



Marconi Veterans' Association Newsletter

Number 25
January 2023

2023 Chairman's Foreword



by Brian Izzard, Chairman

What a year ...

It is hard to believe that since I last put pen to paper for this Newsletter, we have had three Prime Ministers, four Chancellors of the Exchequer, war in Ukraine, double-digit inflation, and the highest interest rates in three decades. I am still trying to decide if appearing on 'I'm a Celebrity, get me out of here' is a promotion or demotion for our former Health Secretary

Add to all of this the sad passing of our late Queen, and the accession of King Charles III. On the 6th May at the King's Coronation we can marvel at the pomp and precision of the ceremony which nobody does better than we here in the UK - just a few weeks after our next Reunion on Saturday, the 22nd April 2023. I can still recall being marched down to Grantham town hall from my primary school to listen to the proclamation of Queen Elizabeth II in June 1952 having just read about the first ascent of Mount Everest by Hillary and Tenzing.

In contrast, not a lot changes with the Marconi Veterans' Association - your Committee is still here to serve you and I have heard no rumours of scandal or impending resignations. That said, we will always be interested to hear from Veterans (or Associates) if you have any suggestions about what we do or offers of assistance which might benefit our objectives.

I am reminded that 2022 saw the 125th anniversary of the formation of Marconi as the **Wireless Telegraph & Signal Company** on July 20, 1897, which included ownership of the patents owned personally by Guglielmo Marconi. I also note that Pye (Cambridge) and Philips (Eindhoven) were formed in the

same decade.

Marconi Wireless Telegraph of America was incorporated in 1899. The assets of American Marconi, (as it was often known) were purchased by General Electric of America in 1919 which led to the formation of the Radio Corporation of America (RCA).

Moving on from history to the present - thankfully, in terms of serious illness, it now seems that COVID is receding into the background for most of us so the return to relative normality hopefully means more of you will feel able to come to the 2023 Reunion. Once again, this will be held at Pontlands Park, almost adjacent to the former Marconi Research Laboratories. Others will report in more detail on the 2022 Reunion but suffice for me to say that I think it went well with great service and a very enjoyable meal. I would like to extend my personal thanks to Tim Wander for a very entertaining speech which kept us all engaged and, dare I say it, awake!

Marconi Exhibition ...

Anglia Ruskin University held an exhibition on campus in June/July 2022 using the theme '*Chelmsford Innovation: Marconi and Beyond*'. We were delighted to support this event with the provision of various artefacts and also contributed to the planning. One of the highlights was a Marconi Mark II Camera that was actually used at our late Queen's Coronation in 1953 - many thanks to the Broadcast Engineering Conservation Group for providing this and also making it available at our last Reunion. Our Secretary, Colin, was present throughout the exhibition and will report in more detail on the event. From a personal viewpoint, I was honoured and delighted to be asked to formally open the exhibition at a reception the evening before opening day.

It is hoped that this event will be repeated in 2023 and we are grateful for the continued support and interest of the University in the Marconi heritage.

BBC centenary ...

Marconi's 2LO radio station, the forerunner to the BBC, started transmission in May 1922 with the British Broadcasting Company Limited being formed in October 1922. The BBC marked the centenary with some special programmes and centenary-themed current programming.

The writer, comedian and radio history fanatic, Paul Kerensa, was interviewed on BBC broadcasts and put together a very entertaining one-man touring exhibition entitled 'The First Broadcast: The Battle for the Beeb in 1922'. Paul played both Arthur Burrows and Peter Eckersley in the show which highlighted the clash between the two on what wireless was all about - Burrows desire to inform and educate and Eckersley wanting to entertain. Get your crystal set ready!

Sandford Mill ...

There is still no permanent successor to the Sandford Mill facility from a Marconi viewpoint, so we are grateful to Anglia Ruskin University for at least partially filling the void as noted above. There is considerable residential development planned for the area, but Chelmsford City Council insist that this does not threaten Sandford Mill itself.

And finally ...

Our President for 2023 will be Chris Neale, Programme Manager and Trustee of the Chelmsford Science and Engineering Society (CSES) and our guest speaker will be Alan Pamphilon, founder of *Chelmsford History Walks and Talks* and a former employee of e2v.

Our Patron and my predecessor Peter Turrall continues to be involved in Marconi events and you can read an interview with him later in this Newsletter.

Once again, I must thank Leonardo UK for assistance with our newsletter printing and postage costs. This ongoing support is invaluable and very much appreciated.

(Continued on page 2)

Index

P1: [Chairman's Foreword](#)

by Brian Izzard

P2: [Secretary's Soap Box](#)

by Colin Fletcher

P2: [Web Site and Newsletter](#)

By Mark Watson-Lee

P3: [Marconi Exhibition](#)

by Alan Hartley Smith

P3: [Spam, Spam, Spam](#)

by Colin Fletcher

P3: [Civic Society](#)

Pam Swaby interviewed

P4: [2022 Reunion](#)

by Colin Fletcher

P6: [Chelmsford Innovation](#)

By Colin Fletcher

P7: [25 Years with Marconi](#)

By Cyril Teed

P11: [I Remember, well sort of!](#)

by Ken Earney

P12: [News from Derrigimlah](#)

by Ken Earney

P12: [Letters](#)

P13: [OBITUARY: John Yates](#)

by Mark Watson Lee

P14: [Christmas Gatherings](#)

by Mark Watson Lee

P14: [Recruitment Drive](#)

by Barry Powell

P14: [In Memoriam](#)

I could not fulfil my role without the support of the Management Committee and particularly Colin for all his hard work as Secretary and to Mark for his diligence in keeping our website up to date.

See you all at the Reunion on 22 April 2023.

Secretary's Soapbox



By Colin Fletcher, Secretary

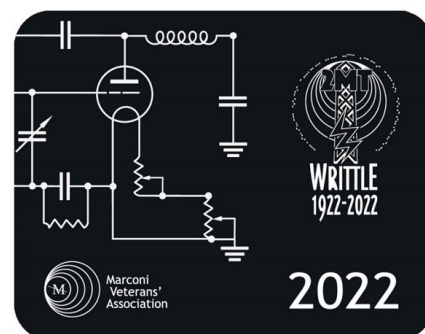
It seems an age since the normal pace and rhythm of life was thrown into disarray with the appearance of Covid. We lost dear friends and family members, we found social interaction limited during lockdown periods but we adapted. Although Covid will always be with us, just like the common cold and the flu, it is no longer the disruption it once was. We are learning to live in the changed circumstances.

Where am I going with this? Well, it is a pleasure to be able to say that the Reunion lunch is now back at its usual time of year i.e. as close to Marconi's birthday (25th April) as possible, Thus injecting (sic) some normality and stability(?) into our plans for the future. Although global events might once again intervene, who knows, that is a matter for another time and place.

What else is new? Following on from the implementation of bank transfers to pay for tickets, which is proving successful and efficient, another step forward was taken by embracing technology in the form of a card reader. This is turning out to be a great asset because of the sheer convenience of not having to handle cash, although there is a charge per transaction it makes life a lot easier for all parties. The card reader certainly showed its worth at the ARU exhibition (see separate article about the exhibition).

The 2022 coaster took a new direction in design to celebrate the Writtle pioneers, with a portion of the circuit diagram for the Writtle equipment.

Yes, the centenary of the BBC could have been celebrated, but in my humble opinion (IMHO as the phrase is now



echoed) the Writtle site and work has far more relevance and significance to Marconi and history. Without the work of the engineers at Writtle and of course Peter Eckersley, the shape of the BBC could be a lot different from what we experience today.

On a final note I wish you all a happy and healthy 2023 and may we meet up once again at the annual Reunion on 22 April 2023 at Pontlands Park.

Coaster Swap

Do you have any missing coasters from past years? Then contact the Secretary for price and availability. We have a healthy stock of coasters for 2020, 2021 and 2022. Would you like a set of 4 or 6 coasters from different years, or perhaps you are looking for gift ideas.

Web Site and Newsletter

by Mark Watson-Lee

Website: marconi-veterans.org

Last July I completed a major software update to the MVA web site from Joomla 3 to Joomla 4. However even

(Continued on page 3)

(Continued from page 2)

though the design templates have changed (previous versions now obsolete) I have adjusted these to make the site look similar in layout to the previous version so you can still easily find the articles (all articles are copied to the new version).

With the Newsletter I am entirely dependant on what members have submitted to me over the year. In November I had very few articles but at the last minute they arrived! My thanks to Eric Peachey for proof reading.

If you have any article suitable for the 2024 Newsletter please email newsletter@marconi-veterans.org or send to the Secretary.

Marconi Exhibitions

by Alan Hartley Smith

The past year has seen considerable activity regarding Marconi history. The celebration of the Writtle 2MT station, as a precursor to the current national activities around the formation of the BBC, in introducing broadcast radio through the expansion of the work carried out during the first World War in translating from telegraphy to telephony wireless communication was carried over into postwar use. The pressure from both the civil population and those amateurs enthused by their wartime experience convincing the government that it was both a needed and necessary national development in social communication.

This was followed by a new venture, the mounting of a three-week event in the Marconi Building on the Chelmsford campus of Anglia Ruskin University featuring an extensive range of equipment provided by related organisations and private collections. These showed the wide range and world-spanning capabilities covered by the Company's many years of successful operation, from its inception until its untimely closure. The event was manned by volunteers from the Chelmsford Civic

Society and the MVA and was a resounding success with the general public, which is further explored in another article in this Newsletter.

This event shows there is a positive interest in the heritage of what was a major factor in the development and status of the county town, with many family members following each other, many for a life-long working career, as part of a workforce in activities requiring skills ranging from high-level research to design and manufacture of large-scale equipment for world-wide markets. This was coupled with the extensive administration necessary to promote, manage, sell and service all the necessary operations to discover and meet customer requirements for highly-technical systems, many at the leading edge of functionality and application. The list of patents, staff honours, industrial and national awards gained is without rival. It also led the way in promoting technical aspects through publications ranging from general publicity to unrivalled journals covering both academic and amateur interests, one of which is still in publication, and participation in international exhibitions and events.

It follows from these and previous events that given the will there is a definite desire and sufficient material support to establish a permanent centre to commemorate the contribution of the Marconi Companies and their People to the life of the now City of Chelmsford.

Spam, Spam, Spam

by Colin Fletcher

Guess what? I still get spam on a regular basis, so much so, that I delete many without reading. However some that arrive amongst the single women out there who are just waiting for me (they never received a copy of the newsletter with my photo, obviously), those sites that feel I need to groom my non-existent dog, buy a drone, backpack, sunglasses (Rayburn of course), or the number of times I have been told the mailbox is full, or my password has

expired or some other nonsense, there are some that raise a smile. One such was one that started

"Hi Dear"

What followed was the usual rubbish, but how dare they be so familiar, that was my initial thought. Further investigation revealed that the same email had been sent to, yes, you guessed it – undisclosed recipients. Unfortunately some poor gullible recipient will probably respond.

So if it looks suspicious, ludicrous or too good to be true, it's probably spam. Take care!

Chelmsford Civic Society

Pam Swaby interviewed by Colin Fletcher

Last year, at the ARU Exhibition, I met Pam Swaby; a very active member of the Chelmsford Civic Society. I was intrigued, as after living many years in Chelmsford, I had only recently heard about the Society. In order to find out more an email interview was held with Pam. Without further ado here is the interview:

Q: What are the aims of the Chelmsford Civic Society?

A: The aims of CCS are to stimulate public interest in and appreciation and care of the history, appearance and character of Chelmsford. In addition, rivers, parks and trees, transport, roads and car parking,

Q: When did you first hear of the Chelmsford Civic Society and how long have you been a member?

A: My initial joining - 2008 when the meetings met at Moulsham Mill under the leadership of Denis Hance and Patrick Bermingham. As a family, we had arrived in Chelmsford in 2006 and decided to become a member of CCS - as interest in planning matters, history and community struck a chord.

Q: What are your current role and responsibilities in the Society?

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

A: Malcolm Noble became Chairman in 2012 - as CCS was about to close - I joined the team and became Membership Secretary also participating in inviting speakers on topical subjects - which continues to this day. I am responsible for promoting our events. Membership is £15 for 2 people, £10 for individual. I also with Chris Neale and Ros Webb helped to set up an exhibition at the World's First Wireless Factory in 2016 as it was about to be converted into apartments. The Construction Company agreed with the Council that we could stage the exhibition for 3 months - so we campaigned to raise £380,000. The target was ambitious and the Company decided to convert the ground floor to apartments instead. Not to be thwarted, I ran an exhibition in Bond Street in 2017 on Titanic - which was enthusiastically supported. Tim Wander is our historical lecturer and author whom we could not manage without. He helped set up both the 2020 and 2022 Centenary.

Q: The Anglia Ruskin University recently held an exhibition in June & July 2022; how would you describe the event?

A: ARU exhibition 2022 - coincidentally I met Prof Laurie Butler, ARU at Chelmsford Cathedral during the British Science Festival and decided to pluck up courage and ask him if he had any space at ARU - his response was a resounding YES. Hence this year we were given the golden opportunity to stage an exhibition in June - Chelmsford Innovation - Marconi and Beyond. The response was very encouraging and BBC Essex joined us and we were thrilled to display the actual Coronation camera with Martyn Clarke captivating the visitors with his knowledge and Paul Green with his vintage radio collection. We have now been invited to stage an annual exhibition at ARU with CSES.

Q: What notable achievements are, in part or whole, due to the Civic Society?

A: Malcolm Noble has battled with both Councils to open up Shire Hall - with the current remedial work in the front of

the building we are certainly hoping for it to be opened in April.

One of our important contributions to the City is running Heritage Open Days in October alerting the public to all our heritage and podcasts which appear on the CCS website - the responsibility of Alan Pamphilon and Paul McClean. Anecdote - I had always been keen to provide walks around the City and on one occasion a student at Keggs devised a basic walk to which I joined with members of the public. On this walk there was also a gentleman who showed knowledge of our industrial history so I seized the opportunity to invite him to take up the role. Thankfully he was as enthusiastic about the idea as I was and Alan P is Chelmsford's resident Walks Guide and goes from strength to strength.

We are also charged with investigating any new planning applications which arise and the recent decision to change the name of The Cramphorn Theatre has certainly ruffled feathers as the Cramphorn family donated immense funding to set up the theatre. Discussions are ongoing at the moment and opinions are strong but it would

appear that it will in future be called The Studio.

Q: What are the current efforts of the Society?

A: Since 2016, we have continued to push for a Heritage Centre in the City because of our valuable industrial legacy and discussions are still ongoing - let's hope not too long! A heritage and visitor centre would be the icing on the cake. At the moment I am working with the publican at The Woolpack who would like to decorate the internal bar with Marconi images and memorabilia.

For further details about the Chelmsford Civic Society and membership visit

[https://
www.chelmsfordcivicsociety.co.uk/](https://www.chelmsfordcivicsociety.co.uk/)

2022 Reunion

by Colin Fletcher

July 2nd 2022 and all the hopes and fears start coming to fruition: will there be enough people to fill the Marquee - yes; have I remembered the petty cash, the tickets, the display items, the name badges...? The list goes on. If anything is forgotten, then wing it.



Your Management Committee (and guests): From Left to right:-

Barry Powell, Christine Powell (Associate), Colin Page, Brian Izzard (Chairman), Val Cleare, Tim Wander (Guest Speaker), Judith Wander (Guest), David Frost (Hon. Treasurer), Dave Roscoe (President), Colin Fletcher (Secretary - in hiding), Mark Watson-Lee (Newsletter Editor), Gillian Drake, Claire Lucas (Raffle Organiser - very much in hiding), Chris Gardiner, Peter Turrall (Patron) and Eric Peachey (Vice-Chairman)

(Continued on page 5)

(Continued from page 4)



View of the Marquee (Bar to the left)

But, rest assured, it all went according to plan as you can see.

It was a pleasant day with a good turnout considering this was the holiday period and some of the regulars were missing. In spite of that we had arrivals from outside of the UK including literally, the other side of the world.

Surprisingly there was a good attendance – over 100.

After all the initial set up, your Management Committee came together for the group photo (see page 4).

The luncheon commenced with the Top Table being introduced by the MC Veteran David Frost.



The Top Table: From left to right :-

Brian Izzard (Chairman), Eric Peachey (Vice-Chairman), Dave Roscoe (President), Tim Wander (Guest Speaker), Judith Wander (Guest) and Val Cleare.

Brian, our illustrious Chairman, gave his welcoming speech, whilst the first course was being served to all tables barring the Top Table, which was served at the termination of the Chairman's speech.

Following the luncheon our Vice-Chairman Veteran Eric Peachey, proposed the Loyal Toast. This was followed by Veteran Valerie Cleare presenting news of and messages from absent Veterans.

Speeches

As always the speeches followed the usual formula. Our President for the year Veteran David Roscoe, proceeded to recount past experiences before introducing our Guest Speaker Tim Wander.

Tim Wander is no stranger to the Marconi Veterans, not only has he written numerous books on the history of Marconi and the Company, but also contributed to our newsletter and given numerous lectures and without referring to notes. Tim's speech was no exception; taking as a topic the original cast of 2MT

(Two Emma Toc) – see photo – he imagined an extra table at the Reunion and with the Writtle teamed seated at it. Tim then proceeded to give a short biography of each. It was certainly an original and entertaining speech.



Tim Wander in full flow

Raffle

The Speeches were followed by the excitement of the annual raffle, which along with the regular prizes also included, for the second year running, matching sets of table mats and coasters for 2022– the table mats were a larger version of the coasters.

At this point it is worth noting that Veteran Claire Lucas has been running the raffle for many years now and I am certain you would join me in thanking her for her efforts over the years.



Mark at the Mic

(Continued on page 6)

(Continued from page 5)

As with last year Claire was assisted by Mark Watson-Lee, who called out the winning numbers

(To buy a set table of mats, please contact the Secretary for further details).

The Writtle Team

For Tim and Judith it was an opportunity to meet up with former colleagues and friends from the Software Engineering Department :-

AGM

At the Annual General Meeting the Resolutions of receiving the Accounts, re-electing the Management Committee and re-electing the Independent Examiner were passed by the Veterans' present in the usual speedy manner. Thus ended the 2022 Reunion.

(photos courtesy of Graham Chorley).



The Writtle Team—as was

Back Row - B. N. MaClarty, H. Kirke, R. T. B. Wynn, H. Russel

Front Row – F. Bubb, N. Ashbridge, P.P. Eckersley, E. Trump, Miss E. Beeson



Friends Reunited

Dave Webber, Dave Roscoe (President 2022), Tony Knight, Rob Rodie,
Judith Wander, Ron Moore, Tim Wander

*The 2023 Reunion is on
Saturday 22nd April 2023—
make a note in your diary!*

Chelmsford Innovation: Marconi and Beyond

A personal view by Colin Fletcher



June and July 2022 saw the first of hopefully many exhibitions staged by the combined efforts of Anglia Ruskin University, Chelmsford Science and Engineering Society, Essex Records Office and Chelmsford Civic Society. The Marconi Veterans' Association, supplied a few display artifacts.

The event was well attended with over 1,000 visitors attending during the period of the exhibition. These visitors ranged over three and perhaps even four generations of not only Chelmsford residents but also from the further reaches of Essex and beyond. From a personal perspective it was heartening to see the reaction of older generations whose memories were revitalised by the exhibits, and the younger generations who viewed the exhibition in awe and wonder.



On entering the exhibition, visitors were greeted at the front desk and given an overview of the exhibition. The first exhibit was a replica of the microphone used by Dame Nellie Melba to make the historic broadcast in June 1920.

(Continued on page 7)

(Continued from page 6)

Following this were posters depicting the history of The Marconi Company starting with young Guglielmo (William or 'Bill' in English) in his home laboratory through to the founding of The Marconi Wireless and Telegraph Company at the Hall Street Works and beyond.

Posters hanging from the roof displayed the technological advances made through the decades, whilst underneath were artefacts of the same period.

As visitors moved around the exhibition they passed by the Chelmsford Amateur Radio Society (CARS) desk, where CARS members were willing to discuss the activities of their society.

At the tail end of the exhibit was the magnificent display of Radios through the ages, from the old valve radios to the transistor. A remarkable collection owned by Paul Green, who among others, including Tim Wander, Alan Pamphilon, Leonardo and Teledyne e2v, allowed precious artefacts and current technology to be seen and enjoyed by the public.

It also worth mentioning that during the exhibition videos were being displayed: one was an Italian made documentary; when English was spoken Italian subtitles appeared and vice-versa, the other was of royal weddings. This leads on indirectly to the high point of the exhibition on the 1st and 2nd July Dr Paul Marshall arrived with the camera used at the Coronation of Elizabeth II in 1953.

On the Saturday the exhibition was visited by Vicky Ford and was captured in a YouTube video at the CRHnews channel. The Video can be viewed at

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HBNjRNRXDcA>

Thanks must go to Pam Swaby (CCS), Vicky Ford and Helen Sheen (ARU) in this video for their efforts in making this a success.



Dr Paul Marshall and BBC Coronation MK II Camera

Note: the camera also made a guest appearance at the MVA 2022 Annual Reunion



Chelmsford Science and Engineering Society also have an article on the event at

<https://cses.org.uk/news/334-exhibition-celebrates-chelmsford-innovati>

Personal Thought: *What struck me about Marconi, Maxwell and Hertz, along with other pioneers of wireless technology, was how young they were. It made me realise that some of the most forward thinkers are the young*

25 Years with Marconi

by Cyril Teed

Having spent two years completing my National Service in the RAF as a Radar lecturer, I joined Marconi in 1953, a few days after my 21st birthday. I had been recruited to work on Radar but on

arrival was given the opportunity to switch to Television. The BBC had restarted a London only service in 1946 with one channel but were expanding. I knew nothing about Television technology, but I had known nothing about Radar Technology when entering the RAF, so it seemed a good opportunity to join a fledgling industry. I immediately went to work for Joe Swain in TV Test. It proved to be a very good decision.

TV Test

TV Test was a very busy department with all the different equipment necessary to produce TV pictures being tested. The transmitters were tested in a different department.

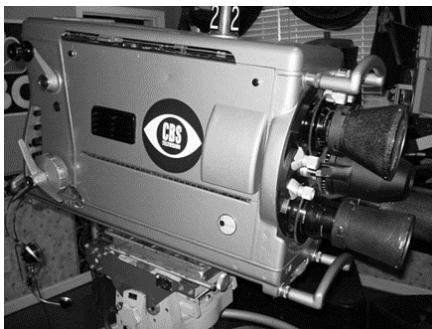
One story from that period concerned acceptance tests for a camera that had been sold to Russia. Mr C. from the Russian embassy arrived to do acceptance tests. He was friendly and talkative and obviously a very proud Russian. In the final camera test area, we had a microphone used as part of our check on the camera intercom system.

(Continued on page 8)

(Continued from page 7)

Towards the end of his visit Mr. C spotted the microphone and went berserk. He grabbed the mic and demanded to know what it was for. Nothing that we could say pacified him, he was white with fright and anger. He left early that day and barely spoke for the remainder of his visit.

The Television Act was passed in 1954 allowing commercial TV to start in the UK. Four companies were soon authorised to start TV services in London, Birmingham and Manchester, and they all needed both equipment and engineers to get started. The workload in TV Test increased considerably and we were getting attractive offers to join the ITV companies. Several accepted, but I had become fascinated with the technology, particularly the cameras, and my interest was to eventually move to R & D. Once we had provided enough equipment to get the ITV companies on the air in 1955, I was allowed to move to TV R & D in Great Baddow.



A MK IV camera sold to CBS

Frank Grierson, one of the engineers who left to join Granada TV, had digs in the same house as me, and when he left, he gave me his TV set. It was a late 1930's home made set built from a simple design from a pre-war wireless world magazine. It had a very small 9" cathode Ray Tube, assembled in a wooden cabinet 30" X 30" X 30". The receiver was designed to work with the TRF double sideband signal of pre-WWII experimental TV. However, when TV restarted after WWII a vestigial sideband signal was used. A metal chassis in the base of the cabinet housed all the components, very large and outdated

valves. This old set was very unstable, but it did produce pictures and we used it when we were first married. All the adjustments were underneath the chassis and needed frequent adjustment. This involved turning this heavy set on its side, and after doing this a number of times I left it on its side and my wife and I turned our heads sideways to watch! It was a major talking point when we had guests.

TV R & D

The TV Camera electronics team consisted of George Cooper, a very good electronics designer, Dion Edwards and me. The Mechanical designer in the Camera design team, Goeff King, designed a brilliantly simple mechanism for changing the camera lens turret saving space and weight. On his activities outside work he became heavily committed to achieve an optimal quality sound system in his home, and acquired two large concrete sewer pipe sections for his loudspeakers!

His attention subsequently changed when he became a Jehova Witness and this quickly became his obsession. Given an opportunity he would lecture us on the subject. This was harmless and had a useful by product. Whenever JW's called at home, we could say we talk regularly to Goeff King and they immediately left thinking we were already converts!

Ampex

My time as the Marconi representative at Ampex was fascinating as in many ways Ampex were the exact opposite of Marconi. A small team in the early 1950s produced high quality data and audio recorders. Their breakthrough came when solving the holy grail of television at the time, instant recording and playback of professional quality TV video and audio. The 6 original employees, who had taken their salaries in stock (no values when the cash ran out), became overnight multimillionaires. This included the Janitor who enjoyed working for them and who stayed on as a janitor and amongst other tasks would wash my car for me every month, and get it serviced

regularly!

A Can-Do attitude, "anything is possible", existed through all levels of the company. On one occasion, I received a phone call in the office just before leaving for home, from an Ampex salesman in Pennsylvania, almost 3,000 miles away the other side of the USA and 3 hours ahead of California's time zone. He was at Brandywine Raceway with the owner and wanted a camera demonstration at a race meeting to clinch the deal. He needed the demonstration the next day at the last race meeting of the season. It seemed impossible, but I checked with the transport department and within an hour they had booked space on an aircraft from San Francisco to Philadelphia for the camera and associated equipment with a seat on the aircraft for me. The aircraft would arrive a few hours before the races started. The transport department then collected the camera and all the associated equipment needed and packed it with a promise to get it on the aircraft.

The next day the salesman met the flight with a station wagon, we loaded the equipment and arrived at the raceway with an hour before the first race. It then transpired they wanted the camera on the roof of the grandstand overlooking the finishing line and access was not much better than a ladder. There was power up there for a water cooler. We carried everything up on the roof and switched on just minutes before the first race started. Although the light level was low, we had excellent pictures. The trotting races with high stepping ponies pulling a lightweight carriage with the jockey sitting at almost ground level were spectacular. The first race was exciting with a very close finish, but just before they got to the finishing post the picture on the monitor disappeared. I checked everything without finding a fault, but the same thing happened in the second race. This time I had monitored the power into the camera and found the voltage dropped from 120 volts down to 75 volts when the photo finish lights switched on, they were on

(Continued on page 9)

(Continued from page 8)

the same circuit!! This voltage was way below the specification. The raceway staff managed to get the water cooler power onto a more reliable connection and the remaining races were shown complete to the finish. The demonstration was a success, and the salesman got his order.

On another occasion we had a visit from Scientists from the Naval Airbase at nearby Alameda. They had a serious problem losing too many pilots and aircraft in training when landing on aircraft carriers at sea. Their existing film recording system captured each landing on film which was processed overnight for briefings the next day. At the briefing, pilots could not recall last minute adjustments of their landing and believed they were being shown another pilot's landing. They had no confidence in the existing system.



A crash landing.

The scientists invited us to propose a solution. A small team was quickly formed with Alameda participation and a potential design was ready within two weeks. Two cameras would be placed below the deck on gyroscopic stabilised mounts looking through two of the landing lights in the centre of the camera deck. Optics would direct the camera angle to the correct flight paths one for jet aircraft and one for slower piston aircraft. The optics would include crosswires to show whether the approaching aircraft was on the correct path in the centre of the crosswires. The cameras would capture any last-minute wing adjustment, a principle cause of crashes. A further camera installed on the superstructure would cover the landing to the point the aircraft stopped, and the pilot emerged. The pilot would then walk to the control room and see

his landing in considerable detail with not just the aircraft identity but the pilot himself getting out of the aircraft and walking to the debrief. The video was ready for replay when he arrived in the viewing room. The system was given the US Navy name PLAT, Pilot Landing Aid Television. The US Navy team were enthusiastic with this proposal and used an emergency ordering procedure to place a contract for a trial system. The trial system was ready in a few months and delivered to the aircraft carrier USS Ticonderoga in San Diego.

The installation team ran into a problem. The Navy wanted the recording control equipment installed in a room in the middle of the ship and the VTR in those days was the size of a big upright piano and could not go through the watertight doors. No problem! A large African-American sailor arrived with an oxyacetylene torch and cut a hole in the thick steel wall big enough for the VTR to pass through then sealed the wall up again afterwards! Another great example of US Can-Do attitude.

Ticonderoga then put to sea and carried out several weeks of landings. These were a great success, and an order was placed for 23 systems, enough for all the aircraft carriers and 3 more systems for vessels that could be used as carriers in an emergency. Coupled with orders for adequate spare modules and parts this was the largest order Ampex had ever received. The US Navy then owned more Marconi MKIV cameras than CBS, who had recently contracted to replace all their cameras. There were more Marconi cameras in the USA than the total in the rest of the world.

When the cameras started to be delivered from Marconi the wooden crates were undamaged but cameras inside the box often had damage. The Marconi response was to make the boxes stronger and more rigid, but the damage continued. I called in the Ampex shipping people, they looked at the problem and a few hours later returned with a heavy-duty cardboard box saying this will solve the problem! Inside the box was another box which exactly fitted

the camera. The inner box was held in place in the larger outer box with a number of blocks of polystyrene. They explained that with rough use the outer box would absorb the shock but the inner box and contents would survive undamaged. When this information was passed back to Marconi it was ridiculed by the packing department, so we put an undamaged camera in the box and sent it back to Marconi. The outer cardboard box arrived damaged in the corners, but the camera was undamaged. The cardboard box design was adopted, and we had no further damage problems. It also had the benefit of being much cheaper than the wooden crates! It totally changed the operation of the packing dept.

Marketing/Sales was another major difference between the companies. Marconi was geared up to sell to large organisations and responded to customer demand, often with tenders with technical specifications. The sales literature was highly technical – mostly specifications. Products had technical names i.e. Marconi MK IV 4 1/2" Television Camera Channel.

Ampex were selling to several hundred TV stations across the USA who didn't have large technical departments, and the decision makers were often the owner or general manager. So, we had to produce sales brochures more like consumer products. But the biggest difference was in attitude. Ampex didn't wait to respond to demand, they also created the demand. They would arrange a visit to a station where their VTRs had not yet been purchased and arrive in the afternoon before the appointment. The team would then set up and monitor the station output all evening. At that time, not just news, but a lot of the programs were performed live from the studio. The next morning discussion with the owner would lead to the costs of overtime for late working which was invariably a sore point with the owner/manager. A costed solution would then be presented showing the savings by producing the programs during the day with just a light crew in

(Continued on page 10)

(Continued from page 9)

the evening to operate the VTR. Once they had bought the VTR they soon began to use editing facilities and soon needed more VTRs.

Back at Marconi

When I returned to Marconi in 1961, Tom Mayer wanted me to adopt the same role I had performed at Ampex on a worldwide basis. This proved to be a very different task. The Marconi representation in many countries was poor and tended to be based on the historical Marconi communications activities. In many cases our agents had never even visited the TV organisations and hence didn't know anyone. The Can-Do spirit I found at Ampex did not exist in the rest of the world including within Marconi. A lot more effort was required to achieve even minimal success.

Eastern Europe was potentially a good market for TV equipment. We had no representation in any of these countries but Marconi had an employee, Bernard Kane, based in Vienna, who was acting as our representative in all of them. So, Bernard and I organised a 3-month tour behind the Iron Curtain, as it was known at the time. I decided to take a TV Outside Broadcast vehicle operated by TDU the demonstration unit. We kept the numbers down to Dai Evans the driver, and David Smith who could share some of the driving with Dai. David and I would set up the 4-camera unit. We had a demanding schedule and Bernard booked hotels and contacted the TV organisations; all were very keen to receive our demonstration.

Border crossing with the TV vehicle was a significant task, several had already crossed between the UK and Vienna, where we met up with Bernard and his wife Poldi. We set out for the Austrian/Hungary border with Bernard, Poldi and me travelling ahead in Bernard's Jaguar. It seemed odd to have Bernard's wife with us, but she turned out to be a vital part of our team. Poldi had a gift with languages. She had mastered all the different languages of the countries we

visited, could translate for us when needed, but also was able to tell us what was being said when the customers chose to talk among themselves. She was also able to get repairs for Dai when he broke his false teeth on two occasions!!



MK III 1954

In each city we would set up the 4 cameras in their studios and let the local engineers operate all the equipment. In every case our equipment was far superior to their existing equipment, but serious negotiation of future sales would have to be by return visits later.

It seems odd today when there are a multitude of instant communication options but as Bernard had warned, from the day we crossed into Hungary we had no contact with the UK until we were safely back in Vienna 3 months later. Telephone calls had to be booked several days ahead in each city, but we left before a connection could be made. I wrote a brief report on each demonstration and posted it back to Marconi together with letters to our wives. Some of these were intercepted en-route and some arrived after we returned to the UK. We had no contact whatsoever from UK.

Sometime later, after we had provided quotations to the various countries within Yugoslavia, I was invited back to negotiate some contracts. A hotel had been booked by the customer and a room prepared to hold the negotiation

with 5 of the 6 Yugoslav countries who had decided to place orders with us. Although they were all completely separate contracts they had decided to negotiate together. I found myself sitting at a long table with some 16 negotiators for the 5 buyers. It was clear that any concession made to one would immediately be claimed by all the others. Whenever we reached a sticking point, a tray of slivovitz (Yugoslav plum brandy) would arrive, someone would make a toast, and the slivovitz had to be downed in one gulp! It was a very demanding situation!

Exhibitions

With a product like a TV camera, at exhibitions we had to set up a complete operating studio. This took a lot of effort to be ready in the time available. At one exhibition in Montreux, a young sales engineer, let's call him Mike, arrived to help just when the work had been completed. He joined in for some drinks and quickly became intoxicated. He had not even checked into a hotel, so we allocated him one of the rooms in the Montreux Palace, and a few of the team helped him to the room and got him into bed. The Montreux Palace was a very old hotel and had a free-standing wardrobe adjacent to the door. The wardrobe was moved to hide the door and the team exited via the balcony to the balcony of the next room which we had also booked. The next morning Mike woke up with a hangover and couldn't find a way out of his room. You can all guess the rest of this story.

After a few exciting and challenging years as Chief Engineer of ITN, designing and building their first colour TV station. I returned to Marconi as Manager of Broadcasting Division. I am not including any stories from that period. Marconi was part of English Electric, who had been taken over by GEC and, in my opinion, it was a disaster for the Marconi Company and all the employees.

(Continued on page 11)

(Continued from page 10)

I Remember—well, sort of!

by Ken Earney

This item from Veteran and MOG (Marconi Old Geezer) Don Halstead appeared in a posting in a July MOGS digest. If you're a MOG you may have already read this, but please forgive us because the sentiments will chime with many other non-MOG veterans familiar with 'old Chelmsford'. It kicked off a number of memories from other MOGs about long-gone drinking haunts and other after-work entertainment venues of the far-off 1960s Chelmsford. Thanks Don for allowing us to reproduce it here. We must also acknowledge Hilda Grieve's history of Chelmsford 'The Sleepers and the Shadows' from which he quotes.

He saw a piece seen on the front cover of last July's Moulsham Times which carried an invitation to a 'Grand 60s Reunion at O'Connors Irish Pub' on Hall Street on 23rd July. The invitation asked "Did you frequent the Corn Exchange, Orpheus Coffee Bar, The R&B (?) or Ecstasy Records?"

He says "I remember the Orpheus in a basement on New London Road, in the early 60s, jammed full late into the night after the pubs, the Regent, the Odeon had emptied. How long could one make half an inch of coffee and two inches of froth last? Notes on the web suggest that it became very popular in later years with the younger generation - especially those with Vespa scooters! I gather that today the basement provides storage for a barber's shop.

Other recollections from that era and area include Wainwright's Milk Bar, on the corner of Tindal Street, with the White Hart coaching inn and all the old buildings swept away by redevelopment. Mike Plant refers to 'perhaps nine pubs somewhere around Tindal Street'.

So I have referred to Hilda Grieve's monumental history of Chelmsford, 'The Sleepers and the Shadows' to see what she tells. There is so much material there

that it would take me weeks to look through all of it, even with the voluminous indices. There are copies available to borrow in a number of Essex libraries.

From early ages Chelmsford had a goodly collection of breweries, alehouses, inns and bawdy houses; perhaps 20-40. I believe there were no less than 4 breweries on the Guy Harlings estate on New Street. Two ale-tasters were appointed annually for quality control purposes. I don't think they were required to wear leather britches to check that the beer could stick them to the seat, but who knows. Certainly an awful lot of folk incurred financial penalties for not sending for the ale taster.

Tindal Street itself dates back a long way and has had many names: Back Lane/ Street, Conduit Street, Tindal Street.

'Conduit' refers to the open water conduit, piped from Burgess Well, which ran from what we now know as Tindal Square down the High Street to Springfield Road and then into a stream, the Gullet. The water was quite fresh at the start, very tainted further down. The block of buildings now occupied by HSBC down to Lloyds Bank was a relatively late development; the successors of many smaller units built on either side of the conduit as years passed. Viewed from above the course of the conduit is still defined by tiny open yards left within the (relatively) modern buildings.

'The Sleepers and the Shadows' includes a street directory circa 1590.

The Back Lane (Street) West side (i.e. the side demolished 1969-71) from North to South. (Modern numbering).

No.27 White Hart inn, first recorded as an inn in 1570; site documented from 1385.

No.25-6 The Heath, a capital message or 'Place' with barns, stables and malthouse. By the 1620s this had become the Angel inn; site documented from 1380s.

No.24 By 1601 it became the **Talbot inn**, later known as the **Dog** or **Spotted Dog**.

No. 21-3 Formerly **Shawes** or the **Bull**, but by 1591 the **Brewhouse**.

No.18-20 The **Bear**

No.15-17 Sharparrows or the **Three Arrows**. An alehouse(?)

No.14 Dolphin inn

No.12-13 & 1 New London Road **Rose** inn. Belonged to Rob. of Writtle in 1383; called **Paryshoppe** in 1421.

Mayes, New London Road gap. By 1603 the **Unicorn Inn**.

By 1909 approx. there were just three inns left; **White Hart**, **Spotted Dog**, **Dolphin**.

In the early 1960s my first car (Austin A40) was serviced by Jack Petchey at the White Hart garage in what were probably the stables at the far end of the White Hart covered passage way.

In 1590 the East side of Back Street was undeveloped open space, where stood Stocks, Pillory and New Cage. And of course the conduit.

Hilda lists a multitude of inns on the High Street and elsewhere; perhaps food for another essay sometime. Notable among them is the **Saracen's Head** in various guises; **The Angel** at Broomfield is another medieval establishment which must have been familiar to Radar's staff at one time. John Brown might comment?

As I understand it, weak ale was a much safer drink than untreated water in those days. There were endless civic feuds about Chelmsford's water supplies, and it was the 1850s before adequate sewerage was attempted. My maternal grandmother (no connection with Chelmsford), was born c1882 in a canal-side cottage in Nottinghamshire. Every drop of water for the family (7+ parents) was drawn from the canal, to be boiled as required. But even in Chelmsford c1850 'aquifer water' was in demand at six pails a penny.

And I can't resist including one more fact: Waterloo Lane was originally known as **Shytburye Lane**, the road down which

(Continued on page 12)

(Continued from page 11)

'night soil' was conveyed to be tipped into the river - another reason not to use its water!

'The Sleepers and the Shadows' (a quote from Walt Whitman's 'Passage to India') is a remarkable read. Pretty certainly the two volumes are no longer in print, but well worth studying if copies are to hand.* I only hope I haven't garbled too much of the content."

*Copies are available to borrow in a number of Essex libraries.

If you'd like to read the reminiscences that Don's piece triggered seek out MOGS July 2022 messages at <https://groups.io/g/mogs/messages?start=7:2022:480>

News from Derrigimlah

by Ken Earney

I had an email from Shane Joyce a couple of months ago about developments concerning the Marconi transatlantic telegraph site at Derrigimlah. I wrote about a 2017 visit to Clifden with my wife Jackie in the 2018 Newsletter (pages 1 and 2). We spent a fair bit of time over two days at Derrigimlah, one day with Shane and a second on our own.

Shane says that the most recent plan for the site is to put a 3ft gauge railway, about 460m in length, on the site mostly on the original alignment. That original track, a 1½ mile (2.4 km) long narrow gauge railway 2ft (610mm) gauge from the site's gate to the main station buildings was inaugurated in October 1907. The map (bottom of page) shows details of the Marconi site overlaid onto 1915 Ordnance Survey mapping where the 1907 track layout is shown in purple. The present day proposal is for a 460m length running due south-east from the main station buildings, shown in dashed blue.

The National Park who own the site are very supportive of the plan which is expected to get the necessary permission in due course.



Above we have a photo of the present-day locomotive and carriages to be operated on the track.

The photo *below* is from the time that the railway was operational during the early 20th century. The photo shows the locomotive and the fuel store loading crane seen loading a hopper of peat next to the fuel store.



Shane has also been working with his cousin Pat to determine the precise landing site of Alcock and Brown in 1917. They have carried out a definitive geophysical investigation and intend getting permission from the Park Authority to carry out a dig on the 11 or so metal detections at location nos. 20-31 on the plan. The location of the memorial to their landing is shown by the red X SE of the south-eastern corner of the condenser house.

Further information on Wikipedia about the Derrigimlah site railway at: https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Marconi_Railway



Letters

A trip down Memory Lane with Wg Cdr John M Brown OBE.

As usual, I enjoyed reading the Annual Newsletter, but this time especially so, with the contribution by Mike Bardell relating to his father, Joe (in the 2022 issue).

I was a member of Peter Max's Systems Group, Radar Division; we were the first occupants of the upper floor of Church Green in 1960, having moved from the 4th floor of Marconi House, New Street. From the very beginning, Church Green was a 'Happy Ship'. As Mike has stated, his father was the Cashier and was also

(Continued on page 13)

(Continued from page 12)

an early occupant of an office in the uppermost part, under the eaves of the roof.

Joe was truly the human face of Accounts; a lovely sense of humour, but really on top of his job. I called in to his office from time to time to present my approved Expense Account for payment.

Following my knock on his door before entering, Joe would look up from what he was doing, see my face, and usually [say] something like "Oh, what have you been fiddling now?"

Very much part of the Church Green team – very affectionately remembered. Although I remembered his missing fingers, none of us ever referred to the subject. In that era, that I greatly miss, people did not comment on those sort of things.

Found Mike's letter of great interest.

Sorting through my filing cabinet, Alan Turk

I've been doing the never-ending job of sorting through my (physical) filing cabinet, throwing out things that have long been out-of-date and of no further interest. Amazing how much junk one accumulates over the years, thinking that one day it will be useful/interesting in some vague way. Amongst it all, however, one sometimes finds something that is actually interesting.

Below is a postcard with an aerial view of the Marconi Space & Defence Systems establishment at Hilsea, Portsmouth, dated 1977. The lower left entrance is



for the Broad Oak works manufacturing area. The canteen is shown on the right of the entrance road and the main factory on the left. Another road crosses left to right from another entrance at the left of the area, nearly half-way up the photo, dividing Broad Oak from the Brown's Lane laboratories, where I worked between 1973 and 1996.

Roughly in the centre of that area is a cube-shaped building that housed the clean rooms where spacecraft and payloads were assembled and tested, a place that I came to know well during my time there. To its right is a group of buildings, one of which housed the environmental test area, though at this distance away in time I no longer remember which it was. Maybe someone else in MOGS can enlighten me, Ian Brighton perhaps?

In the top right part of the photo, the green area with curved tracks is the former Portsmouth Airport, limited at that time to light aircraft, following a crash that occurred shortly before I arrived, caused, I was told, by a larger craft landing on wet grass and skidding across to the boundary fence on the far side, where it ploughed through and onto the Eastern Road. The airport was eventually closed altogether and is now largely occupied by houses, but the Marconi address continued to be "Airport Service Road".

The Marconi ad. (*on the right*) was in a special newspaper that was produced for the occasion of "Showville", a show that used to be held annually at Brambles Farm on Hambledon Road, Waterlooville, about 10 miles north of Portsmouth and just across the road from where I was

living in 1976 and adjacent to the site that was later occupied by Marconi Underwater Systems Limited. I recall that my parents were visiting at the time and that my father really enjoyed taking my children there. Admission was 40p for

adults and 10p for senior citizens and children! It was a great show and included a spectacular act where a fellow dived from an enormous height into a shallow pool that was engulfed in flames! I can't imagine what today's health and safety people would make of it!

MARCONI

NEXT STEP ?

If you're wondering about your next career step it's time you heard about Marconi Space and Defence Systems. There are plenty of opportunities for engineers to join us, working on the world's most advanced communications projects with aerospace, military and underwater applications.

We're always on the look-out for —

Quality Assurance Engineers and Technicians

to carry out mechanical and electronic testing at all stages of the production process, to our extremely stringent standards.

Test Equipment Engineers

for developing special to type automatic test equipment which includes providing software services.

Project Engineers

for the initiation and development of projects, working as a part of a closely integrated team.

Inspectors

to carry out Quality Assurance, to both mechanical and electronic aspects, at all stages of the production process.

With Marconi, you'll find a realistic salary, the kind of benefits you'd expect from such a large and successful company and every prospect for promotion with an organisation that is quietly confident about the future.

We'll be happy to make your next step easy for you. Write to Mrs. M. Blair, Marconi Space and Defence Systems Limited, Broad Oak Works, The Airport, Portsmouth, or call her on (0705) 63211.

Obituary

John Yates

John Yates died on 26th August 2022.

He had a major cancer operation from which he recovered and was able to attend the 2022 reunion. But later had further complications and died in Broomfield hospital.

His first job was a cinema projectionist, this made him interested in photography

(Continued on page 14)



(Continued from page 13)

and video editing which he continued throughout his life.

John joined Marconi in 1959. He worked in Installations, and he was the Union Representative. An amateur radio enthusiast who even took his system on his annual holiday to Finland. He was also a keen member of the Friday pub gang.

Christmas Gatherings

By Mark Watson-Lee

Various Christmas gatherings happen in Chelmsford of (mainly) retired colleagues. One group organised by Graham Chorley met at the County Hotel on 6th December, photograph below.



L to R: Chris Gardiner, Graham Chorley, Martyn Clarke, John Wright, Bob Rushbrook, Peter Brisley, Dave Chinnery, Steve Spooner, Hok Cheung, Tim Steele, Phil Eaton, Dave Webber, Peter Roscoe, Dave Roscoe, Mark Watson-Lee, Bernie Chesney, Phil Robinson

Another group is organised by Dave Excell and meets in The Globe.

Recruitment Drive

By Barry Powell

In the late 1920's a number of employees of the Company decided that it would be appropriate if they organised a formal dinner to celebrate the many years they had been with the Company and to reminisce on times together.

The first President in 1928 was Senor Guglielmo Marconi and the following year his brother-in-law H. Jameson Davis who was, by now, a Director of the Company, was elected to succeed him.

Each year, apart from 1939 -1946 (WWII) and 2020 (Covid), a get-together with

members of the Association has taken place either in London or at Chelmsford and a new President is elected.

The basic requirement for Veteran Membership is that the employee has achieved 15 years total service with the Company. Associate Membership is also available to anyone who has not achieved that length of service but nonetheless can demonstrate an association with "things Marconi".

Reunions are now held each year, around the date of Marconi's birthday in April, at Pontlands Park which is just outside Chelmsford, near to the old Marconi Research Laboratories with all members being invited. An annual Newsletter is also published and sent to members around the beginning of the year.

Because of the number of companies involved, calculation of qualifying service is quite complex, but a short phone call can usually sort it.

Joining MVA

If you or someone you know would like to join The Marconi Veterans' Association or just wish to find out more, please contact the Membership Secretary, **Barry Powell** on telephone **01268 696342**, or email membership@marconi-veterans.org

Giving your contact details.

V23.11

In Memoriam

We extend our sympathy to the families of those who have died. *For an up to date list please refer to our web site:-*

<https://www.marconi-veterans.org> Menu > Membership > In-Memoriam

Notified to our secretary from Nov 2021 – Dec 2022:-

Mr. BR Ackroyd, Mr. GH Bamford, Mr. DV Banes, Mr. SI Bass, JJ Bellamy, Mr. NR Bennett, Mr. CW Boyton, Mr. JP Brand, Mr. PJ Dowse, Mr. HJ Emms, Mr. NN Faulkner, Mr. GT Hayden, Mr. MA Healey, Mr. JH Hogg, Miss ML Hudgell, Mr. R Huntsman, Mr. KB Jacob, Mr. TM James, Mr. ML Martin, Mr. MB Oddy, Mr. JE Sellick, Mr. R Shead, D Skingley, Mr. Gerry Valentine, Mr. P Williams, Mr. JR Yates, Mr. AJ Young.