
Marconi in Chelmsford

Peter Turrall, MVA Chairman

The last bastion in our County City of Chelmsford where founder Guglielmo Marconi set up his Wireless Telegraph Company has now been sold to a commercial operator. For three months a local organisations the Chelmsford Society and Chelmsford Engineering Society set up a wonderful exhibition entitled 'Marconi Science Worx' of Marconi artefacts, large posters etc, in the original Marconi factory in Hall Street and invited the public to view these items, and knowledgeable people to give lectures not only on Marconi but also on other engineering facets.

This is a very sad blow for all the hard work this local Group put in to not only save the factory for a museum, but also a future educational establishment covering all aspects of engineering and communications.* The second Marconi factory in New Street Chelmsford opened in 1912 has been razed to the ground for a major housing complex. The only exception is the front building which has a preservation order on it. This is now completely refurbished and occupied by an American cosmetics company called Benefit which employs a large number of female operators. Whilst the building has been tastefully redesigned internally, it has changed from its original details. The outside of the building still holds a plaque denoting the world's first wireless broadcast took place from the building in 1920.

The water tower running alongside Marconi Road is in the process of being converted. It is understood a local organisation hopes to produce community broadcasts from the building. The water reservoirs have been filled in and a new multi storey block of flats will soon be erected in the area once known as Building 720 with its wavy roof. The whole site has either one/two bedroomed flats or major three/four bedroom houses. Quite unrecognisable from its original 1912 complex.

Whilst there is no possibility of an ex-Marconi site being used for a Marconi Museum, there will be celebrations coming up covering various anniversaries - the opening of the BBC in 1920 when all Marconi equipment and engineering staff formed the British Broadcasting Company, later to be called the British Broadcasting Corporation. These anniversaries will wherever possible be supported by The Marconi Veterans Association and through the local and National Press people will be informed.

The Sandford Mill Museum run by Chelmsford City Council still holds a large variety of Marconi and other local industries items. The Marconi items are regularly updated and rebuilt by a faithful band of ex Marconi employees who spend their Mondays at Sandford Mill carrying out a wonderful task. They will always be ready to accept any unwanted Marconi items which will help them maintain existing equipment. If you have any items in your loft or you know of other people who have them, please ensure they are not thrown away or dumped. Get in touch with our Association and we will make sure they are transferred to the museum or contact peter.turrall@sky.com



***Stop press: all may not yet be lost!**

The editor's spot

Another year and in that time, probably almost twelve months, I've had an incredible number of emails from people researching family history and asking if we can assist in their enquiries - over three times as many as in earlier years. They've rather taken over this issue. Let's hope that some of you out there will be able to assist in some of the enquiries.

You will no doubt notice that this edition is not quite up to the standard I've set for myself in previous issues. I was hit with a flu-like cold in mid December which completely floored me - Christmas didn't exist in our household. I'm still suffering from the its effects a month later, and it meant that dragging myself to the keyboard daily was a bit of an effort, so my apologies, I hope it's not too obvious.

One of the things I always find difficult is to provide a brief summary of the speeches given at the previous reunion, almost a year after the event. My wife says, why on earth do you bother, it's old news, and they can find it all on your website. But I do it mainly to give a flavour of what was said for the benefit of those veterans who are not able or have no interest in looking at proceedings on our website. If you think it really serves no purpose, please let me know and we'll consider dropping it next year.

Mailbag

As in previous years, a number of letters many more than last year, are from correspondents seeking information about former colleagues, for research into their family history, or for the preparation of articles, books, etc. If no contact detail appears with the letter then please direct your reply or any correspondence for the enquirer to:

Barry Powell, Secretary, Marconi Veterans Association, 22 Juliers Close, Canvey Island, Essex, SS8 7EP; 01268 696342; secretary@marconi-veterans.org or to the editor;

Ken Earney, 01245 381235; email newsletter@marconi-veterans.org

Barry has produced a comprehensive guide to the online resources which may be helpful with this kind of enquiry. Find it on the MVA website at: http://www.marconi-veterans.org/?page_id=3047

Certain items in this issue, particularly on this and the next page, are responses to letters or articles appearing in the 2016 edition which have already been posted during the last eleven months on the website. There is thus an inevitable but necessary duplication catering for those Veterans who have no possibility, or wish, to use the internet.

Picking up on mention of the internet, many of the articles now come with links to web pages giving considerably more information on topics than can be included on these pages. For those not internet enabled, may I suggest that you enlist the help of a friend or neighbour who is, or go to your local library - remember those? - to enable you to see the material referred to.

Finally note that, to avoid unnecessary repetition of the Association's name in full, the initials MVA have in places been used.

Brian Edwards

From Denny McCrisken, 5 July 2016

I am searching for my dad who worked for Marconi many years ago and I am hoping that someone, somewhere, may be able help me find him.

My brother and I last saw our dad in Canada in 1967 and due to a nasty marriage breakdown all contact with him ended and he disappeared from our lives. Over the years I have tried in vain to find him but always reach a dead end. I just would like to know what happened to him. Is he alive? Maybe not...we want nothing apart from some answers and maybe, just maybe, someone will remember him.

His name is Brian Edwards, born July 4 1934. I know that he worked as a draughtsman for Marconi. We moved from Harlow, Essex in 1967 to 204 Thompson Boulevard, Ville St Laurent, Montreal, Canada for his work but I have nothing more from then to now.

Thank you in advance for taking the time to read this. I understand it's a strange request and will appreciate any comments you may have. I am 58 years old and live in Australia with my husband of 40 years, children and grandchildren and it would be wonderful if I could tell them about their grand-father and great-grandfather.

Keeping in touch from the US

**From George Maclean, 23 May 2016,
geodalgliesh@me.com**

Living in exile, in the US, I would like to keep in contact with old colleagues and friends, from people who I know, and those that I did not, to hear about past and present experiences. My 29 years with Marconi were the happiest time of my life, especially that in Bld 46! I am a member of the 'Chelmsford Remembered' Group on FaceBook, and MOGS & MOFS.

Please keep in touch. Happy memories.

Eric Bird

From John Edwards, 18 November 2016

I am a researcher for the ex-students of the Wireless College, Colwyn Bay. I have been contacted by a relative of Eric Bird, 20 years (?), who was 3rd Radio Officer on the MV Harpagus which was torpedoed and sunk by a U-Boat on the 2nd of May, 1941. Eric Bird did not survive the attack. He was believed to have been a Marconi employee. His relative is trying to discover which radio school Eric attended before sitting his exams. If there is any record of him in the Marconi files, would it be likely to contain this information? It is not known if he attended Colwyn Bay Wireless College as all the records have been lost. I was a Marconi Marine Radio Officer in 1944.

Watford Junction

From Sue Hearfield, 2 May 2016

I used to work at Marconi Radar Systems in Watford Junction in the 70s. I sometimes wonder what happened to the people I worked with but I can't find any mention of the place online. We did have to sign the Official Secrets Act, perhaps that's why there's no mention of it? I also worked at Cable and Wireless (London). Do you have members from the Watford Junction branch?

Marconi Radar History - public access

Ian Gillis, 10 March 2016

As promised I have changed the access controls to the Marconi Radar History Wiki to give read access to the general public. Now anyone can read the contents at marconiradarhistory.pbworks.com. To leave comments readers will need to be subscribed to PB Works and the History website. I would like to thank Alan Hartley-Smith for his heroic efforts on Saddleworth Moor which made this possible. I dedicate this work to my former boss Brian Kendon who is laid to rest today.

The relaunch of Elettra III as a student laboratory

Seth Muir, 14 October 2016, seth@salish.org

My name is Seth Muir and I'm the Executive Director of Salish Sea Expeditions, a Seattle Washington USA based non-profit charity. For 20 years we have been engaging middle and high school students, primarily from public schools (US term for state schools), in science research and maritime skills programs on Puget Sound aboard a 61ft sailing research vessel.

I'm writing because in 2015 we purchased the M/V Elettra III (o/n 694607; BRIT304285) from a private owner here in Seattle. We have begun to retro-fit and plan to relaunch her as our region's first science and marine technology laboratory and research vessel for kids. We have made great progress and I thought you might be interested in our exciting new plan for this historic vessel built to Lloyd's class for the Marconi Company.

Some materials about our progress (including the Act of Congress we received) and the campaign underway to relaunch Elettra III as a student lab can be found here (<http://www.salish.org/pathtolaunch/>). I also recently won a prize pitching this idea, and a short video can be seen here (<http://www.salish.org/news/salish-sea-expeditions-advances-to-svp-fast-pitch-finals/>) which tells the story and highlights our plans.

If this is of interest at all to you, I'd love to talk more. If you ever happen to be in this area we'd love to show you around and might have some original equipment coming off the boat that could be of interest too.

My information is all below, and I thank you for your interest.

PS: I have attached photos we took on a recent cruise in Seattle (see above) and an article written in Marconi Mariner, Sept/Oct 1962 describing the vessel at the time of her original launch. (*You can find it on the MVA website*).

Seth Muir, Executive Director, www.salish.org Phone: 206.780.7848 c: (mobile) 206.427.9090

"Inspiring youth to connect with the marine environment through boat-based scientific inquiry and hands-on learning, instilling curiosity, confidence, and critical thinking."



John (Jack) Bacon

From Don Bacon, 26 August 2016,
d Bacon@blueyonder.co.uk

It is with regret that I inform you of the passing of JF Bacon - Jack. He worked almost his entire working life at Marconi, and you may still have people within your association who knew him.

He worked as a turner at Baddow Research from about 1939, then as an inspector, before moving to New Street, and then St Mary's House as an estimator. His final job was at the Writtle Road works from where he retired. On his retirement day, Jim Prior made his presentation on the mezzanine floor. Photographs were in the company magazine/newspaper at the time.

His funeral was at Chelmsford crematorium in September 2016. Please could you circulate this information and my email details should anyone wish to get in touch.

David French

From Helen French, 7 December 2016

It is with great sadness that I write to advise you that my father, David French, a draughtsman at Marconi's for many years passed away in the early hours of today. I know that he kept in touch with some old colleagues on a monthly basis but I think this was a quite an informal arrangement and I don't have any direct contact details.

Could you spread the news so that when funeral details are available I can pass them on to you for those that may be interested in attending. There are no details yet as we are awaiting a Coroner's report which will probably take a week.

It really would be much appreciated if you could assist in this matter. My father was not into modern technology so we don't have a list of e-mail addresses to readily send the news to.

The 80th Veterans Reunion

The reunion took place on the 16th April 2016. Our President at the reunion and for the past year has been Val Cleare, currently a MVA committee member with a distinguished Marconi career in secretarial and administration roles from 1971 to 1999. The Guest of Honour was John Shrigley who retired as personnel director to GEC reporting to Lord Weinstock at Stanhope Gate in 1994.

The toast to the President was proposed by MVA Chairman Peter Turrall who briefly sketched Val's career, highlighting her facility with languages, initially French and German and later acquiring a sound working knowledge of Italian, invaluable in negotiations with Marconi Italiana. She was for some time secretary to GEC-Marconi Electronics director of personnel John Shrigley, her Guest of Honour here today.

Val responded by fleshing out Peter's brief resumé of her career: joining the company in 1971 combining work with part-time day-release to attend Chelmsford College studying shorthand and typing, progressing through secretarial and administrative posts with increasing responsibility, Pitman shorthand teacher training and qualification, attendances at conferences in Europe. The acquisition of competence in written and spoken Italian became increasingly valuable in dealings with Marconi Italiana. Her final period of service with the company was working with the Commercial Director of Radar, David Harrison, involved with the production of key tender documents, which successfully secured important MOD contracts. After 32 years' service she was made redundant and has since worked for Essex County Council in a variety of posts.

Outside work her interests include choral singing, folk dance and she is secretary of Marconi's Theatre Group

Peter Turrall then introduced Val's Guest of Honour John Shrigley, someone he first met in 1985 when Peter was overseas sales manager for Tom Mayer in MCSL. John had been in Personnel and Human Resources director roles culminating in his appointment as personnel director to GEC reporting to Lord Weinstock at Stanhope Gate. In 1994 a career change away from large organisations as a consultant as well as civil service commissioner.

John Shrigley recounted stories about Stanhope Gate and Lord Weinstock, how he once picked up the phone to Conrad Black to bargain over the cost for GEC of recruitment advertising in the Daily Telegraph, a tussle that uncharacteristically he lost.

Coming closer to home, an anecdote concerning a big pay negotiation round at Chelmsford when Hugh Jones wanted to offer staff conditions to manual employees which at that time was revolutionary. Normally decided locally, on this occasion John had concerns so he phoned Stanhope Gate.

A pause.

"Who wants to do this? You realise this is very unusual; on your head be it".

With some concerns about sickness absences it was implemented, and apart from an initial spike in sickness absences it settled down to normal staff levels of sickness and was a major innovation.

Finally a tale about the time Arthur Walsh asked Robbie Robertson to take over Norsk Marconi, a problem area for most MDs

But not only did Robbie visit Norsk Marconi on many occasions and spend serious time with them but he also or at least started with the language but certainly he endeavoured to correspond with them and keep them on board. My abiding recollection is of Robbie and I walking down a street in Oslo in the middle of February at 14 below zero.

He closed by thanking the MVA very much for having him, saying that clearly Marconi Veterans Association is flourishing and he hoped it will flourish well in the future.

Eric Burnett Vass 1936-1953

From Bruce and Kathy Vass, West Lakes, South Australia, 8 June 2016

I have been building my family tree for a number of years and recently came across the Marconi Veterans website and wonder if you can assist me with information about my Dad. He passed away 25 August 1984 and as is a common story we don't have a great deal of his history. I came across a draft letter Dad wrote in 1972 seeking work at STC, which was unsuccessful, however it does provide a brief synopsis of his career and I transcribe the letter as follows:

With reference to your opening a branch office in Adelaide I am writing to ask if you could have a suitable vacancy either part time or full time. Brief resume as follows:

1936-March 1953, Communications Project Officer, Marconi's W/T Co, Chelmsford, Essex.

March 1953 - April 1966, Communications Project Officer, Phillips P.T.A., formerly T.C.A.

Continued on next page

Liverpool's Planet Lightship appeal

The beautiful 'Planet' was Britain's last manned lightship and was world famous among mariners for marking the entrance to the Port of Liverpool channels at the 'Mersey Bar' sandbanks, 12 miles out to sea in Liverpool Bay. It was known in shore side bars from Honolulu to Sydney as the one at the Liverpool Bar.



During the final years of the great Trans-Atlantic liners, sea captains used to race from New York's similar 'Ambrose' Lightship to Liverpool's 'Planet', to see if they could set new times. Glimpsing the Planet Lightship meant seafarers were safely home after long voyages.

QE2 Captain Robin Woodall, of Hoylake, memorably described Planet as the 'Lantern on Liverpool's front door' for millions of sailors and passengers. After many years happy retirement on public display at Canning Dock in Liverpool's UNESCO World Heritage Site, a popular attraction, with owner Alan Roberts utilising the space as a cafe and bar while he nursed plans to turn it into a floating hotel, she was seized in September 2016 and towed over 200 miles round Wales to Gloucester by the Canal and River Trust (C&RT), in a dispute between the trust and Alan Roberts over mooring fees, a sum reported to be £10k.

(See full article at <https://you.38degrees.org.uk/petitions/bring-back-liverpool-s-planet-lightship>)

Many local Liverpool folk, particularly Planet supporters and volunteers, are naturally outraged at this situation and have organised a petition to the Canal and River Trust (C&RT) chairman Allan Leighton and local MP Louise Ellman hosted by 38 Degrees. Local volunteer and supporter Stan McNally first sent us information about this developing situation in September, before the seizure. They are asking concerned Veterans now for their support: you can sign the petition by going the above link for 38 Degrees..

Further background on this story at:-
<https://www.liverpoolconfidential.co.uk/news-and-comment/bar-lightship-the-lonely-planet-sails-away>
and the Planet supporters group's own website: www.mrmsw.co.uk

Eric Burnett Vass - continued from previous page

During the above period I was responsible for the design and development of a large number of projects of advanced design. The original doppler radar Blue Silk, miniturised ADF equipment, Telemetre Receiver for the Blue Streak missile project, VHF link equipment etc. Both firms took out many patents in my name, some of these used on Mobile Radio Telephones: Squelch noise limiters etc.

In June 66 due to the close down of PTA labs I was asked to take over the Phillips tech. library where my experience as an engineer could be an asset. However with the closure of the Menzies Research labs and the removal interstate of the remainder of the development departments the services of a technical librarian was no longer warranted.

I was retrenched on 30/3/72. Although I am 63 years old I am in excellent health.

Dad also mentioned briefly that he was involved in recording morse code messages during the war and I only realised recently that this activity was not to be spoken of. He was able to build his only radio equipment and he also built a TV for the home in the late 40s. We left 12 St Vincent Road, Chelmsford in 1953 to settle in Adelaide South Australia. He was always keen that his children and grandchildren learn morse code and made a very professional key for them to practice on. He also became a amateur radio enthusiast when he was 70 after passing the appropriate exams to gain his operating certificate.

I was contacted years ago by a wireless collector who found Dad's name inside some equipment. Even today a Google search will locate some patents that Dad was responsible for. I do have some papers from the estate which deal with the patents. It was always a mystery how Dad acquired the skills in the radio field without any formal training or university degrees – clearly it was self taught and brought about by a passion for the field. We believe he would have taken a shine to computers if he had lived 20 years longer, but of course this may have interfered with his hobby of amateur radio which occupied him in his retirement.

The Secretary's slot

Well, here we go with 2017. I hope you all had a good Christmas and are looking forward to a healthy New Year

On a sad note, I regret to inform you that this year we lost two stalwarts of your committee, Bernard Hazelton in July and then Jimmy Leadbitter in November. Bernard was Secretary before I took over and was a great help in ensuring a smooth transition. Jimmy was a fount of knowledge on all things to do with the Marine Company. They will both be sorely missed.

On the bright side, Colin Page and Colin Fletcher have agreed to join the committee and I hope you will confirm their positions come April.

Our Reunion and AGM this year will be on the 22nd April once again at the Marconi Club. Don Mott, the current Treasurer of the Association, will be the President and the BBC Essex presenter Ray Clarke, our honoured guest.

Over the years, we have partaken of most of the standard menu offered by the caterers (many more than once or twice) so we have decided, for this year, to select the menu from an alternative list. This is a more adventurous menu but, unfortunately, comes at a higher price. Our selection for this year is smoked duck salad with mango purée, salmon Coulbiac with a sparkling wine sauce (salmon with egg en croute), lime posset with raspberries and homemade shortbread, cheese and biscuits, tea or coffee. We regret that, in order to offer this menu, the cover price must rise to £30. We appreciate that this is a large increase but feel that it still represents extremely good value, especially as it includes wine. However, we are pleased to maintain the subscription rate at £6 (£3 for friends).

We have had several of our meetings at the 1912 building on New Street and are grateful to Benefit, the San Francisco based cosmetics company, for their hospitality. On the occasions that Benefit is unable to accommodate us, we have met at the Marconi Club and, again, would like to thank them. Whilst on the subject, we must not forget to record our thanks to Selex-es (now named Leonardo) who have kindly supported us for a number of years now.

With regard to the name tags, last year's arrangements seemed to work quite well so we will, again, produce the name tags on A4 sheets which will be at the merchandise table so you can collect yours as you enter the hall. When you order your ticket, please indicate, in the box provided, how you would like your tag to read. If you attended the Reunion last year, it will read the same, otherwise, **the default will be to print your name as it appears on the first line of your address label.**

Two of the frequent reasons I hear for not coming to the reunion are 'I won't know anyone' and 'It's only managers isn't it' To answer the first, I would think it's unlikely that, out of the 170 or so Veterans at the reunion, there is not someone that you have come across in your 21 or more years with the Company. In any case, everyone at the reunion is friendly and welcoming. Which brings me to the second reason. Marconi initiated the Association in order to acknowledge the contribution made by long serving employees at all levels. Any employee that has served for 21 years or more, at whatever level, is a Veteran and all Veterans are invited to the reunion and the 'friendly and welcoming' point above is just as valid.

If you are still unsure about attending or have any questions, please give me a ring. I am always happy to talk and can give you names of those Veterans who attended recent reunions.

If you know of an ex-Marconi employee who does not receive the newsletter please urge them to contact me as soon as possible. It may be that they have moved or not replied to a confirmation request of a few years ago or that they left with 21 to 24 years service and have now become Veterans by virtue of the reduction in service requirement to 21 years. The 'Friends of The Marconi Veterans' Association' has been set up to cater for anyone who does not qualify as a Veteran but wishes to be kept informed of things Marconi. Numbers are growing slowly with, currently, approaching 70 members and any more would be welcome.

The three registers (the main register, In Memoriam and friends) are now published on the website so please have a look if you can and let me know of any errors.

Please note that I may be contacted at the address below. Finally, I would like to wish you all a very prosperous 2017 and hope to see as many of you as possible either at the reunion on 22nd April or the next Open Day at Sandford Mill.

One final note – the 2018 Reunion will be on Saturday 21st April.

Barry Powell, Secretary, Marconi Veterans Association, 22 Juliers Close, Canvey Island, Essex, SS8 7EP Phone: 01268 696342 (answerphone if we are out, please leave a message and I will ring you back) Email: Secretary@marconi-veterans.org

Formal opening of walking trail at Marconi transatlantic telegraph site, Clifden

There have been several references to the Marconi radio site at Clifden in Connemara in previous newsletters, supplied by Shane Joyce, who has done much to publicise the site and the Marconi connections. In October the formal opening of the newly constructed 4.6km walking trail took place during Clifden's annual arts festival. The trail follows the original pathways used by the Marconi personnel. There are a large number of information panels, 'Photoscopes' and audio devices amongst many other items along the trail. Alcock & Brown, being a major part of the story of the site, feature prominently.

William Davies R/O Nr1

From Michael Kirwan, 3 May 2016

I was most interested to find your webpage. By any chance have you any information on Radio Officer Nr 1, Willie Davies. He is mentioned in the Marconi Mariner around 1952 on his retirement.

I am a member of the Radio Officers Association.

Michael Kirwan

The Secretary has checked our membership register and there is one W Davies who could be the Willie Davies that you refer to.

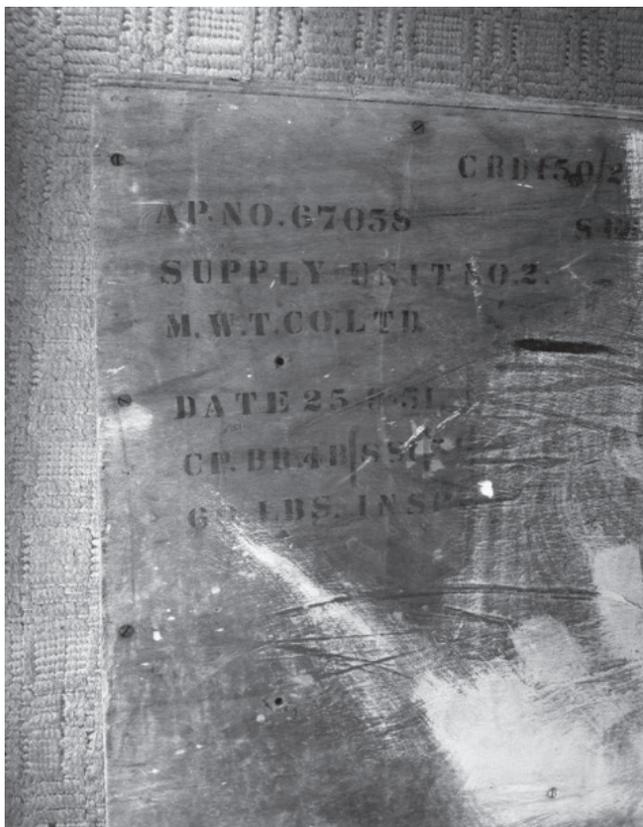
He joined the company in 1902 and was at some point awarded the MBE.

Supply Box

From Joanna Tribe, 22 September 2016

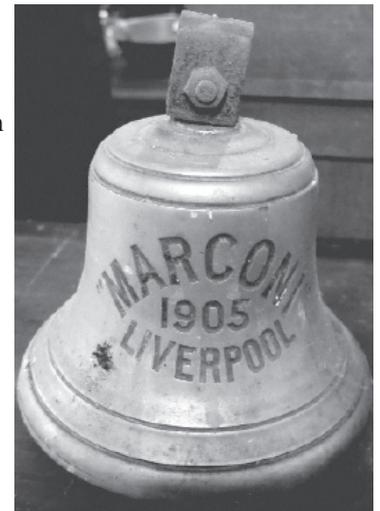
I recently saved the wooden box below from the crusher at Chelmsford recycling centre. I plan to smarten it up and use it as furniture. I was wondering if any of your members may be able to let me know what was originally stored in it? The date reads 25th September 1951. Supply Unit No. 2. Weight is 60lbs. I have googled MWT Co Ltd so I thought it might be Marconi related. Please do let me know if this is not correct. Sorry for the random query. I just thought it would be lovely to know the history behind the box.

No further information from Joanna as to the size of the box, or any more of the text than can be read in this photo.



Marconi Seaforth Sands wireless station bell

I acquired a bell engraved 'MARCONI 1905 LIVERPOOL' many years ago whilst on holiday in Queenstown, Southern Ireland. It measures 9 inches high and I understand it was installed at the Marconi Seaforth Sands wireless station which opened in 1905 as the world's first training school for wireless operators. Would it be possible for you to make enquiries amongst your members to see if anyone has photographs of the bell in situ?



**From Dennis Yates, (Earlywireless@aol.com)
18 May 2016**

Thomas Cox

From Susan Scott-Herridge, 12 April 2016

Thomas Cox worked for the company for many years. He was working in Chelmsford in 1911 as a Scientific Instrument Maker and worked in the Model(?) Shop, and may have become its manager. He was sent to Whitehead Torpedo works at Weymouth/Portland during the Great War, and later returned to Chelmsford. At some point he went to Geneva with a small group to install equipment at the League of Nations. He was also asked to go to South Georgia, but declined due to family commitments. At some point in the mid thirties, I believe he was sent to the new Hackbridge factory, but I'm not sure in what role. During WW2 I understand that the factory made radio transmitters for the troops. I think he worked there until his retirement and move to Weymouth. If your association has any further information available about his career with the company, I would be most grateful to receive it.

PS: I now know for sure that he joined the company in 1907 when he was 19, so any information would be fantastic.

I haven't had time to contact the Bodleian yet, and speak to Michael Hughes, but I will try and do it soon. I also missed the Marconi exhibition in the Hall Street works in the spring in Chelmsford, but managed to get there last week and had lunch at The Woolpack!

As far as I know, Thomas worked in the model shop in Hall St. My mother tells me that at some point he worked on a knife which basically cauterised meat at it was cut and stopped it from bleeding, but I'm not sure if that was in Chelmsford or much later when he worked in the Hackbridge factory.

Marconi ballistics**From Mike Rignall, 28 February 2016**

Having read the latest copy of the Marconi Veterans newsletter I was amused by the article by Bob Mountfort on page 4.

Firstly I must admit to not being a true veteran, having served only 19 years with the company, but when the doors closed at the Witham microelectronics plant, I had little choice but to look for pastures new. When I joined the company as a student apprentice in 1951, it was a company where although you may not die a rich man, you would have a job for life. How things have changed.

Looking at the airborne view of New Street fills me with sadness, since now Building 720 where the apprentice training centre was located has gone, no central building where father in law was in accounts and worst of all, no Building 46 where I met my wife. Fortunately as life progressed I became a graduate apprentice with a spell at Marconi College, now another building development, before going to Baddow where I worked on Doppler radar under Mervyn Morgan and high stability oscillators under Norman Lea, both superb engineers who could inspire younger hopefuls.

Coming now to the subject of ballistics, I recall an incident when located in B building at Great Baddow. The room number eludes me but it was on the top floor, the adjacent lab was the Measurement section of which Ernst Schelisch was a member. Ernst, who I see sadly passed away in 2008, had in a previous existence, it was rumoured, worked on the V2 hence an inborn love of ballistic matters!

To come to the point, on one occasion the labs on the ground floor had the need to launch two large tethered hydrogen filled balloons about 2 mtr in diameter, for what purpose I do not know. However this presented the perfect opportunity for a little target practice to Ernst. Fortunately all labs were equipped with a supply of compressed air, the stores had a wonderful stock of telescopic brass tubing, one size was a nice slide fit for 0.1uF 350 v Dubilier tubular capacitors. To cut a long story short, 30 minutes later, some 10s of capacitors and many cubic feet of compressed air, the long brass barrelled DIY cannon, after a few trajectory adjustments had been made, he succeeded in shooting both balloons down.

To use the words of Bob, see what happens when memories are jogged

Postscript, 5 March 2016 06:39

The Writtle ballistic episode really brought back memories. I had completely forgotten about the days under Mervyn Morgan when designing PETA. I still look back with a warm feeling about Marconi and the wonderful training that they gave me and it was a sad day when I finally left Marconi Microelectronics at Witham, but I did not want to be the last man out of the door.

After 3 years as applications manger for a Canadian semiconductor company I joined two other Marconi engineers and set up our own company here in Stroud. It turned out to be an excellent move and selling all my shares certainly gives a comfortable retirement. But and it is a big BUT, I can never forget those days with the once great Marconi company who provided me with excellent education and a wife (tracer in Building 46).

Miss Florence Attridge**Tim Wander**

Over the Christmas break Chelmsford Museum Services was pleased to acquire a British Empire Medal (civil division). The medal was awarded in 1946 to Miss Florence Attridge of Chelmsford for services as head of the winding shop at New Street during WW2.

With the medal came eight documents including a signed letter from Buckingham Palace (George RI), a signed letter/telegram from the Admiralty, a signed telegram from the Admiralty signal establishment and a signed letter/telegram from Admiral HW Grant, then MD of the Marconi Company. Other letters included other congratulatory signed letters from the Admiralty and from the Marconi's Wireless Telegraph Company. Another letter being researched came from 'K3 section' which appears to be part of the Naval Intelligence code breaking section.

After further research the museum will be putting the items on display at Oaklands in the near future and is keen to hear from anyone who knew or remembers Miss Florence Attridge. Do you know anything about her and can you locate a picture of the lady? Do you have any information pertaining to her wartime work and her secret connections with the Admiralty and code breaking - what was K3 section?

Please contact Tim Wander at timwander@compuserve.com

Sandford Mill open days

International Marconi day 22 April - the 80th anniversary of Marconi's death

The big weekend is currently 12/13 August, and Heritage weekend 9/10 September

Tim Wander appointed consultant curator of Sandford Mill Museum

Tim's appointment was announced in the autumn. Congratulations and welcome Tim

With his customary zeal he has been reviewing and reorganising the holdings of archive material at the museum and has already come up with a number of initiatives for future activities and events to be held there, and much more! For full details please see <http://www.marconi-veterans.org/?cat=4>

Commemoration of Writtle 2MT 1922 broadcasts

In mid-February, coinciding with the distribution of this newsletter so too late to allow you to 'tune in', a Chelmsford-based team of enthusiasts will commemorate the 95th Anniversary of the 1922 2MT (2 Emma Toc) broadcasts from the wooden hut in Writtle in 1922 when a small group of fascinating individuals launched the UK's first regular radio broadcasts. Jim Salmon from radio emmatoc writes: "We will not try to recreate station 2MT - how could we? We live in a very different age. What we would like to recreate is the spirit and adventure of 2MT," More importantly the team is now planning the centenary celebrations of the birth of British broadcasting in Chelmsford and Essex. So radio emmatoc, Chelmsford Amateur Radio Society and Chelmsford Museum Services this celebration for the 95th anniversary will allow the team to prepare for the big events to come!

Here are some of Tim's museum appeals

Does anyone know of – or can you guess from your career history – where we might find a Marconi Myriad Computer? Today we (ie, the National Computer Museum, Leeds University, Sandford Mill et al) cannot find any surviving example: I have vague memories about AFTN Switching in Cyprus (FLIGHT report confirms installation in 1967) and South Africa military switches – can you help?

We are trying to get the important Great Baddow Chain Home Radar Mast listed – you may be surprised to know that due to several 'technical' reasons this unique and only complete surviving CH radar mast has effectively no statutory protection. I have to assemble a report about its use from 1954 until today, so any information please email me – I need to cover all its uses – for radar, TV, microwave projects etc..

As the Centenary fast approaches we are urgently seeking the loan of any early wireless equipment from WW1 and RFC use designed by the Brooklyn/Joyce Green RFC and later Writtle engineering teams. So can anyone loan us a Sterling W/T set or one of the early AD series of equipments designed, built and tested by Eckersley and his team between 1919 and 1922?

The 2MT Writtle hut now has an original 1916 tortoise stove in place and a correct Cliftohone gramophone on its way. We are looking for a 78 RPM record of Robert Howe singing the 'Floral Dance' – the first record to be played on 2MT.

And we are still looking for an elusive picture of the Hall Streets Works wireless station – the one across the road from the main factory site. Anyone seen one?

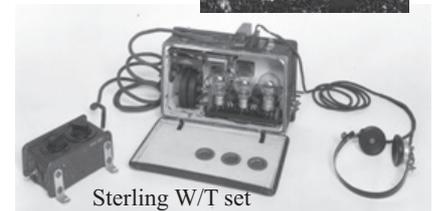
Finally, we would like more information on the Broomfield Wireless Station – formed in 1903 and badly damaged in WW2 – does anyone have any pictures or can point me to a source?



Myriad



Baddow-Tower



Sterling W/T set



AD series
c1920

John Peachey (1911-1922)

From David Peachey, 10 January 2017 - researching the past of my father

I wonder if you can cast some light on a quandary of my youth and now my history? I understood that my father went to a college/school in Cardiff at the Marconi school. He then went on to be a wireless officer on the Merchant Fleet.

I have pictures of him in the China Sea, Panama, in hospital in Port Said and of his ship after a hurricane in Hong Kong. He spoke very little of his time at sea but seemed to go all over the world, except Australia. I do know he worked with White Star and others from cruise ships to tankers. Ranked as First Radio Officer, really smart uniform.

He came ashore in 1936 I think, then worked for the GPO. During the war I'm not sure, protected profession. After the war he went flying on de Havilland Rapides as a radio operator. From there to transatlantic air traffic control at Birdlip in Gloucestershire.

Enough...what I am asking is, is there any information about the Cardiff training establishment as Dad gave up a career in the family business to go there. That included training in Sainsbury's in London in 1927! I am sorry to ask such mundane question.

Best wishes, hoping you may be able to at least tell me that the wireless school in Cardiff existed.

Old Marconi Instruments

From: Fabricio Camiletti, 16 November 2016
camiletti.fabricio@gmail.com

I am Fabricio Camiletti, a student of Electronics Engineering in the National Technological University (Universidad Tecnológica Nacional) in Argentina. I write because we are building a Radio-Frequency (RF) Laboratory at the University. We received some old Marconi Instruments items as a donation from an old research project but without the instruction manual. I've been trying to find in internet but there is no information there. I would be grateful if you could provide some further information about the instruments or if you know where can I find it.

The instruments are: Slotted Waveguide Section Type 60148 from Sanders Division; Universal Probe Carriage Type 6010 from Sanders Division; TFT Power Meter 6460 from Sanders Division. I attach the pictures of the instruments. (Images can be found on MVA website.)

Apprentice at Marconi Radar 1979 - 1983
From Jacquie Cole, 1 May 2016

I am Jacquie Cole, an apprentice at Marconi Radar between 1979 – 1983 when I became a skilled wireperson. I have been looking for some of my old colleagues and have found your details on the internet. One name in particular I have been looking for is Steve (Stephen) Wheeler known as Whizz. He was an apprentice with me. Have you any idea how I might be able to get in touch with him?

I now live in Wiltshire but am occasionally back in Essex.

Leslie Purdy 1890-1972

From Pamela Purdy, 27 May 2016,
pampurdy@ntlworld.com

I am not sure whether you can assist me but I am trying to research the career of the above named. I have come across a newspaper cutting of his father's obituary which states that the deceased's son Leslie did not attend his father's funeral because "he was connected with the Marconi project". This would have been in 1930 and was obviously important enough to miss the funeral. Can you perhaps suggest where I might find further details.

My main purpose is to find a photograph of Leslie Purdy as he was estranged from his family and we have very little information about him and no photos. The family assumed he was killed in the war but we now know this was not so.

It may be that you can't help me but thank you anyway.

Richard Allen Harker, 1905-1983

From Pat Harker, 2 August 2016

Having recently obtained the RAF Service Records for my father (above), I am wondering if there are any archives in existence relating to the period immediately before WWII.

Briefly, family anecdotal evidence is that whilst at Trinity College, Cambridge he was recruited by Marconi to help

with research on radar and subsequently went on to work for Marconi before arriving at the Air Ministry in 1939 and then being commissioned into the RAF in December 1940. He was de-mobbed in 1945 and during those 5 years he was involved with the setting up of radar all over the UK but principally on the South Coast. I would be very grateful if you could let me know whether there is any information available to us or, if not, if there are any other organisations we could contact.

This query was forwarded to MOGS who in turn recommended directing it to the Defence Electronics History Society. If any Veteran can contribute anything further would you please make contact with Pat Harker through the Secretary.

Mark Ward

From Jane Marston, 7 May 2016

I am trying to track my now deceased grandfather who I am led to believe worked at Marconi South Africa around 1951. He was an engineer. I came across your website and wondered if you have any data or leads that may assist me.

Marconi Underwater Systems Ltd

Robin Selby, 28 June 2016

Those of your members who were in MSDS's Underwater Weapons Division or its successor, Marconi Underwater Systems Ltd, may be interested in the memoir covering the period 1979-1985 which I have published on Kindle. It is called 'Sting Ray and Spearfish: The Pioneering Years of Marconi Underwater Systems'.

The memoir covers the achievements of that period, including the award of the Sting Ray and Spearfish contracts, rushing Sting Ray into service for the Falklands, Mk24, the rapid growth of staff, setting up new sites at Neston, Croxley Green and Waterlooville, entry into the export market, etc. I had a ringside seat during the entire time.

News from Bawdsey Radar

In April last year Bawdsey Radar Trust was awarded £1.4m by the Heritage Lottery Fund to conserve the Transmitter Block and develop new exhibitions telling the story of RADAR. Historic England has awarded it Grade II* listed status and given a grant of £196K, which will help with the works to save it.

Work progressed through the rest of 2016, and by January, after the Christmas break, over 95% of the blast wall repairs were complete and the excavated earth around the blast walls put back. In addition one third of the roof has been emptied of the shingle blast protection and is ready for waterproofing. Work will then start on the incinerator chimney and excavation of the walkways (between the blast walls and the Transmitter building) to install the new drainage.

The site will be closed until September 2017 for the conservation work to be completed. See www.bawdseyradar.org.uk for further details.

Bernard Hazelton 1922 - 2016

Bernard was born in Chelmsford in November 1922. His father was employed by The Marconi Wireless Telegraph Company in New Street.

He went to KEGS in Chelmsford and left at 16, in his own words, after rather modest achievement. After leaving school in 1939, he started work with the Essex River Board as a Chainman and Trainee Surveyor, but the war started soon after and all projects of the board ceased for the duration. Out of a job he applied to Marconis and was accepted into the Marconi Marine Company in the Operating department, later Personnel

He served in the works company of the Home Guard and after two years volunteered and was accepted by the Fleet Air Arm as a Telegraphist and Air Gunner. Following training, he served in the Middle East, Orkney Islands and mainland UK until the end of hostilities.

At his final base, Gosport, he met and courted a WREN, Jean, who came from Colchester in July 1946, then returning to work at Marconi Marine until retirement at 65 as Personnel Officer of the company

With a lifelong interest in the sea and things nautical, after leaving the navy, he joined the Chelmsford Unit of the Sea Cadet Corps and was commissioned into the RNVR and served for twelve years as administrative officer of the unit, retiring as a Lieutenant.

Keen on horticulture, he served on the committee of the Great Baddow Society, was secretary of the Danbury Society and latterly on the committee of the Hatfield Peverel Society. He was also a member of the Chelmsford Fuchsia Society.

After the war, a Telegraphist Air Gunners Association was formed and for many years he was a very keen and active member, forming close friendships with war-time colleagues which meant a great deal to him.

His family has been particularly important in his life and meant a great deal to him.

Around a number of part-time jobs in earlier times - GPO telephonist, taxi driver and relief sports hall manager - he fitted in charity work with the disabled and more recently, supported the RNLI, RSPB and Cancer Research. He was also a member of the Fleet Air Arm Association, the Royal British Legion.

Barry Powell adds that Bernard joined the MVA committee in 1969 and served as its secretary from then until 2004.

James A Leadbitter - Jimmy 1925 - 2016

Ron Stringer

Jimmy was born in 1925 in Whitburn, County Durham but moved south to work for the Marconi Wireless Telegraph Company (MWT) at its New Street factory early in WW2. Following service in other departments, he worked in the Marine Test department, was subsequently transferred to Marconi Marine's installation planning department and was the Installations Manager in 1963 when the Company moved from New Street to its headquarters in the newly-built Elettra House on Westway, Chelmsford, where he remained until his retirement in 1990. That period covered the introduction of Single Sideband radio telephony and radio telex in maritime communications (Apollo, Pennant receivers; Crusader, Commander, Commandant and Conqueror transmitter equipments), several new ranges of radar equipment, the transition from valve to solid-state technology and the maritime world's adoption of satellite technology for communications and navigation.

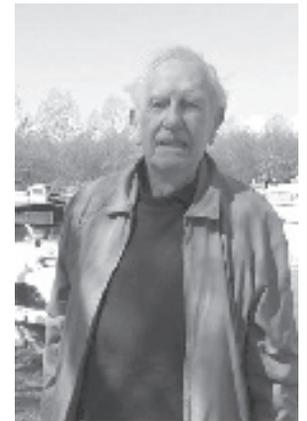
His department was responsible for the planning, logistics and fitting of radio rooms and radio navigational aids on ships in shipyards and ports world-wide, overseeing MIMCo technicians on long-term assignment in shipyards in the Far East and South America as well as those working from the Company's many offices in the UK and elsewhere. Overseas agents involved in the installation of MIMCo products were supported and directed from his office. They were also deeply involved in the planning and execution of Company display stands at shipping exhibitions around the world, behind the Iron Curtain as well as in the West, including those formerly held each year at the beginning of January at the London Boat Show at Earls Court - not a good recipe for a peaceful Christmas for those involved.

This work, and the many, detailed discussions with shipowners and their representatives brought him into contact with many people from all aspects of shipping's radio and construction community.

Barry Powell, MVA Secretary

To this, I can add that he joined our Committee in 1988 and was President in 1989. He was very knowledgeable in all things to do with Marconi Marine and was almost always able to answer a query from memory.

At the reunion he would organise the tables, ensuring that each of the various groups had sufficient places in the same vicinity. He would also oversee the provision of wine and would supply one of the raffle prizes.



Frank Newman (1871-1939) - our earliest veteran?**From Jenni Ibrahim (nee Kirby), 12 January 2017, Perth, Western Australia**

A very recent submission concerning a person who could be considered our earliest Veteran. Jenni Ibrahim is working on a more comprehensive piece which will appear in the 2018 newsletter. She hopes that it can be accompanied by photos of Frank Newman and possibly SS Lucania.

I've been writing an article about my great great uncle, Frank Newman (1871 West Derby, Liverpool -1939 Kingston by Sea, Sussex), who worked for the Marconi Wireless Telegraph Company from 1899-1927, when he retired, except for a short period from 1902 when he worked for the Marconi Company in New York. He then returned to London and re-joined the company. He was an electrical engineer. His activities inspired my father, who was born in Australia, to construct a crystal radio set in the 1930s when he was growing up, and later to construct a television prior to broadcasting commencing in Australia in 1956. He never met Frank Newman but heard about him from his grandmother, Frank's elder sister. I am a family historian, and discovered Frank staying at the Sandrock Hotel, Niton in the 1901 census when the 1901 census first came online.

Frank joined the competition when he was employed by the Marconi Wireless Telegraph Company on 22 December 1899 after training as an electrical engineer with the Eastern Telegraph Company. He was born in Liverpool, the youngest son of a master mariner Charles P Newman from the Isles of Scilly and his Liverpool-born wife Alicia Kirby, whose Irish parents had moved from Dublin to Liverpool in the 1830s.

Frank was involved in the experimental transmissions leading up to the historic transatlantic transmission on 12 December 1901. In the March 1901 census he was staying at the Royal Sandrock Hotel, at Niton, near Knowles Farm on the Isle of Wight where many of the early test transmissions were made. Two months later he was posted to County Cork to set up the Crookhaven station which received transmissions from Poldhu, Cornwall, extending the transmission range in the lead-up to the transatlantic achievement. Just two days after Marconi and Kemp in St John's Newfoundland picked up the dot-dot-dot transmission from Poldhu, Frank Newman was on board the SS Lucania as a ring-in telegraph operator, working his passage to New York where he stayed for about six years, working with the Marconi Wireless Telegraph Company of America. He returned to London in 1907, married in 1909, and for the remainder of his working life was employed by the Marconi Company. He retired in 1927 and died in 1939, five months before the outbreak of the Second World War.

Although he and his wife Kate Talbot McLewee never had children together, the story of his work with Marconi travelled thousands of kilometres to Australia, where his great nephew, Terence P Kirby, my father, was inspired to build a crystal radio set as a young boy in the 1930s, and then in the 1950s, to build a television set, months before TV broadcasting began in Australia.

Bushy Hill**From Ken Wilkinson, 6 July 2016**

I can confirm that as a test range, Bushy Hill has closed with the site now under the ownership of BAE Systems Property Services. Before closure we donated some pieces found off S600 etc to the RAF ADRM. Our S600 now stands with a cabin at the entrance to their site - with another just recently discovered and transported there. We also ensured that some 'social history' material on the test site was passed to the Essex Record Office, in addition we donated a few artefacts to Chelmsford Museum Service. We had - with the backing of MoD - offered Chelmsford Museum Service an Above and Below Decks Seawolf unit. However, after much toing-and-froing they decided to decline our offer. Seawolf, and the SWMLU variant, will cease in service with Mod (N) once a newer provision enters service on surface Fleet vessels. Until all the above cease to be available (following removal from vessels) we are looking at other potential 'homes' for this example of Air Defence capability.

We are still very much in contact with the RAF ADRM, as to ways in which we may continue support to 'Tell The Story of Radar' and associated history of those companies involved which have evolved into the BAE Systems we have today. The Museum has recently undertaken a few changes, so that you exit through the shop and cafe rather than how it was previously.

In Memoriam

We report the death of those Veterans notified to the secretary from the copy date of the last newsletter to the 31st January 2017. We extend our sympathy to the families of those mentioned.

AR Alderson (Alan), CA Auger (Charles), JF Bacon, CS Barham (Clifford Stanley), LC Bearcroft (Lester), FC Bennett, BA Bingley, WJ Blackburn (Bill), PW Buers, WC Buckfield, CS Burnham, JP Candler, DS Carlile, EC Clark, DIH Clements, BO Cooke (Bill - Billy), MT Daniells (Malcolm Trevor), R Davis, BJ Everitt (Bryan James), HN Ellis-Robinson OBE (Hugh Nigel), DA French (David), NG Gower, DG Green, BJ Hazelton (Bernard), DA Hills (David), AT Humphrey (Arthur), B Kendon (Brian), J Kurdelski (Jerzy - George), JA Leadbitter (Jimmy), ME Lewis (Mick), Mrs BE Maltby (Betty), DB Manning, Dr JR Mark (John), MT Marwood, SR Moore, BER Munday, VP Olley (Vic), Mrs AD Parmenter, JC Playle, RR Porter, RG Prior (Bob), CA Pudney, R Reeve (Robert), DRL Rowland, M Saggars (Michael - Mike), KR Shaughnessy, C Shelton (Charles), JH Southgate (John), RW Taylor, GF White, Miss JP Wigley (Joan).