

'Train the Trainers': the RSGB Full Licence Tutors' Weekend

The weekend of 18 / 19 October saw a unique gathering of amateurs at the Telford campus of the University of Wolverhampton. Chaired by Ed Taylor, G3SQX, RSGB Director responsible for Amateur Radio Development, and ably assisted by Dave Wilson, M0OBW, and Brian Reay, G8OSN, it brought together a team of around 35 tutors representing between them some 30 radio societies across the UK and Channel Isles. This was in addition to a leader's team of six, plus RSGB HQ staff and the Radiocommunications Agency.

With the next stage of the three-stage licence process now well under way and the new Full licence syllabus due to be introduced early in 2004, it was considered vital that experienced tutors got together to evaluate the changes and to share ideas and experiences.

OPENING DAY

Peter Kirby, General Manager of the RSGB, set the tone of the two-day session with an insight into the history of the RAE since its inception in 1948. He also gave an outline of how and why, just over three years ago, there had been an urgent need to update the established City & Guilds route to licensing. Peter said that "the Society's aim was to serve the UK amateur population as a whole, by providing education and training and that it was vital to find and use the best ideas to achieve this".

Alan Betts, G0HIQ, representing the Radiocommunications Agency, spoke about licensing standards, the position of OFCOM - the new regulatory body - and answered questions on the commercial value of the spectrum, the reasoning and methodology of the new licence structure, together with the international dimension.

Richard Constantine, G3UGF, the RSGB's Director of Education and Training, outlined 'the big picture',

giving an overview of the Society's progress and long-term goals, liaising with other organisations and professional bodies. He said that by working with other agencies, including those in government and education, the aim was to raise the profile of amateur radio once again, to re-establish its value as an educational tool and to improve its standing at all levels and in the world of work. To achieve this, Richard added, "it is vital that whilst we value and appreciate the differences in teaching styles and methods, in order to gain credibility for what we do in mainstream circles, we must foster a climate for high standards of learning through consistently good and repeatable teaching methods."

On the first day of the conference, Anthony Vinters, G0WFG, chair of STELAR (Science & Technology through Educational Links with Amateur Radio), gave an animated and 'energising' lecture on teaching and classroom methods for effective learning, particularly geared to how people do, or indeed do not, learn! Using two 'Slinky' coils to form a dipole, he demonstrated simple and effective teaching methods and stressed the need for consistent terminology in the learning process under the heading 'Energy not Voltage!'

DAY TWO

On the Sunday, Brian Reay, G8OSN, gave an excellent presentation entitled 'Lesson Planning and Instructional Techniques' on thinking processes, learning retention and overcoming disruptive classroom behaviour. Due to a last-minute change of speakers, Brian stayed up well into the early hours generating an effective and most thought-provoking PowerPoint presentation, which was well-received by all.

On both days workshop groups considered various topics from the revised Full licence syllabus, including:

- EMC and Licence conditions
- EMF, Potential Difference and Mathematics
- Propagation, Feeders and Antennas
- Transmitters and Receivers.

Each group made presentations to the whole seminar. This revealed some superb thought-provoking and innovative ideas, highlighting the wealth of talent and experience available from within our ranks. These ranged from cardboard models, simple diagrams and memory aids to complete 3D animated PowerPoint slides, many covering complex subjects in an interesting, easy-to-understand and informative way.

In the feedback sessions it became clear that there is much to be gained by working together and those assembled were enthusiastic about developing shared resources for tutors.

As a result of this first weekend, work is now in hand to make the interchange of ideas between tutors easier. During 2004 it is hoped to develop a simple lesson planning scheme, in partnership for accredited tutors to follow, together with material and links to other sources.

As soon as the new and last link in the licence scheme is in place early in 2004, Ed Taylor, G3SQX, and the ARDC will be looking at ways to make the tutors' accreditation scheme more widely available, based on the outstanding success of this first weekend. ♦

Far right: Brilliantly simple frequency explanation by Murray, G6JYF.

Below left: Anthony, G0WFG, 'energising' the tutors with his 'Slinky dipole'.

Below middle: Working group on Transmitters and Receivers in session.

Below right: Brian's, G8OSN, humorous lecture 'Tell them what you're going to tell them', also known as 'Joining up the dots'.

