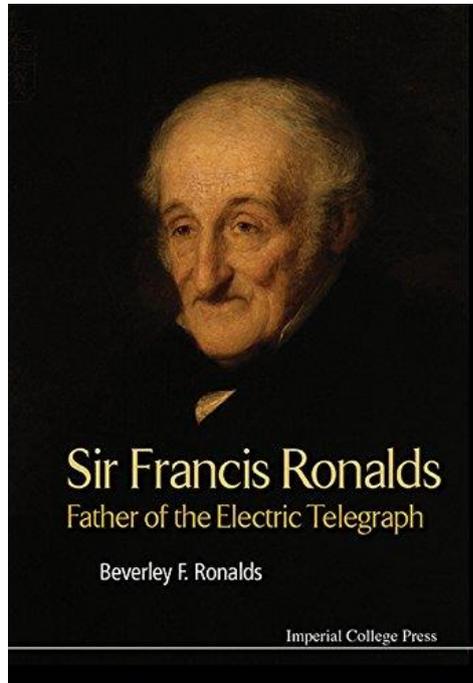


# PRESS RELEASE



## Sir Francis Ronalds Father of the Electric Telegraph

By **Beverley Frances Ronalds**  
(formerly CSIRO, Australia & The University of Western  
Australia, Australia)

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*“Electricity, may actually be employed for a more  
practically useful purpose than the gratification of  
the philosopher’s inquisitive research...”*  
- F. Ronalds, 1823

Two hundred years ago, Sir Francis Ronalds used electricity to transmit messages over long distances. Ronalds was in his twenties when he built his telegraph in 1816 in the back garden of his family home in Hammersmith, London.

Despite this, he is widely unknown and little recognized. Laying out his visions of electrical telecommunications decades before Morse, Ronalds offered his invention to the government for use in defence. When the admiralty advised him that it was “wholly unnecessary”, Ronalds turned his attention to other ideas.

Ronalds went on to become one of the most respected engineers and scientists of his time. He was later the director of the Kew Observatory for a decade, where his inventions shaped the new science of systematic regional-scale meteorology.

Told here for the first time on the bicentenary the telegraph, Ronalds’ story details this and other inventions – covering areas as diverse as electrical devices, weather forecasting, photography, art, mass production, and even fishing – interwoven with personal and professional tales of achievement.

***The author is available to write articles/features on this topic, as she has done in Physics Today, Weather, and the Chiswick Herald.***

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