

A PHASE CORRECTING
REFLECTION ZONE PLATE FOR FOCUSING MICROWAVES

This invention relates to a zone plate for focusing microwave energy and in particular to a phase correcting reflection zone plate for focusing microwaves. This invention also relates to apparatus and a method for manufacturing such a zone plate.

The use of zone plates for focusing microwaves is well known. One particular type of zone plate disclosed in "Millimeter-Wave Characteristics of Phase-Correcting Fresnel Zone Plates" by D.N. Black and J. Wiltse, IEEE Transactions on Microwave Theory and Technique Volume 35 No. 12 (1987) Page 1122-1128, is the phase-correcting Fresnel zone plate. Such a zone plate is shown schematically in Figure 1 for quarter wave correction, although a phase correcting zone plate can be made for any wavelength fraction. The radius of each zone r_n can be given by

$$r_n = \left(\frac{2nfl}{P} - \left(\frac{n\lambda}{P} \right)^2 \right)^{\frac{1}{2}}$$

where n is the zone number, f is the focal length of the zone plate, λ is the wavelength of the radiation and P is an integer greater than 2. For quarter wave correction $P = 4$. For such a zone plate both in and out of phase zones contribute to the energy at the focus thus increasing the efficiency compared to a conventional zone plate. The correction of the phase of the zones is achieved by changing the path length of the energy reflected from that zone. Thus the energy reflected from the zone 2a of the quarter wave zone plate of Figure 1 would be out of phase with respect to the energy from the zone 3 by $\lambda/4$ at the focus, unless the pathlength was decreased or increased

by $\lambda/4$. An increase in pathlength of $\lambda/4$ is achieved by providing steps $\lambda/8$ in depth. Thus zone 2a is $\lambda/8$ higher than zone 3 and zone 2b and 2c are $\lambda/4$ and $3\lambda/8$ higher than zone 3 respectively. More generally, the different phases of the zones of the zone plate are stepped by d where

$$d = \lambda_0/2P$$

where λ_0 is the free space wavelength of the radiation.

The construction of such a zone plate may be achieved by a number of manufacturing processes such as machining out of solid metal, stamping out of a thin metal sheet, moulding and subsequently metallising a plastic material or by vacuum forming plastics.

According to the present invention a reflection zone plate for focusing microwave energy comprises a plurality of reflective portions corresponding to zones of said zone plate; said reflective portions being positioned in P parallel planes, so that each said reflective portion reflects energy λ/P out of phase with respect to adjacent reflective portions, where λ is the wavelength of the energy and P is an integer of four or more, such that energy reflected from said reflective portions constructively interfere at a focus of said zone plate; characterised in that the reflective portions in each said plane are formed on a respective low dielectric loss planar substrate.

In a preferred embodiment each reflective portion reflects energy $\lambda/4$ out of phase with respect to adjacent reflective portions and said reflective portions are positioned in 4 parallel planes and separated by an electrical thickness of $\lambda/8$. In such an arrangement the planar substrate may be constructed from a plastics material.

The present invention also provides apparatus for the manufacture of a zone plate, comprising means to apply reflective portions corresponding to zones of said zone plate to the surface of said plurality of planar substrates formed of low dielectric loss material; and means to stack said planar substrates of low dielectric loss material to form said reflection zone plate.

The present invention further provides a method of manufacture of such a zone plate comprising the steps of applying reflective portions corresponding to zones of said zone plate to the surface of said plurality P of planar substrates formed of low dielectric loss material, and stacking said plurality of planar substrates to form said reflection zone plate.

Examples of the invention will now be described with reference to the drawings, in which:-

Figure 1 illustrates a cross-section of a known quarter wave zone plate;

Figure 2 illustrates a cross-section of a quarter wave zone plate constructed from panels according to one embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 3 illustrates a cross-section of a quarter wave zone plate constructed from panels according to another embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 4 illustrates a cross-section of a quarter wave zone plate constructed from panels according to a further embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 5 illustrates a cross-section of a quarter wave zone plate constructed from panels according to a still further embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 6 illustrates a cross-section of a quarter wave zone plate constructed from panels according to another embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 7 illustrates a cross section according to a further embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 8 illustrates a continuous sheet containing all the zones of the zone plate;

Figure 9 illustrates the use of sheets separated by panels to form a zone plate according to a further embodiment of the present invention;

Figure 10 illustrates the sheets formed from a single sheet of material;

Figure 11 illustrates a simpler construction of the embodiment of Figure 9.

Figure 12 schematically illustrates apparatus used in the manufacture of the zone plates of the type illustrated in Figures 2 and 3.

Figures 13a and 13b illustrate a close up of the kiss-cut punch and ellipse applicator.

Referring now to Figure 2, this drawing illustrates in cross-section the use of 4 adjacent panels 10, 11, 12 and 13 of electrical thickness $\lambda/8$ in a quarter wave zone plate. In this and the rest of the drawings the panels are shown separated for clarity.

On each of the panels 10, 11, 12 and 13 are reflective portions 14a, 14b, 14c and 14d. These reflective portions correspond to the zones of a fresnel zone plate and will be in the shape of rings on these panels 10, 11, 12 and 13, except for the central zone of zones 14a which will be disc shaped. The reflective portions 14a, 14b, 14c and 14d are on a front face facing the incident signal I of each of the panels 10, 11, 12 and 13. The panels 10, 11, 12 and 13 can be made from a plastics material and to simplify the construction of a complete zone plate, the permittivity of the plastics can be chosen such that the electrical thickness of the panels 10, 11, 12 and 13 can be $\lambda/8$ where λ is the wavelength of the energy to be focused. Thus the panels can be put in direct contact with each other.

- 5 -

The reflective portions 14a, 14b, 14c and 14d can be formed on the panels 10, 11, 12 and 13 by silk screen printing, by using self adhesive metal foil or by metalised foil.

Figure 3 illustrates another embodiment of the present invention wherein the reflective portions 14a, 14b, 14c and 14d are on a back face of each of the panels 10, 11, 12 and 13. This arrangement protects the fragile reflective portions 14d on panel 13 from accidental damage at the surface of the zone plate.

Another arrangement is shown in Figure 4 wherein only two panels 15 and 16 are used. In this arrangement the reflective portions 14a, 14b, 14c and 14d are provided on both front and back faces of the panels 15 and 16. The spacing D between the panels can then be air or a further panel (not shown) having an electrical thickness of $\lambda/8$.

Using this arrangement it is possible to achieve some variation in electrical performance of the zone plate structure.

Figure 5 illustrates a further example which combines the features of Figures 2 and 4. In this example three panels 17, 18 and 19 are provided with panel 17 being provided with reflective portions 14a and 14b on a front and back face and panels 18 and 19 being provided with reflective portions 14c and 14d respectively.

In Figure 6 the reflective portions 20, 21, 22 and 23 are provided on the front faces of the panels 10, 11, 12 and 13 as in Figure 2. However, the reflective portions 20, 21, 22 and 23 cover all of the face of each respective panel except for areas which are required to be transparent to allow quarter wave phase correction. Thus the rear panel 10 need not have any transparent portions since no signal will reach the areas not contributing to $\lambda/4$ phase correction. This enables easier construction since

this panel 20 can be totally reflective.

In Figure 7, a similar zone plate to that shown in Figure 6 is illustrated, except reversed from the incident radiation. In this example, three panels 24, 25, 26 are provided to separate the reflective portions 20, 21, 22, 23 by $\lambda/8$. The front panel 27 need not be of any particular thickness but must provide support as a substrate for the reflective portions 23. This panel 27 also serves the purpose of protecting the reflective portions 23 from damage. The rear panel 28 is provided purely for protection of the rear reflective portion 28.

In a further embodiment of the present invention, the reflective portions of the zone plate are provided on 4 sheets of plastic film 34, as shown in Figures 8 and 9. In this embodiment the sheets are separated by an electrical thickness of $\lambda/8$ using spacer panels 29, 30, 31. Two outer panels 32 and 33 are also provided to protect the sheets. In constructing such a zone plate the sheets 34 are formed by forming the respective zones or reflective portions on the sheet and placing these sheets between panels 29-33 so that they are correctly spaced.

Figures 10 and 11 illustrate a simplification of the construction of this type. In this example the sheets are formed as one length. The single sheet is then wrapped around alternate panels 29, 30, 31. This simplifies the assembly procedure of this type of zone plate.

In the arrangements illustrated in Figures 2 and 3 where the reflective portion corresponding to zones of the zone plate are formed on only one face of the sheets, a simple method of manufacture can be used. This is particularly the case where, as in the arrangements of Figures 2 and 3, the total surface area of the reflective portions adds up to the total surface area of the zone plate. In such an arrangement all the reflective portions for the zone plate can be cut out of a single sheet of

metalised film. The m^{th} sheet (where m is the sheet number which in these examples is between 1 and 4) has applied to it the $1 + (4 (n + m - 2))^{\text{th}}$ zone. More generally for cases other than a quarter wave reflection zone plate every m^{th} sheet will have the $1 + (P (n + m - 2))^{\text{th}}$ zone applied thereto, where P is the total number of sheets. Thus the present invention is applicable to any reflective zone plate and is not restricted to a quarter wave zone plate.

A method and apparatus for manufacturing reflective zone plates will now be described.

Figure 12 illustrates apparatus for the manufacture of a reflection zone plate of the type illustrated in Figures 2 and 3. A roll 40 of metalised film is provided to be fed between a kiss-cutting punch and applicator 41 and a press base 42 to nip roller feeds 43. Reflective portions corresponding to zones of a zone plate can then be cut from the metalised film 51 by the action of the kiss-cutting punch and application 41 on the press base 42. Waste metalised film is fed into a waste catchment bin 44, whilst the reflective portions are retained in the applicator 41. A stack 45 of sheets of low loss dielectric material is provided and a single sheet 48 at a time is fed through nip roller feeds 43 to a position between the kiss-cutting punch and applicator 41 and press base 42. During feeding the surface of sheet 48 is subject to anti-static treatment via a tinsel brush 46 and is also coated with a suitable adhesive 47. Once the sheet 48 is in position under the applicator 41 the appropriate ellipses or reflective portions corresponding to zones of a zone plate are deposited and the sheet 48 is then fed out to form a stack 49. Once the correct number of sheets to form a zone plate are stacked light compression is applied

- 8 -

to the stack 49 to adhere the sheets 48: the adhesive on the surface not covered by the reflective portions providing the adhesion. Thus a laminate is formed which is ready for fitting into an antenna assembly.

Figures 13a and 13b illustrate the structure of the kiss-cutting punch and applicator 41. Elliptical blades 52 are provided protruding from the underside of the kiss-cutting punch and applicator 41 to co-operate with the press base 42 to cut the metalised film 51 to form the reflective portions. The kiss-cutting punch and applicator 41 is urged towards the press base 42 to cut the metalised film 51. When the cutting action is complete a vacuum is applied through a porous sheet 50 provided on the lower face of the kiss-cutting punch and applicator 41 to hold the reflective portions in place. The kiss-cutting punch and applicator 41 is then raised and a sheet 48 of low loss dielectric material transported to a position beneath it. The kiss-cutting punch and applicator 41 is then lowered to a position very close but not touching and a slight positive pressure is applied through the porous sheet 50 to the appropriate elliptical reflective portions to urge them into position on the face of the sheet 48 of low loss dielectric material, where they will adhere by the action of the adhesive 47 applied during transportation of the sheet 48.

The arrangement thus provides for accurate alignment of the respective zones of the zone plate on the respective sheets since the zones are cut from a single sheet of metalised film and are deposited on the sheets at a single location.

Thus the examples of the invention described herein-above illustrate the simple construction of a phase correcting zone plate made according to the present invention.



CLAIMS

1. A reflection zone plate for focusing microwave energy comprises a plurality of reflective portions corresponding to zones of said zone plate; said reflective portions being positioned in P parallel planes, so that each said reflective portion reflects energy λ/P out of phase with respect to adjacent reflective portions, where λ is the wavelength of the energy and P is an integer of four or more, such that energy reflected from said reflective portions constructively interferes at a focus of said zone plate; wherein the reflective portions in each said plane are formed on a respective low dielectric loss planar substrate.

2. A reflection zone plate as claimed in Claim 1 wherein said planar substrates comprise adjacent panels of electrical thickness $\lambda/2P$.

3. A reflection zone plate as claimed in Claim 2 wherein there are P panels each with said reflective portions mounted on a front face thereof.

4. A reflection zone plate as claimed in Claim 2, characterised in that there are P panels each having said reflective portions mounted on a back face thereof.

5. A reflection zone plate as claimed in Claim 2, wherein said reflective portions are mounted on a front and back face of at least one said panel.

6. A reflection zone plate as claimed in Claim 1 wherein said planar substrates comprise thin sheets on which said reflective portions are formed and which are separated



by panels of low dielectric loss material having an electrical thickness of $\lambda/2P$.

7. A reflection zone plate as claimed in any preceding claim wherein each reflective portion reflects energy $\lambda/4$ out of phase with respect to adjacent reflective portions, and said reflective portions are positioned in 4 parallel planes and separated by an electrical thickness of $\lambda/8$.

8. A reflection zone plate as claimed in Claim 6, wherein said sheets are joined to form a continuous sheet folded at alternate ends in alternate planes of said sheets.

9. A reflection zone plate as claimed in any preceding claim wherein said planar substrates are constructed from a plastics material.

10. Apparatus for the manufacture of a reflection zone plate as claimed in any one of Claims 1 to 9 comprising means to apply said reflective portions corresponding to zones of said zone plate to the surface of a plurality P of planar substrates formed of low dielectric loss material; and means to stack said planar substrates to form said reflection zone plate.

11. Apparatus as claimed in Claim 10, wherein said means to apply reflective portions comprises cutting and applying means for cutting said reflective portions from a metalised film and applying said reflective portions to a surface of said planar substrates; said reflection portions



being applied to said planar substrates such that the m^{th} substrate has applied to a surface thereof the $1 + (P (n + m - 2))^{\text{th}}$ zone of said reflection zone plate, where n is the zone number and m is the substrate number.

12. Apparatus as claimed in Claim 11 further including means to apply adhesive to a surface of said planar substrates of low dielectric loss material before application of said reflective portions to said surface.

13. Apparatus as claimed in Claim 11 or Claim 12, wherein said metalised film is supplied to said cutting and applying means from a roll.

14. A method of manufacture of a reflection zone plate as claimed in any one of Claims 1 to 9, comprising the steps of applying said reflective portions corresponding to zones of said zone plate to the surface of said plurality P of planar substrates formed of low dielectric loss material, and stacking said plurality of planar substrates to form said reflection zone plate.

15. A method as claimed in Claim 14, characterised in that said step of applying reflective portions comprises cutting said reflective portions from a sheet of metalised film and applying said reflective portions to a surface of said planar substrates; said reflective portions being applied to said planar substrates such that the m^{th} substrate has applied to it the $1 + (P (n + m - 2))^{\text{th}}$ zones of said reflection zone plate, where n is the zone number and m is



the substrate number.

16. A method as claimed in Claim 15, wherein all the reflective portions corresponding to zones of said zone plate are cut from a single piece of said metalised film simultaneously, and the respective reflective portions and are applied to the sequentially fed planar substrates of low dielectric loss material.

17. A method as claimed in Claim 15 or Claim 16 further including the step of applying adhesive to said surface of said planar substrates prior to the application of said reflective portions.

18. A method as claimed in Claim 17, wherein light compression is applied to the stack of said planar substrates to laminate said planar substrates.

19. A reflection zone plate substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to any one of Figures 2 to 11 of the drawings.

20. Apparatus for the manufacture of a zone plate substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to Figures 12, 13a and 13b of the drawings.

21. A method of manufacturing a zone plate substantially as hereinbefore described with reference to Figures 12, 13a and 13b of the drawings.
