Coast of the UK I see a considerable contrast in the low levels of 2m and 70cm activity in the UK as compared with some of our nearby European neighbours. It cannot be argued that available equipment is a significant barrier with 144/432MHz dual band handheld transceivers often now costing less than £35 new. Much of the reason behind this difference is that in these countries, newcomers at the lowest licence level are often only allowed on the VHF/UHF bands, thereby stimulating greater levels of activity. In some countries the amateur 'Novice' examination is a fairly simple, time restricted test. In the UK the number of people under 25 sitting the amateur Foundation examination has nearly halved in the past ten years. The second proposal is, therefore, to introduce a 'Junior' amateur licence that would only permit limited low power operation on the 144 and 432MHz bands. Such a licence would allow young people to gain a real taste of radio communications before making too many commitments on the path to one of the full amateur licences.

### DEMONSTRATING AMATEUR RADIO?

We should also consider changing the way in which we demonstrate amateur radio particularly to young people and youth organisations. We all have a tendency to want to demonstrate the aspects of the hobby that we enjoy. However, feedback received by the RSGB indicates that simple demonstrations of HF voice and CW do not necessarily engage with the generation we need to impress. Many amateurs use computers and an internet connection as a normal part of their operations and these should be considered as standard features of any demonstration of amateur radio. These might include, for instance, a live DX cluster connection, an active WSPR station or reverse beacon monitoring. A computer that visitors can play with connected to

WebSDR.org or a similar site together with a handout with the URL would allow them to listen to amateur radio when they got home. Any of the above would show that the hobby is solidly in the internet and computing age rather than something that has stood still for many years. How many of us can truthfully say that our Special Event Station really showed off amateur radio to its public audience? Too often we are just running on 40m or whatever, having a great time, but merely setting a somewhat curious spectacle for the general public. We need some suggestions, and sharing of best practice, about what we need to do to make a public event demonstration meaningful and captivating, especially those aimed at younger visitors.

One aspect of the hobby that has been commented on, especially by the Foundation licence holders, is that they are looked down upon by more experienced amateurs who they find very discouraging (read

some of The Last Word letters in previous *RadComs*!). Whilst I know that such prejudice is not widespread, it persists – what happened to the mentor approach of helping others along? When I was newly licensed as a G8+3 (Class B licence) I was one of the lucky ones to be encouraged by the local club members, not criticised by the G3s (Class A licence) for not having passed the Morse test! They recognised, nearly 50 years ago, that the hobby needed youngsters to survive. I must stress that mentors do not have to be the more mature members; it would be great to have younger amateurs supporting the newcomers to the hobby.

There are other options such as Hackspace, Arduino, Raspberry Pi, High Altitude Balloons and Space that are likely to attract younger people but the three proposals above are a ‘starter for ten’ and one of them addresses, to some degree, what attracted many of us to the hobby; namely, the thrill of receiving signals on something that we had built ourselves!

Not everyone will like these suggestions, indeed some may not like any of them but the intent of this article is to encourage discussion – and by that I mean positive discussion. If you are critical of the proposals please accompany your criticisms with your suggestions and/or enhancements and explain why your ‘Plan B’ than is better than our ‘Plan A’!

I recognise there are views on this issue that cover the whole spectrum but, having recently celebrated our first hundred years, we are now on the verge of an always-connected internet world. So the challenge we all must live up to is to look afresh at how to keep the hobby alive and attractive for the next hundred years. Over to you...

**Graham Murchie, G4FSG**  
Chairman, RSGB Board

Responses can be made via the ‘Have Your Say’ page on the RSGB website <http://rsgb.org/main/myrsgb-2/have-your-say/> or directly by e-mail to [haveyoursay@rsgb.org.uk](mailto:haveyoursay@rsgb.org.uk)

## RCE Quality Manager and EC Members

The Radio Communications Foundation (RCF) wishes to appoint a Quality manager (QM) for the Radio Communications Examinations (RCE). This volunteer role is currently held on an interim basis by Dave Wilson, M0OBW. Reporting to the RCF Standards Committee, the QM is responsible for auditing the processes of the RCE, for coordinating RCE inspections and for investigating reports of non-compliance with RCE procedures. Candidates should be prepared to travel around the UK. They should have a UK Full amateur radio licence and will ideally have experience in a senior position in industry or mainstream education, with responsibility for leading a team and quality management.

The RCE are run by the RCF under the terms of an MoU between Ofcom and the RCF ([www.commsfoundation.org/rce/pdf/2007-01-16-ofcomrcfagreement.pdf](http://www.commsfoundation.org/rce/pdf/2007-01-16-ofcomrcfagreement.pdf)), which should be consulted to see the full terms of reference for the QM.

Those interested in applying should contact Simon Watts, G3XXH, Chairman of the RCE Standards Committee, by e-mail to [sc.chairman@commsfoundation.org](mailto:sc.chairman@commsfoundation.org), providing a brief CV and a covering letter outlining how they meet the requirements of this role.

The RCF Examinations Committee (EC) is also seeking new members. Further details of this role and the desired qualifications of potential candidates, together with information on how to apply, can be found on the RSGB website at [www.rsgb.org/main/about-us/volunteering-for-the-rsgb/rcf-exam-committee](http://www.rsgb.org/main/about-us/volunteering-for-the-rsgb/rcf-exam-committee).

The EC is ideally looking for applicants with a Full licence and with qualifications in radio and electronics at NVQ level 4 (HNC) or higher. An understanding of syllabus development and examination board practice is also desired but candidates with other relevant professional experience will also be considered.

## Silent Key

Former GB2RS news reader Martyn Phillips, G3RFX / ZB2FX passed away on the morning of 20 June 2014 after a short illness. He started transmitting GB2RS in 1995 and made 1273 broadcasts from his well-equipped shack. Martyn was a CDXC committee member and *Digest* editor for the past 11 years. Our thoughts are with his wife Jane, his family and friends.



Photo courtesy  
Nigel, G3TXF

## Intruder Watch

The RSGB is pleased to announce that Vaughan Ravenscroft, MOVRR has been appointed as Intruder Watch Co-ordinator, succeeding Chris Cummings, G4BOH, to whom the RSGB express thanks for his years of service to the amateur radio community. Vaughan took up his duties on 27 June and may be contacted by e-mail to [iw@rsgb.org.uk](mailto:iw@rsgb.org.uk)

## Youngsters on the Air (YOTA)

The Youngsters on the Air event at Wolverhampton on 19 and 20 July has been granted a NoV to use the unusual callsign GB1YOTA for the Special Event Station on site. The YOTA team are most grateful to Ofcom for their permission to use this special callsign.

The YOTA UK event has been timed to

coincide with the IARU Region 1 YOTA gathering in Finland and it is hoped that GB1YOTA will be able to make contact with the Finnish station.

Activities at the UK event include workshops on Summits on the Air, satellite working, digital modes, Intermediate practical assessments and Centenary PSK

receiver building; there will be a barbecue and an ARDF contest – all of which have been arranged by young amateurs, for young amateurs.

Bookings for YOTA UK are still being taken via the RSGB Shop and you can follow YOTA UK on Twitter using @yota\_uk

## RSGB Annual Construction Competition

The annual RSGB Construction Competition is to encourage home construction, experimentation, design and innovation. Any Member of the RSGB is eligible to enter. The closing date for entries is 30 September and judging will take place at the RSGB Convention. Winners in each category will be awarded prizes and the best overall entry will be awarded the Pat Hawker, G3VA Trophy.

The rules have been simplified for this year's competition with the restrictions on cost and timescale having been removed. Projects must have an amateur radio context. Examples might include receivers, transmitters, transceivers, aerials,

instrumentation, test equipment, etc. Projects must be home-constructed, tested, complete and working shown either by a short video or by demonstrating it working to the judges at the Convention.

There are four classes of entry: **Designer** is aimed at encouraging original designs, which can be software, hardware or a combination thereof. **Craftsman** is aimed at those constructing projects designed by someone else; entries are likely to be based on a published design. **Beginner** is aimed at those new to amateur radio. The entrant must have been a member of the RSGB for less than a total of three years and must have

held an amateur radio licence of any type for less than three years. **Junior Member**. This category is aimed at our young members. The entrant must be a Junior member of the RSGB on the date of submission of the entry.

Prizes will be awarded to the winners of each category and to other highly commended entries. The Pat Hawker, G3VA Trophy will be awarded to the best overall entry. All prizes will be awarded at the sole discretion of the judges, whose decisions shall be final.

You can check out the full rules at <http://rsgb.org/main/rsgb-annual-construction-competition/>

## Louis Varney legacy

In June, Vintage & Military Amateur Radio Society chairman Ian Underwood, MOYMK, visited the RSGB National Radio Centre at Bletchley Park to deliver the long term loan of a prototype Mk 2 Elizabethan transmitter designed and built in the 1950s by the late Louis Varney, G5RV. It features carefully designed filters to prevent interference to television receivers, a significant problem for many radio amateurs and their neighbours at the time. Accompanying the transmitter are many of Louis' mathematical filter calculations and graph plots for each of the VHF TV channels then in use in all regions of the UK, as well as handwritten notes, circuit diagrams and correspondence relating to his research and development on the project, dating from 1948 to 1957. The original Louis Varney-designed Elizabethan transmitter was introduced in 1953 and named in honour of the Her Majesty the Queen for her Coronation, which took



Graham Coomber, GONBI accepting the Elizabethan transmitter from Ian Underwood, MOYMK and Stuart McKinnon, GOTBI.

place in June of that year. The *RSGB Bulletin* featured a six page article on the Elizabethan transmitter in July 1953.

The Elizabethan transmitter was given to VMARS by Ian Greenberg, G8LOY, who requested that the Society preserve the historic set and accompanying notes in an appropriate way.

## Getting the News

There are several ways for radio amateurs to enjoy GB2RS. As well as the regular Sunday broadcasts from a host of volunteers, to whom the RSGB is most grateful, you can also read the news online or download it as an audio podcast. This recording is provided by Jeremy Boot, G4NJH and packaged and loaded to iTunes and The Lounge by Ed Durrant, DD5LP. The file is also available with the text at [gb2rs.podbean.com](http://gb2rs.podbean.com).

As a new addition to our news service the GB2RS broadcast is also available on the TXFilms website [www.txfilms.co.uk/txfactor/](http://www.txfilms.co.uk/txfactor/) under the TXNews heading or by searching for TXTalk on iTunes. TXFilms also produce TX Factor, a series of high definition TV shows covering all aspects of the hobby, available from the TXFilms website or Youtube.

## RSGB 2015 AGM - date for your diary

The 2015 RSGB AGM will be held on 25 April 2015. The venue has yet to be finalised but will be in the south of England.

## Board Vacancy

The Nominations Committee is seeking to fill the vacant Board Director post with a Member who has a marketing, sales or promotions background, ideally gained within a membership organisation.

We need someone who has experience of marketing, communications and public relations, the design and execution of marketing strategies and the effective use of websites and social media in a marketing context. The successful candidate will contribute strategic input

to the Board, and lead the design and implementation of an agreed marketing strategy.

This position will be filled by co-option in the first instance, with the successful candidate being recommended to the Membership for election at the next AGM.

RSGB Chairman Graham Murchie, G4FSG will be pleased to discuss the role informally, by e-mail to [g4fsg@rsgb.org.uk](mailto:g4fsg@rsgb.org.uk).

Applications by CV should be emailed to the Honorary Company Secretary, Rupert Thorogood, G3KKT via [g3kkt@rsgb.org.uk](mailto:g3kkt@rsgb.org.uk) by Friday 15 August 2014.

### CONGRATULATIONS

To the following Members whom our records show as having reached 70, 60 or 50 years' continuous Membership of the RSGB.

|                  |         |
|------------------|---------|
| <b>70 Years</b>  |         |
| Mr R D Thomas    | RS558   |
| <b>60 Years</b>  |         |
| Mr P Sorab       | G3NDO   |
| Mr R J Pye       | G4IUH   |
| Mr L Foster      | RS20323 |
| <b>50 Years</b>  |         |
| P Stepponat      | DL7BAT  |
| Mr W C Miller    | G30TW   |
| Mr C J Lambert   | G3TA    |
| Mr G F Kimbell   | G3TCT   |
| Mr B F Greenaway | G3THQ   |
| Mr P J E Carey   | G3UXH   |
| Mr H F Tabberer  | G3YVK   |
| Mr G E Austin    | G4DPA   |
| Dr B W Flynn     | GM8BJF  |
| Mr P A Miles     | GW3KDB  |
| Mr C S Carver    | GW4EYO  |