

Ben: Ok, so my name's Ben and I've been working at STFC for nearly three years as a graduate.

John C: My name's John Casson I'm on the graduate scheme at STFC and I work in the e-Science Centre.

Jack: My name's Jack Fletcher I work for the STFC as a public affairs officer and I went to the University of Nottingham to study archaeology.

Vicky: My name's Vicky I am a cryogenic engineer I went to Southampton University and I studied aeronautical engineering.

Ben: STFC is a central funding body.

Jack: We at the STFC look after astronomy, particle physics and nuclear physics. It is one of seven UK research councils.

Ben: We run a particle accelerator which produces neutrons and scientists that come and visit us use the neutrons to analyse sample of things. We have a RAL Space department as well that make components for satellites that go up into orbit. There's a lot going on and a lot to do.

Vicky: You definitely start off straight in the deep end. After a month people are saying "Why haven't you done this?" or "You need to start working on this project." You definitely hit the ground running.

Ben: Size of project soon ramps up until you are designing complicated bits and pieces.

Jack: You have small bouts of responsibility and gradually as you progress and you get better at your job your management are happier to give you more substantial tasks.

Ben: The STFC's keen to see you go through professional chartership with whatever institution you're affiliated with. So I'm a mechanical engineer so my institution's the IMechE and you are put through this programme of chartership. Basically what I have to do is every quarter fill in a quarterly report, at the end of every year fill in an annual report then after four years you go to interview with a board of chartered engineers. They assess whether you're competent enough to become chartered.

Ben: No pun intended but the flagship grad scheme event is the Tall Ships where the most recent two years of grads go on a boat and sail round and team build.

Jack: It's a good training set up and you get to go on the Tall Ships event and you get to have dedicated training.

Ben: I personally felt it was a very rewarding experience. I was certainly better friends with everyone I was on that boat with after the week I was there. I think it does kind of cement the relationships you have with people.

John: So we're a very friendly sociable bunch; tend to meet up for lunch every day, go out once or twice a week for meals, movie nights, things like that. Go on nights out together, celebrate birthdays that kind of thing.

Ben: We'll often go out for meals every couple of weeks. This Thursday we're going for a curry for example. There's also quite a lot of weekend socialising where we go out and have a few drinks around Oxford.

Ben: The biggest benefit - by a clear margin - is that I get to meet lots of other people my own age.

Ben: RAL has its own RecSoc where you pay £3.50 out of your monthly wage to be a member and you get access to all sorts of discounts.

Jack: There's so much available for you to use like the RecSoc and sporting facilities.

Vicky: And they have loads of clubs and societies that are pretty varied.

Ben: I'm a member of the music society. I'm actually in a band.

Jack: There's so much going on. For instance, it's only a small thing but, during the summer you can play tennis. It's things like that that break up your day. It's a nice thing to have on site and you can actually take it for granted.

Vicky: We've got a rounders tournament; get to play rounders in the summer at lunchtime.

Ben: I play football with some of them; play rounders with some of them.

Vicky: If they don't have a club you want you can propose a new one. There's quite a lot of funding available to start new clubs and get instructed.

John: Living in Oxfordshire's nice because it's a nice part of the country and you're near enough big towns and cities that there's an awful lot to do. You can easily get to London or Reading or even Oxford itself is a very nice place.

Vicky: I really like living in this area. It's really pretty; it's a great place to go for walking or cycling.

Ben: There's a lot of countryside about so if you want to go on walks or bike rides there's the Ridgeway nearby.

Vicky: I've never met so many people that cycle as cycle round here.

Ben: You're not right out in the sticks but at the same time you're not right out in a concrete jungle.

Ben: I've learned a hell of a lot since being here.

Vicky: You'd be stupid to turn down a job from STFC.

Jack: There's as much here as you want in lots of ways. You have take advantage of it but it's here.