Marconi Veterans' Association Newsletter

Number 27
January 2025

2025 Chairman's Foreword

by Brian Izzard, Chairman

All Change ...

As widely predicted, Labour won a landslide majority in the UK 2024 election increasing their seats in Parliament from 203 (31%) to 403 (62%). Interesting to note that this was achieved with just a 1.5% increase in the overall share of the vote from the 2019 election which speaks volumes about our 'first past the post' electoral system. The Reform party got more votes than the Liberal Democrats but secured only 5 seats compared with 72 seats for the Liberal Democrats. Planning note for party leaders at the 2029 election – forget the seats you can't win or are certain to win!

As I finalise this contribution to the Newsletter, Donald Trump will be the next US President, so not only 'all change' but also 'as you were'. We wait to see how this might impact the UK, and the world conflicts mentioned below.

The UK flirted with the possibility of changing its electoral system in 2011, but this was roundly defeated in a referendum on the proposed 'Alternative Vote' system. It seems that our major parliamentary parties are quite happy to have all of the action some of the time rather than some of the action all of the time!

I don't know what changes our new administration will introduce over the next five years but the relentless march to prevent live human contact is worthy of reconsideration. Every time I want to interact with someone new, I need another online account – I reckon I have well over 400 now and it keeps climbing. In one sense, your Committee has succumbed to this trend – most of our meetings are on Zoom which started during Covid but we still have one face to face meeting a year. What we won't be doing anytime soon is to have an online Annual Reunion! When our guest speakers are not in action, the constant buzz of background conversation tells me there will never be a substitute for good old personal contact.

On the economic front, interest rates are now moving down which may not be good news for those of us who have any reliance on savings interest but will be excellent news for those who are trying to get on the property ladder. Most of us will have lost our Winter Fuel Payment but we are lucky that the so-called Triple Lock on the State Pension is still in place.

Sadly, conflict still continues in Ukraine and the Middle East and has escalated since I wrote this article last year. Fortunately, I am young enough to not be personally aware of the effects of war in the UK, but I shudder to think about the personal and economic devastation being inflicted on the civilian population – especially the children.

Following on from my comments last year on RMS Titanic – the BBC published an article in August entitled *Rarely seen Titanic artefacts kept in secret warehouse* which reported on items retrieved from the so-called debris field. I had not realised that items have not yet been recovered from the ship itself, but the article mentioned a desire to retrieve *the Marconi radio equipment which transmitted the Titanic's distress calls on the night of the sinking* and noted that surveys had captured *the current condition of the Marconi radio room*. I registered the interest of our Association in future developments with RMS Titanic Inc. which seems to own all the rights to the wreck.

Essex Shire Hall Trust (ESHT)

Many of you will be aware that the Shire Hall in Chelmsford has been largely unused for some time. My first visit there was to a disco/dance (remember them?) in about 1961 when I was a student apprentice.

Largely thanks to the dedication of the Chelmsford Civic Society, ESHT was formed in August 2023 and its objectives are:

- The preservation and restoration for the public benefit of the historic Grade II listed building known as the Shire Hall Chelmsford and the education of the public in its heritage and the heritage of Chelmsford and the county of Essex.
- The advancement of the arts for the public benefit through the public display and exhibition of painting and artwork of artistic merit at the Shire Hall, Chelmsford.
- To provide or assist in the provision of facilities in Chelmsford and the surrounding area in the welfare recreation or other leisure time occupation of individuals who have need of such facilities by reason of their age, infirmity or disability, financial hardship or social circumstances with the object of improving their condition of life.

In October 2023, Essex County Council granted ESHT exclusive rights to prepare a business plan and terms of a lease. This had to be completed by the end of July 2024. In the event, the plan was submitted one week before the deadline. At the same time, architectural plans were prepared and presented to the City Council. ESHT had to secure planning consent. A pre- application review led to a positive response.

The next step is for ESHT to gain leasehold ownership of the building. If all goes to plan, I am sure the Marconi heritage will feature significantly in the final result. I should be able to provide an update at the 2025 Reunion.

Reunion news ...

Moving on to the Annual Reunion – we received some complaints about the meal which was disappointing but, in any event, the planned redevelopment of the area where the Pontlands marquee was located meant it would not be available for our 2025

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Reunion. We spent some time looking at alternative venues with our key requirements being cost, capacity, parking, location and public transport. In the end we opted for the County Hotel in Chelmsford which ticked all these boxes but is very much an urban and not a rural location. I look forward to seeing you all on **Saturday 12 April**. More details will be included in the usual invitation which will be mailed to all our current members in addition to full details being posted on our website.

The theme for the 2025 Reunion will be *The Present and the Future* and I am pleased to welcome Christopher Axcell, Senior Vice President of Leonardo UK as our President for 2025.

Our guest speaker will be Adam Wood, Trustee President of the Chelmsford Science and Engineering Society (CSES) and Systems Engineering Lead for Teledyne e2v.

Accordingly, our 2025 coaster will also have a *Present and Future* theme.

And finally ...

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.

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 editing this Newsletter and keeping our website up to date.

See you all at our next Reunion on **12 April 2025**

Secretary's Soapbox

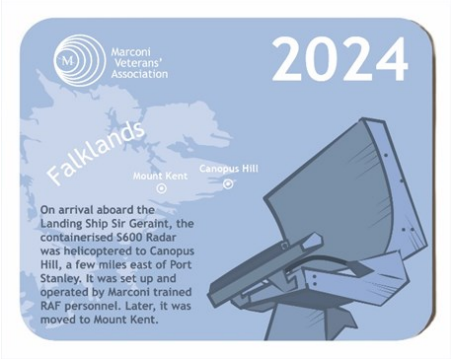
by Colin Fletcher, Secretary

As mentioned in the last Newsletter, it's never easy to get on this Soapbox and spout loquaciously.

However after stating that the Annual Reunion had settled down, Pontlands informed me, in March last year, that the Marquee would be taken down at the end of 2024 and would not be replaced in the near future. Alternative venues on offer were not suited to the number of attendees, which was 126 for last year..

Horror of horrors, once again the search for a replacement venue began. After chasing all possible venues ranging from Channels to Writtle Agricultural College, luck was with the MVA. After approaching the County Hotel in Chelmsford, Brian and I struck the mother lode. There is a dining room, with bar, that can accommodate our numbers. Included in the package are audio visual capabilities, thus ensuring potentially more exciting speeches and presentations.

At the time of writing the 2025 Coaster has still to be designed, but with the theme for 2025 being 'Present and the Future' (more details in the Chairman's Foreword) there is plenty of scope for the imagination.



As can be seen, the 2024 Coaster followed the Radar theme highlighting the S600 Radar which was installed in the Falklands.

It should be noted that the influence of Marconi Radar is worldwide. Not only was the radar equipment installed: dish, control room etc., but as many, if not all, of these sites were in remote areas, Marconi Radar also managed the installation of the infrastructure, including roads and power. A complete package.

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At the 2024 Reunion Marconi Radar project ties were on display. I have now received additional Radar memorabilia, which will be on display at the coming Reunion.

On a final note I wish you all a happy and healthy 2025 and may we meet up once again at the annual Reunion on 12 April 2025 at The County Hotel.

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. Please contact Colin Fletcher, Secretary.

Website and Newsletter

by Mark Watson-Lee
Website: ***www.marconi-veterans.org***

With the Newsletter my task is basically to format whatever articles members have submitted to me during the previous year.

Please note that some of the opinions contained in the articles may not be those of the Veterans' Association.

Thank you to Eric who does the proof reading.

If you have any article suitable for the 2026 Newsletter please email newsletter@marconi-veterans.org or send to the Secretary.

Spam, Spam, Spam

by Colin Fletcher, Secretary

How gullible (BTW that word is in the dictionary, contrary to public opinion) do some people think we are? Just check the subjects of these emails:

The following 3 emails all require clicking on a strange link to find out further information (as if I would do that!).

- Marconi Veterans Association: Earn $1,000+ a Day By Making Movies—Without a Camera!
- Marconi Veterans Association: Find out exactly how to earn as much as $300 every day…
- Marconi Veterans Association: RE: open to partnership?

Naturally, I sent the following emails from the East West

- <MyJCBアカウントに関する異常検知のお知らせ」イベント番号：TW-36426744513
- <イベント番号：JX-52366722646-MyJCBカードに関するご確認のお願い>
- 「新幹線eチケットサービス」えきねっとアカウントの自動退会処理について。メール番号:Ek2024-45551583

…and finally this email, which I mentioned in a previous Newsletter, was dated 19/03/2040. Quite a feat of endurance!

- Be a Stud in the bedroom!

Take care with spam it can be dangerous. Just delete it.

Postscript: As Scott Adams, the author of The Dilbert Principle, has said, *"Everyone is an idiot, not just the people with low SAT scores. The only differences among us is that we're idiots about different things at different times. No matter how smart you are, you spend much of your day being an idiot"*.

Post Postscript: Apologies for the bad jokes (sic)!

Remembrances of Nigeria

by George Maclean

It all began in 1974 when, in Building 46 at New Street, we began Development of the B6124 500kW HF Transmitter. The project was headed by Ron Bradbrook, ably assisted by Section Leaders Ewan Fenn and Len Howard.

We were to use an existing HF Drive, from Comms.

- Neville Hogarth was designing The Control Unit,
- Mick Cranmer the Servos,
- Mel McGann the Broadband Amplifier,
- Wasim Abdullah, the Memory unit
- Johnny Whatson, & Ewan Fenn the RF system, and Modulation System Power Engineering, the High Voltage supply with Bryn Fox
- Len Howard, the Pneumatic Switches
- And Your's truly the Power Supplies, AC distribution, Air and Water cooling and general Interconnections and overall system layout

We had assembled the prototype in Bldg. 46 and I was starting to circuit test this, and arrangements were in progress to connect the Transmitter to the power house, controlled by Len Styles, down near Bldg 30 This would be used to power the HT supply.

However we never got to the stage of powering up, and not even connecting to the 415 Volts, for auxiliaries, when we were informed that some sales idiot had sold a B6124 to the Voice of Nigeria to be commissioned in 1977.

There was no hope in building another Production model, so the decision was made to dismantle the prototype, in its untested state, and ship this to Ikorodu, Nigeria.

In the meantime two Nigerians, Chris Bako and Michael Olieide (spelling?), arrived for training to be held as a series of lectures, by the above mentioned individuals, in the conference room in Bldg 46. I can't remember if the Nigerians came over before the

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Prototype was shipped and if not, then, we had nothing to show them.

I remember as Wasim was unavailable, and as I knew the Memory unit quite well, then I was to give that lecture. Having toiled through my lesson I finished up by asking the two gents if they had any questions, to which the reply was "What time do Woolworths Close?"

Soon after the transmitter arrived and was assembled in Ikorodu, it was soon ready to begin testing by Frank Fenwick, Mario Almeida and Nigel Warren.

About 5 weeks after testing began, reports came back that the single phase supplies, were too low in voltages, although the 3 Phase ones were O.K. On re-examining my designs, I found that I had, inadvertently, used a wrong factor in the design (Root 2, I think) and that, too, had also been missed by the individual who did the recheck. So hastily I had to redesign and contact the Transformer manufacturer, and order replacements, in a hurry.

When these were ready, I was bought an open return ticket on British Caledonian to Lagos, and had to hand carry these replacements and some missing parts as hand luggage. I got the necessary papers, for goods entering the country, which were about six pages, and Dr Griess, who was familiar with Nigeria looked at these and made about one dozen copies for me to take with me, and said that I would need the extra copies. Why? I would find out later!

After quite a few Jabs from the doctor at New Street, I was on my way to Gatwick and a few weeks that I will never forget.

On arrival at Lagos, Ikeja Airport, I was swarmed and overwhelmed by locals all pushing and shoving to get through immigration, and then through customs, with my large amount of hand luggage. The Customs lady demanded my paper work, so I handed her the sixty odd pages that Doc Griess had prepared for me, and when she saw this amount of paper, to go through, she handed it back to me and asked for 'Next Please'! Eventually I made it through to see a couple of friendly white faces waiting for me. Thank goodness, as my hand luggage weighed a ton!

Then off to the Airport hotel, via a bar or two. Then it was an eternity to get booked into a room there. Sleep was said to be impossible, I was told, till about two o'clock when the 'Heavy Sounds' a very loud disco, just opposite the hotel, shut down, if we were lucky! So it was a question 'If you can't beat them, then join them', which resulted in quite a bad hangover, (due to Star Beer) next morning, while we waited, patiently for breakfast.

Then what should have been a twenty minute journey, which took a remarkably short time of two hours, as I was soon to find out later. This was the famous Ikorodu Hill, which must go down in history

It was here that I found out that cars and trucks when bought, only the horn and four wheels were tested. The spare wheel was often sold as it was a non essential. Cars only needed four wheels to run!

Here I could see trucks inching their way up the hill, avoiding various wrecks and broken down vehicles there. Boys were seen to follow these ascending trucks up the hill shoving wooden wedges under each back wheel as it, and as often not, progressed up the hill.

It was not possible to overtake these trucks as there was no room on either side, and if there was then one would most likely be hit by a runaway truck coming down the hill. Seemingly brakes were only a secondary condition on a vehicle.

Coming home that night I was told this would be experienced again coming down the hill, so we would have to leave two hours early to get to the bar in time to wind down. This left us about 4 hours to do the work! As I remember we had a Land Cruiser and a VW Passat for transport.

On one particular day, we did not get to work at all, as we were stuck there for six hours or so, and a bit of luck, enabled us to turn around, and get back to the hotel by about six in the evening. Our Driver was a local by the name of Kyrian, very good for a Nigerian, and we became good friends. He originated from East Nigeria at Port Harcourt. Most locals were Yoruba some Hausa but he was an Ibo. It was best to have a local driver, as, if we were involved in an accident, and there were plenty of these, then, It helped, as a white face was easily blamed!

One day we were coming home with 5 of us in the VW with me in the middle of the back seat, when Kyrian caught us up, as he had finished helping the Aerial Riggers. I said that I would travel behind with him in the Land Cruiser. Just as well I did for the VW hit a passage of black smoke and the driver was blinded then ran into a lorry that was stopped. The lorry had scaffolding in the back and a piece of this went straight through the wind screen in the middle, and through the back window just where I'd been sitting earlier! I had a few bottles of Star Beer that evening!

Couple of nights after my arrival, the boys took me down to the Federal palace, after a death defying tour around Lagos. I thought that it was quite pleasant until I saw a large Rat running about, but the Beer was good.

The traffic in Lagos was jammed packed. The authorities had decided that, to ease the problem, they would restrict access by banning odd numbered plates one day and even the next. However that did not work as, people who owned cars were rich enough to own multiple vehicles!

On Sunday we either went to Bar Beach or Badagary Beach. There were a lot of people there on a Sunday. It was not safe to go any other day. Safety in numbers, I was told!

The hawkers were most annoying and persistent. Trying to ignore them did not work as they would kick sand in your

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face to get attention. They would haggle to get the best price, but once the price was agreed they would stick to it. One particular guy sold me something and I only had one Naira notes which proved to be 50 Kobo too much, but he had no change either, so he unloaded his stuff asked us to look after it, as he disappeared and finally came back with my 50 Kobo. Strange but honest!

Meanwhile, at the transmitter hut, all was going quite well apart from the mains supply (415 Volts 3 Phase). I reported back in one of my regular reports, that the mains supply was up and down, more often than a 'whores drawers' I believe this to be quite amusing back in New Street and, I believe it even reached the MD!

A three phase supply is supposed to be 415 RMS all at the same time, but the Nigerian supply was more often two or even one phase at a particular time. I occasionally, watched it on the scope and I have seen one phase reaching nearly 1000 volt peak with the others missing. I often wondered how they accomplished that? Quite often one could see the kids in the street playing on these transformers, but I never saw any harmed, probably because the power was more often off, than on!

Gradually the transmitter began to be nearing the stage of applying High Voltage, and this necessitated informing New Street to send, the now late, Johnny Whatson out as none of us present had ever experienced powering the RF section.

The day that Johnny was due, we left early and went down to the Airport restaurant so that we would be in good time for Johnny's arrival. The service was usually abysmal in the restaurant, and the four of us had developed the habit of befriending a local waiter and gave him 50 Kobo for quick service before our meal, which then would be about twenty minutes wait instead of the usual hour or more.

As we were in a hurry we offered 'our friendly waiter' 50 Kobo each for quick service. Well that improved the service so much, that, as I was eating my soup, the remainder was whipped away before I was finished, and the main course arrived in front of me!

We were there in good time for Johnny, and helped him through Immigration, just as the others had done for me. I now learnt the meaning of 'Dash'. Every night after that we were asked if anyone was coming from the Airport, and did we need quick service!

One Sunday we decided to take the road to the next state, of Benin. It was a dual carriageway thereto, and there was not much traffic thereon, however we were surprised to see a VW Beetle, heading straight for us, on our side of the carriageway. It was coming at us at some speed so to avoid it we ended up on the verge. We did find out the reason for this, which was the water had come over the road on the other carriageway.

When we reached the beach we took the Land Cruiser on the beach and unfortunately got it stuck in the sand, and if it weren't for a bunch of helpful Russians who pushed us to get it out, then I am not sure what we would have done!

One day we were on our way back from work we came across a horrible Coach crash with a lorry. There were dead and dying all around and when we tried to help our drivers stopped us, for fear that we would be blamed! Strange logic! The drivers were arguing about who was at fault amid all the dying around them! There was no way to call for help!

On a lighter note, we were being driven by our other driver, and he went racing through a red light, saying that 'My brudder allas does that'. However when he stopped at a green light after that, we asked him what he was doing, to which he replied 'My brudder, he may come the other way'! Inverse logic! Also at a roundabout he would not go around the island, but cut across the corner, or go back up the dual carriageway!

We were getting on quite well with the arrival of Johnny Whatson until there was a power cut, which was to last, over a week. The diesel generators started to power up, but did not include our transmitter hall. We did have the arrival of an engineer from the Diesel company who was supposed to install these for our transmitter, but found that they had been stored outside, and they had been damaged beyond repair. It seems they had been delivered in wooden crates, but these been removed, and now probably had someone living in them. So off he went, after asking where the nearest hotel was!! I still wonder where he spent the night? We did not see him again!

We could not do much except a few modifications as we had a soldering iron and one inspection lamp which consisted of a bulb and a lamp holder screwed to a piece of 4 X 2. However that stopped after the diesels went silent. It was then that the Chief Engineer was heard to remark 'Oh, I better order some more Diesel'! We then stopped at the hotel for few days until we heard that the power was back on. This was however boring, we could not sleep much with the heat, so we would be out having our breakfast about 7.00 am, then looking for something to do. Having a bottle of coke or two and trying to avoid having a beer. There was also a beer shortage because of the power problems, and I ended up having a Nigerian brewed Guinness, at about 9.00 a.m. This tasted foul but the saying proved to be true, "there issuch thing as bad beer, if that is all there is!". However I was moaning to the barman that the beer was awful , when he suddenly said 'I have some 'udder' Guinness out the back' and he went back and appeared with a dozen large tins of Guinness brewed in UK. As a result, I fell off my barstool about midday!

Quite often we would go to the 'Heavy Sounds disco' just across from the Airport Hotel Entrance. It was just required show your key from the hotel. It was quite loud, but we used to meet up with some expats there. We knew one as 'Miserable Jack' for he rarely smiled. He

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had been in Nigeria for many years. He was the Traffic Manager for Petra Monk, a Brit./African firm. He told us some stories of his dealings. The one that I remember was when Nigeria decided to abandon driving on the left and switch to the right. He told us that they decided, to make things easier, they would get cars to switch on one day and lorries, the next!!! He said that he took all his equipment off the road for a month, until all the wrecks had been cleared! One night he was recounting one of his tales when I noticed a large drunk guy staggering in our direction, who started to unzip his flies behind Jack, so I dived at Jack and knocked him off his chair and we both fell on the floor. Jack yelled at me but stopped just as he saw a large stream of urine land just where he had been sitting! That was the same night that a 'lady of the night' approached as saying in a loud voice "My names Comfort, anybody want Comfort?" There were no takers, not from our group anyway!

Shortly after that the premises began to charge us entry into the disco, so one night after we had a few drinks we watched the men at the entrance and the guard at the exit. The guys going out would say goodnight to the guard, and we noticed that he did not look up. So we, one by one' walked in backwards, said 'goodnight' and we got in free! That only worked once!

Once that the power had been restored it was back to work at Ikorodu and things began to progress but we did find that a chip in the Reflectometer needed changing, so Frank armed with a soldering iron and a Nigerian 'helper' was asked to take pliers and pull hard on the chip, when Frank said so. Frank was about to apply the iron, when there was a loud crack and the board got damaged, as the helper had acted in too much haste. The 'helper' headed for the door, rapidly, pursued by a flying pair of pliers and he was not seen again for a few days!

A few days later we arrived at the Transmitter hall a bit late because of Ikorodu Hill, and found a guy had come in and was chipping away at the plasterboard in the corner. Frank went over to him and asked what was he doing. He replied something like, repairing the hairline crack on the plaster board. Frank got annoyed and said 'F**k off outside'. We then got our stuff and headed for Lagos Airport.

We were down in Lagos to find a rigging pole. Kyrian our trustworthy driver had volunteered to help the Aerial Riggers with the mast and had offered to drive the Land Cruiser with the tow rope. Unfortunately he was pulling the next section up via the 'rigging poles', but had omitted to stop when required. Result one bent rigging pole. So we had ordered another and was told by New street that it was on a particular flight, so we had gone to pick up this pole, urgently needed by the Riggers. We could see the pole behind the security fence at the Airport, but were told that it hadn't arrived. Much haggling went on but eventually after a large amount of 'dash' we had the pole.

When we came back we were amazed to find the whole corner of the wall missing and when we investigated this the 'plaster' guy had tried to repair the cracks from the outside! He took Frank's remark literally!

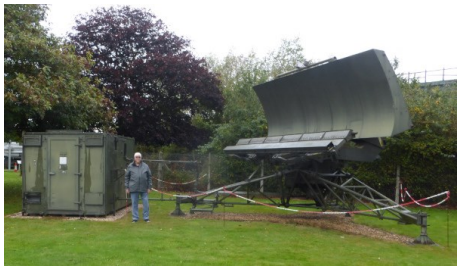
Soon after, I got a bout of Amoebic Dysentery, and spent a painful week in my hotel room , going to the toilet every five minutes or so. My Lomotil had been seized at the Airport. I ended up losing about four stone of weight but I recovered and as all was going well, my job done, I tried to get on a flight to Gatwick without much luck. What a palaver to get on a British Caledonian flight. Did not want to fly Nigerian Air after my experiences, so I had to go all the way to Lagos, to 'Bookshop House', to get a flight. Eventually I got to the Airport, and it was nearly as bad getting out as it was coming in. My luggage was searched, by an officer with a Sten gun and he poked around in my dirty laundry before saying 'have you anything for me?' to which I put my hand in my shirt pocket and gave him a ten Naira note. He then closed the case and said 'next!' My luggage was put on a trolley and a young boy asked me which flight? Even though it had LGW on the label I handed him a five Naira note, to ensure that it got on the correct baggage truck.

Got into the Aircraft and took off. I was never so glad to get out of there, and vowed not to come back. Little did I know that I would return two years later, but that is another story!

RAF Air Defence Radar Museum, Neatishead, Norfolk

by Barry Powell

Those of you who attended the 2021 Reunion will perhaps remember my Presidential address, where I recounted some of my experiences in Abu Dhabi. It was 1973 and we were installing a Marconi S600 Radar System for the Abu Dhabi Defence Force.



10 years later, Marconi Radar provided a similar system for use in the Falklands following the Argentine invasion. This was referred to by Dave Lowrey from the Air Defence Radar Museum (ADRM). Dave joined us as a speaker following contact from myself regarding a S600 related project that is under way at the ADRM.

Learning that the Surveillance Antenna and Cabin that was used in the Falklands was on display at the ADRM, I vowed to visit so I could show Chris and our son, David, what I was doing in Abu Dhabi for 6 months at the beginning of 1973. Health problems prevented me from

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visiting before now but I managed it in October 2024.

Let's get the boring details out of the way. The ADRM is located near Horning in Norfolk. Access is via a narrow winding road (with passing places) so take care. The car park is a fair size and surfaced. Access to the museum is good. It is all at ground level although this does vary by few feet in places so there are a few sets of steps. The café is light and airy (as is most of the museum) serving good food at reasonable prices. There are toilets which are clean and accessible.

Now to the museum itself. The car park is edged by a grassed area upon which are several radar related exhibits not least of which is the ex-Falklands S600. Other items include a Bloodhound missile and Rapier missile each with their control cabin. The entrance leads to a small, but well stocked, shop.

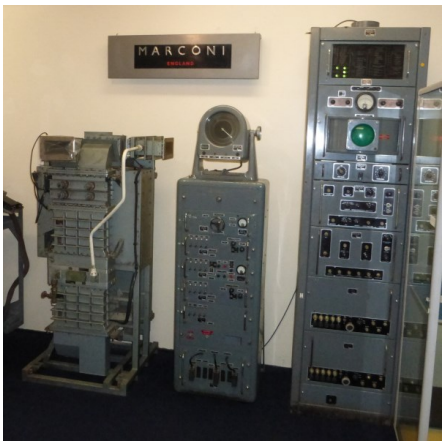
As you progress into the museum, the first thing you see is a model of the Marconi Martello radar. At this point, in explaining to Chris and David how radar worked, I found myself with an extended audience.

Although the ADRM is a bit of a rabbit warren, you are given a leaflet, including a clear map, on entry. This leaflet also includes background information on the ADRM and how radar was discovered.

Highlight of the tour is the exhibit at the far end of your visit – the Cold War Rooms. Here you will see the area where a continuous watch was kept during the cold war period. There are dozens of radar displays, situation boards and

audio which adds to the atmosphere. One of the buttons on the console is labelled "Pigeons". I won't spoil things by saying what the response was when we asked but it was quite amusing. If you really want to know, ask me at the reunion.

Elsewhere in the museum you will find examples of the plotting tables used during WWII, cockpits from Jaguar and Tornado aircraft that you can actually sit in - mind you, you need to be pretty agile to do so as they are very cramped and an ejector seat (deactivated!). There are numerous Marconi Radar related models around the museum and an impressive model of a Bloodhound launch site. In addition, there is much emphasis on the role of women.



Around two thirds of the way, there is the History Room which contains many Marconi Radar models and some display consoles.

I have mentioned the highlights but there are many more exhibits to see. We spent over 3 hours there (including lunch when we arrived and a coffee before we left – it was raining!) but could easily have spent twice that time.

All the exhibits are labelled with lots of back-up information. The volunteers are very knowledgeable – many of them having direct experience of the subject. And, of course, you could sometimes get a visitor who ends up explaining radar.

There are a number of talks given every day – these are announced in plenty of time.

With my background in Radar, I found the ADRM extremely interesting but Chris and David also thoroughly enjoyed the visit and we have agreed that we will try and make another visit early next year (Tickets give you free entry for 12 months).

In the 1969 film Battle of Britain, there is an exchange between a civil servant and Hugh Dowding which goes as follows:-

Senior civil servant: I see. So I'm to tell the Cabinet, that you're trusting in radar and praying to God, is that right?

Dowding: [chuckles] More accurately the other way round. Trusting in God and praying for radar.

The ADRM is in Birds Lane, Neatishead Norwich NR12 8YB Web www.radarmuseum.co.uk

It is well worth a visit.

2024 Reunion

by Colin Fletcher

What have I forgotten this time? That's the question that plagues me each year. If I'm lucky it's 'I've forgotten that I haven't forgotten anything'. No such luck. I had forgotten that Pontlands may not be available in 2025. (Spoiler Alert! A new Venue has been located.)

Soldiering on, the display tables are laid out, tables are identified by name and number and the program of events, AGM minutes and agendas, and financial statements are distributed, all thanks to your Committee members. Phew!

Great; time to relax before the esteemed members arrive. Not a chance, because now they start arriving. First as a trickle and then as a torrent.

Meanwhile Gillian is handing out tickets and name tags, which this year are clip-on badges. Hopefully these will prove to be more durable than the sticky labels previously used.

Among the arrivals is a very youthful face, the owner is none other than Chris

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Axcell, Senior Vice President, Integrated Sensing & Protection from Leonardo.

As the start draws near the Committee and Guests assemble for the annual photo-shoot before taking their places at the lunch.

***Left to Right: Back Row**: David Roscoe, Dave Lowry (Guest Speaker), Chris Axcell (Leonardo), Judith King (Guest), Mark Watson-Lee (Newsletter editor), Gillian Drake, Andrew Sosin (Guest), J Sosin (Guest) , Chris Gardiner, Eric Peachey (Vice-Chairman), Claire Lucas, Brian Izzard (Chairman), Colin Fletcher (Secretary), Barry Powell, David Frost (Hon. Treasurer).*

***Seated** : Val Cleare, Peter Turrall (Patron), Christine Powell (Member), Alan Matthews (2024 President),*

...And So It Begins...

The luncheon commenced in the usual fashion with sartorial MC Veteran David Frost introducing the Top Table.

Left to Right; *Brian Izzard (Chairman), Chris Axcell (Leonardo), Eric Peachey (Vice-Chairman)*

Serving commenced as Brian gave the welcoming speech to the ensembled attendees, whose number this year was the largest since the Covid lockdowns.

Meanwhile as the Top Table waited to be served the Reunion took a slightly different start. Andrew Sosin the son of Boleslaw Sosin gave a brief talk about his father.

Many of us I am sure will remember Boleslaw, who held a prominent position in Marconi as the Chief Scientist. Not forgetting that for many years he was the oldest Veteran at the Reunion.

Andrew Sosin

The Usual Suspects

Following the meal, which unfortunately elicited numerous disappointing comments, coffee is served to a cheerful ensemble; and as can be seen from the following photograph of the tent, it was well attended. Many more photographs are on our web site: ***www.marconi-veterans.org***

2024 Reunion

Left to Right: *Dave Lowry (Guest Speaker), Judith King (Guest) Val Cleare*

Following the meal as everyone relaxes it was time for the ...

Speeches

Chris Axcell

It began with Chris Axcell, Senior Vice President of the Leonardo site at Basildon, giving a brief introduction to himself and the work at Basildon.

The Association is extremely grateful to the Basildon site for the continued support we have received over the years. Without this support it would be difficult for the Association to continue.

Alan 'Matty' Matthews was the President for this year and gave a speech on the history of the Radar company in line with

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the theme for 2024.

As is now the tradition, Alan introduced the Guest Speaker David Lowry.

Alan 'Matty' Matthews

David Lowry

David Lowry from the RAF Air Defence Radar Museum complemented the President's speech by providing details of his experiences with the S600 radar in the Falklands.

Note: *Please see the article on the visit to the museum in this Newsletter.*

AGM

Once again the Veterans showed their appreciation by passing all of the items on the AGM agenda with astonishing speed.

Raffle

Once again the raffle took place thanks to the efforts of Claire Lucas who organised the tickets. Mention and thanks must also go to all those who donated the raffle prizes to help raise extra funds for the MVA coffers.

And so, with a surprising number of name tags returned the 2024 Reunion ended.

Note: *Should any Veteran or Associate wish for a set of four or six tablemats for any year, please contact the Secretary for prices and availability.*
secretary@marconi-veterans.org

Spoiler

Next year the 2025 Reunion will be held at **The County Hotel on the 12th April 2025**

Note: *For more photos and articles and copies of past newsletters please visit the website https://marconi-veterans.org/*

Documenting World War II

by David Davies

When I received the email from our Secretary Colin Fletcher regarding articles for the next Newsletter it reminded me of the BBC realising unless they documented the stories of those that were in World War II, they would be lost in time. We are not talking about war stories here but the history of the The Marconi Company at Communications, Radar, Marine and the boffins at Baddow.

When the word Marconi is mentioned we tend to think of the man himself and the events at that time, however there have been some remarkable projects since that time which I believe should not be lost in time.

There are two projects out of the many that I believe were major achievements. The first is Jindalee Over the Horizon Radar Network (JORN) in Australia that both sites worked on In the early nineties. Australia needed to cover thousands of miles for their defence and over the horizon radar appeared to be the best option. However this was state of the art technology and there were only a few countries with the experience: Russia, the USA and the UK, and thanks to Ken Perry and Ted Sissons they chose the UK.

It should be noted that if it was required today it would not involve the UK. A massive project involving thirty-six amplifiers and hundreds of receivers. There must be some veterans who can provide the detail .

The other outstanding project was the digitisation of the UK Radar defence systems, which are still operational today.

SeaWolf Mid-Life Update

by Malcolm G D Mack

The following few words are a summary of my final few years of working for what had been Marconi Radar Systems Ltd. The majority of the time being spent on the SeaWolf Mid-Life Update (SWMLU) Project. It's a story of decline in the availability of work, which was mirrored in my contribution. As usual the opinions and errors belong to myself.

At the termination of the Marconi JORN contract in January 1999, having worked on the JORN Project for seven and a half years, our names went on a list for redeployment or scrap. The Company was later sold to BAE Systems Ltd and into Alenia Marconi Systems plc., a joint venture company between The Marconi Company and Alenia Difesa. In April 2005 this venture was dissolved and what was left of the Company became BAE Systems INSYTE Division.

Luckily I finished on a Friday and started work on Monday 11 January 1999 for Ray Wombwell, who was Systems Manager on 743D for the Greek Pilion Radar. The Project Manager was Terry Barnsley. The Project was under a stiff deadline as the Company wanted to trade the radar by the end of the financial year 5th April 1999. My job was to ease the holdups and restrictions that slowed or stopped the Field Services Engineers from achieving final acceptance. This included the provision of equipment from Broadoak Works to meet the contract, clearance of site

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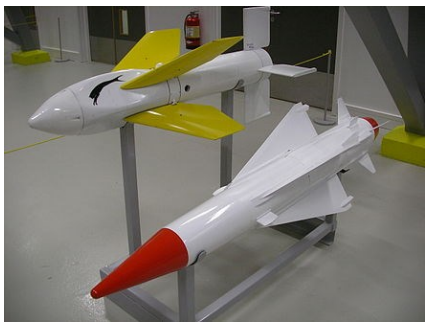
technical queries and observations, provision of special test equipment and spares. Each week I would go with Chris Simons to Broadoak with a prioritised list of equipment and spares requirements to bring back to Rivenhall. Following ten weeks and many hours of hectic activity, acceptance of the radar was achieved. My next job within the Systems Department was working on Year 2000 compliance of S600 equipment; going through drawings to identify any timing circuits with clocks that could be affected. By the end of May 1999 I had lost the plot, and applied for a job in the Installation Design Department to do some real work within the Mechanical Engineering Systems Department. After an interview with Mike Pickering and Paul Snook I was taken on as a Principal Installation Design Engineer. (Never could understand why an Electronics Company would put Electronic and Electrical Engineers in a Mechanical Dept. Would have thought that Mechanical Engineers should have been attached to an Electrical Dept. as the mechanical aspects had become more electrical over time.)



Seacat Seawolf

My first job was the design of the Land Based Integration Facility for the ST1802. This was part of the contract for three ships worth of systems that had been sold to the Government of Brunei. The LBIF was to be located on the beach near Barrow-in-Furness. The design was based on a shipping container that was provided and strengthened by Bradgate Containers at Shepshed following stress point analysis on the design structure. This included the addition of two detachable buttresses on one side. Wiremek at Woodbridge provided the container power supplies. Provision for fitting two Trackers one at each end of the container was provided, with the Tracker below Deck equipment fitted internally. The Project was run from Frimley, and was already suffering from a lack of time, money and a System Design Specification; as someone had not initiated this item of contract at the appropriate time. The customers engineering staff were not involved in the engineering design as required by the contract, a failure of Project Management. Thus when they did involve themselves late in the design cycle, the resultant rejection of the internal design layout was an unnecessary embarrassment to the Project. The redesign to their wishes was undertaken, following a meeting at Frimley to which I was called. They made little difference other than destroy the centre of gravity of the equipped container when lifting. This was to the extent that I felt obliged to add a warning note to the drawings. The last part of the redesign was taken away from me in January 2001 as the Project Manager wanted it to be finished there at Frimley by the Installation Design Office under Mike Haladja since they were running out of work. On my handover of the design I wrote to the Project Manager and Systems Engineer listing all the outstanding redesign issues and items to be finished, including those aspects to be confirmed by the System Design Authority. In the subsequent 'drain covers up' enquiry by the upper management, this was used for asking the relevant questions. The running of the LBIF part of the project was a shambles for which the Project Manager and Systems Engineer eventually left the Company under a cloud.

During this time at the end of 2000, possibly the beginning of 2001, I was involved with the installation of a new HF Transmitter into the PortaKabin at Dengie for the HF Surface Wave Radar there. I had Andy McCubbin down from RFI to advise on dummy loads, cabling and filters through the wall. To get the old GEC Marconi Communications Systems (GMCSL) Project Heartbreak HF Transmitter out of the cabin; Mike Drake, Malcolm Burrells, John Knight and myself had to remove the end wall from the cabin, and lift the transmitter out with a crane. The new Alenia Marconi Transmitter (less than a third the size) was then lifted in. An engineer from Alenia Marconi Systems Italy came to commission the equipment. This was the time I had John Crozier (Carpenter) come and build some stands for the coiled surplus cables to the antennae.

From January 2001 to April 2002 I worked on the HADAF Project, where Terry Barnsley was the Project Manager. My job was to liaise with Andrew Piechowiak of Scot Wilson the Civil Construction Engineers at Basingstoke and in Oman, with respect to site and equipment layouts. Although most of the main aspects of the various site locations had already been decided before I arrived.

At Thumrait, after checking the as built elevations of the radar and the Operations Building, I had to have all the air conditioning fans and condensers removed from the roof of the Operations Building and placed in a valley in the adjacent attached roof. This was to limit possible interference with the radar beam, following examination of the radars beam radiation patterns based on the Rivenhall Near Field Test Site results.

At Masirah, the Operations Building that housed the Equipment Container required a temporary roof to be designed by myself; this was commissioned from Mark Butler at James Lawrence Sailmakers Ltd. at Brightlingsea. John M Wells and myself went there to accept receipt of the canopy awning, with roof poles and restraints. To lift the spine and antenna into position on top of the site hill, calculations were modelled, using the topographic drawings and building drawings of the construction company, cross related with the radar mechanical drawings and the crane range and capacity drawings.

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It was determined with Ray Wombwell that part of the hill had to be removed due to a limited access road, so that the only suitable large crane on Masirah Island could reach.

I was involved with AB Dick Ltd. of Cheltenham in the provision and layout of Radomes for the 743D radars and the Glass Reinforced Plastic Ground to Air Masts. The masts were at the time some of the tallest GRP structures ever made, and being sited close to the radar needed to be mostly non-conductive. I had an involvement with Dave Davey in what had been GMCSL, on the provision of Tropospheric Scatter sites. During which time the site between Thumrait and Muscat was found to be misaligned by 3 degrees, and the dish ground work fixings had to be moved round. I also went to Oman a couple of times to sort out various design issues at Thumrait, Masirah, Muscat and Salalah, during which time I liaised with Norman Davies.

In April 2002 I was sent to work for Cliff Nicholson, SWMLU System A Design Authority, to finish the writing of the System A Defining Specification. After a month of working in the SeaWolf Mid-Life Update Project Office, and having placed the specification out for review, I returned back to the Installation Design Department. There I was to lead the design on the SWMLU Facilities, reporting to Dr. Sam Brown. I became the Facilities Electrical Design Authority and the Facilities Electrical Integration Authority from May 2002 to September 2009. This covered the design of the interconnection cables between the various Configuration Items of the SWMLU System, and involvement in the various cabinet mechanical designs. In total there were approximately Qty.150 cables in the Tracker System and Qty.110 cables in the Surveillance system. Ray Strudwick did most of the cable drawing, up to System Design Review. Cable manufacture with Low Smoke and Fume, Zero Halogen cable was undertaken by TYCO Electronics at Swindon, where Dominic Hammond was the Sales Project Controller. Ian Dancey from the SWMLU Project was involved in the production control on behalf of the Company.

There were few cables remaining from the original design, and most interfaces to equipment were new. The interface specifications were not very mature and written in theory, and so the implementation design had to be worked out from first principles and functionality, and then adapted to the design that existed as built. There was also a failure in the Systems Department in recognising that a Configuration Items interface to another CI did not stand alone, and might be combined in an interconnection through the Tracker Below Deck cable termination panel with other unrelated interfaces.

Amongst the new cables to be designed was the fibre optic run from the new Selex camera on the Tracker Above Deck to the video processing cabinet in the Tracker Below Deck. Ed Mouchel, who was the SELEX Design Authority for the camera tracking system, and myself spent a considerable amount of time identifying a type of cable which would meet the rigorous operational requirements for losses and in-service operability, reliability and maintainability. The design could not allow more than five cables within the run, and one of the cables needed to turn through 270 Degrees to allow for azimuth tracker movement and 100 Degrees in elevation of the Tracker Above Deck. The fibre optic cables were covered with abrasive resistant outer sheathing, and following a review by Norman Davies it was decided to cover all optical fibre cables within the Tracker with the same product.

In November 2004 I went to the Communications Electronics Security Group, GCHQ at Cheltenham for a TEMPEST Installation Design Course.

Other members of the Mechanical Systems Engineering Department who worked on SWMLU were Brian Bolton-Knight, Malcolm Burrells, Eric Coe, Duncan Hill, Bob Lewis, Ryan Renshaw, Grant Walker and Barry Woodham.

From 22 January 2007 to 11 April 2008 I provided support for the SWMLU Design as it matured, and the provision of more detailed Level 3/4 design guidance to BAE Systems Fleet Solutions.

From 14 April 2008 to 30 September 2008 I was involved in the design proving of the Type 22 Surveillance Office SWMLU conversion of Outfit DBB (Data Bus B) at Bushy Hill Test Site. Chris Stone the Bushy Hill Site Manager had stored an old Naval display and power supply at my behest a couple of years before, and this was requisitioned to be built into a small system. The North Mark, antenna synchro turning and targets of opportunity data were taken from the GWS25 Mod0 Surveillance Reference Model run by Brian Olley. Graham Breen from Frimley provided the Design Authority input for the existing design of DBB. After a visit to Portsmouth, a spare DBB was rescued from the scrap heap at Broadoak Works and moved to Bushy; to provide spares and be converted. Martin Wager from Field Services provided the changes to the power board in the Tracker Base that was used; and Dave Hardes from Field Services provided the physical corrections to the design as faults and errors were found. Peter Davenport came to look into the software, and aspects of the interface with the remaining existing Winchester Highway.

From 1 October 2008 to 24 December 2008 I supported the SWMLU Design for Type 23 First of Class HMS Sutherland.

From 6 January 2009 to 3 April 2009 I formulated the Installation Design for moving the HMS Fraser SWMLU Tracker to Bushy Hill Test Site; plus, the conversion of Bushy Base E into the SWISS (Sea Wolf In Service System) Reference Model. At this time Trevor Hayden, the ST1802 Design Authority, and myself went down to HMS Fraser before it's closure to meet the Project sponsors, to discuss moving the lightweight tracker reference model to Bushy. There being no budget to carry this out, the event was put on the backburner. The LBIF facility had been scrapped and there was no appropriate building at Bushy.

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This was followed by the formulation of the SWMLU Installation Design for HMS Collingwood, and the SIF (System Integration Facility) site at Portsdown run by QinetiQ. These facilities were each built slightly differently from the ship fits, being more like test sites.

From 6 April 2009 to 29 May 2009 I converted the BVT (BAE Vosper Thorneycroft) Surface Fleet Ltd. ship cable specifications into SWMLU wiring lists for Type 22 First of Class HMS Campbeltown.

Work on SWMLU dried up and so I was assigned, from the 1 June 2009 to 24 December 2009, to the updating and modification of the Company Business Management System Procedures applicable to the Mechanical Systems Engineering Dept. Writing new processes and amending old process specifications for the Dept.

From 4 January 2010 to 26 February 2010 I worked on the Isle of Wight for three days a week, specifying the electrical design for the ARTISAN Simulator Cabinet, which was taken over by Bob Forshaw.

My last job for the Company, from 1 March 2010 to 30 April 2010, was to convert BAE Systems Surface Ships Ltd. cable specifications into SWMLU wiring lists for Type 23 HMS Argyll.

On the 30 April 2010 I retired at 62 years of age from BAE Systems, having applied for voluntary severance. After 39 years and 1 month of working for the remnants of what had been the Marconi Radar Systems Company, this was probably the best career decision that I made, other than going to Australia for four years, August 1991 to August 1995.

It was with relief that I felt that I had escaped from an organization that had been in decline for at least 20 years, since the close of the Cold War. Lack of investment, no British Government commitment, an emphasis on being politically correct, a move away from engineering into managing the programme, subcontracting everything and losing the skill base and capability, the takeover of the bought-in and brought-in careerist who moved on to their next career move, lack of inventiveness with no product champions, all created an atmosphere of decline and low morale. With the recurring rounds of redundancies, I have calculated that I survived 18 rounds in my time; those that remained struggled on.

From c5,500 personnel working across various sites at my start to the day I left there were c350 personnel. In the following twelve years since, that had declined to about 100 people working on legacy products, and the sites have all been closed other than a small corner of the Great Baddow site, the rest has been given over to housing development and light industrial units.

The only compensations were that I was privileged to have worked with some of the cleverest and skilled people that could be found; and the work was both interesting and rewarding for mental and intellectual stimulation, and job satisfaction. Most people were helpful and took pride in their work in the team, and went out of their way to assist; but it was not all sweetness and light. There were a few clowns, fantasists, prima donnas, divas and sociopaths throughout the organisation, probably reflecting society in general. Field Services had a slightly above average of functioning and nonfunctioning alcoholics, this probably reflected the work and life style. Only the Board of Directors let it all down. (Lions led by Donkeys).

However, if you are making vast sums of money selling aircraft and ships, why would you invest in a radar company that soaked up money like blotting paper with little return?

Martello and the Radar Numbers Game

by Peter Hopp

Don Halstead's marvellous memories prompted some completely random shoots to pop out of the ground giving a slightly different 'Comms' emphasis:

The Bard Hill Hut aka the Winkle Hut - why? - was my first encounter of three with Baddow, where I had a very happy Student apprentice 'attachment' in the mid 60's working there with the lovely Doug 'the Power' Jones and his No 2, whose name escapes me, on Linesman Power supplies. These were monstrous devices which were going to need a small crane to lift into their cabinets and I swear the only reason I was there because I was fairly big and No 2 and I could man-handle the brutes into the cabinets before the winch was installed. I can vividly remember the looks of abject horror when the first install happened and we stood back to see that the cabinets were bulging from the weight and we had to swiftly get them out before disaster and then some girder work in the side uprights sorted the problem. Fellow inmates were John Gay whose younger brother was a fellow apprentice, and a gentleman surnamed Barber with a flatulence problem who could - and did - clear the hut with one parp. I can remember lolling around on the grass outside having a fag waiting for the miasma to clear. The hut also had an incredibly holey floor which allowed us to play a form of 'golf' with walking stick, Ping-Pong balls and paper cups in the holes on rainy lunchtimes.

Quite often 'lunch' was taken on the grass outside, and one lunchtime we became aware of a rumpus on the roof of the adjacent 'B' block with a naked couple doing circuits with much bad language. It later emerged that said couple used to 'play away' on the roof at lunchtime and she had discovered that he was also playing away elsewhere and had gone with the roof keys and a pair of scissors to do a 'Bobbitt'. Security had to break open the door and they were ushered away in raincoats - very exciting entertainment for a callow apprentice.

I lived on the Moulsham estate in an apprentice house, regularly visited by one Owen Hawkes in his Riley(?), and used to sometimes walk to Baddow

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through the estate, and was often picked up along the way by a gentleman with a double -barrelled name, in his Rolls-Royce of some age where I would happily share the back seat with a complete diving suit, including helmet, who also worked at Baddow and must have recognised me as a fellow worker. It happened several times, and where I am sure I was told who it was I have completely forgotten - was he a Radar luminary?

Ben Lamb, indeed a Doctor of Divinity, with his lovely assistants was also an ardent and valued PERT advocate in Communications, but we too could never afford regular 'runs', and would employ coloured crayons until the drawing was illegible. I can remember one father of young children saying to him once "if you just colour that in, it will look so much better" and Ben nearly swallowing his teeth! We did not have many PhD's in Communications, most of our very clever bods were often ex-apprenticed. But I can remember the unedifying time when MoD insisted on a PhD signature on Tender responses and we employed "Gas-board Jones" for just that role. Thoroughly nice bloke but inevitably clueless in Comms, he didn't last long and we then use to borrow a Baddow PhD to do the job

Arnold Weinstock was indeed absolutely brutal, the late unlamented Andrew Glasgow was out overnight and doing his gardening leave at Stanmore, to be replaced by a Radar surplus who was possibly worse, followed by the Italian circus. But Arnold loved the minutiae particularly numbers and I can vividly remember sphincter flutter when he used to phone to check something on Divisional accounts, fortunately rarely but it was that degree of detail that he personally checked and software and computers did not particularly work to his famous six ratios. I also learned to dread the big horse racing meetings as we were doing a contract in Saudi at the time and the customer Sheik was also a gee-gees fan and would whine to Arnold at Ascot or wherever and we would get a visitation from one of his hatchet men shortly after, really a most unpleasant bunch!

There was a fable doing the rounds after Simpson and Mayo started at the top of GEC that Arnold tottered into Simpsons office under a pile of folders and dumped them on Simpsons desk. "What's this?" asked Simpson. "The Company monthly Accounts" quoth Arnold. "Ah!" says Simpson, "I employ others to do that for me" - and look where it got us!

Happy Days, sorry for the ramble!

The Missing Deleted Files

by Blunder

Once in a while it's time to play a practical joke. One that is harmless and provides amusement for all. That is not always the case as one can discover.

The tale revolves around two idiots who, for the purposes of this narrative, shall be called 'Thud and Blunder'. The target they picked we will call 'Bliss' as will become apparent.

Take your minds back to the days when software was developed on VAX terminals, which were shared by software engineers. Engineers would often arrive early to access a terminal. It so happened that Bliss was observed to arrive early. Blunder noticed this and being aware that Thud had administrator privileges, approached Thud with an impish trick to play on Bliss.

The idea was that Thud would write a login script for Bliss's account that did the following:

- Print the message – 'Deleting all files…',
- Pause briefly,
- Delete the spurious file, restore the users login file,
- Log out the user.

When the user logged in again everything was normal. What a great laugh when Bliss would see the message and turn the air blue with rage and frustration.

No such luck. No eruptions of rage and frustration. It didn't work.

After a few more failed attempts by Thud and Blunder. The mystery was solved.

Bliss would log in and then go to the coffee machine for morning refreshment. On returning to the terminal, the login prompt was waiting. Bliss would admonish the system and carry on as normal.

The morals to this tale are:

Software doesn't always go wrong, sometime it's the user.

Ignorance is Bliss.

How do I know this happened? I am Blunder.

Note: No engineers were injured during this idiotic venture. This same cannot be said about Thud and Blunder and their pride.

The Marconi Fire Engine

by Peter A.T. Turrall MBE

It is a well known fact that Marconi's at New Street Chelmsford had a very well organised Fire Brigade with all Firemen being employees of the Company.

They practised Fire Drill once a week usually on a Friday evening after most employees had left for the weekend.

Apart from practising Fire Drill within the Company premises, the Firemen took their very small Fire Engine at weekends to local Fetes and Carnivals throughout Essex. The Fire Engine was usually driven to the event and around six or seven Marconi Firemen accompanied the vehicle in separate transports.

The actual Fire Engine was commandeered by MWT at the start of World War II from the local Ingatestone Fire Brigade where it was stationed usually in a garage at Mountnessing. The wording on the Fire Engine was changed to read Marconi instead of Ingatestone

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and was put into use for any incident which occurred on the Company premises during the War.

Following the Armistice, the Fire Engine was garaged at New Street and the Marconi Apprentices Association took on the task of keeping the engine and apparatus in good working order. They even drove it to local Carnivals and other events showing it off to the general public.

The Ingatestone Fire Brigade at some time during the 1990's wrote to Marconi Communications. requesting the Fire Engine be returned to them at Mountnessing. The request some how arrived at The Managing Directors desk and although he knew nothing of the history of the Fire Engine and how it came to Marconi's, decided without any consultation or enquiry, to refuse to return the Fire Engine to its rightful owner and the undersigned was instructed to send a letter to the enquirer to state that the engine would be kept by Marconi Communication Systems.

This statement did not go down very well with the Ingatestone people whom I happened to know very well as one was MD of a local business and we both were members of a local Golf Club. I tried to pacify the Ingatestone people to no avail but they later decided to give up efforts of trying to retrieve the Fire Engine from the Company.

Coming home from a Golf Tournament on the A12 one Saturday afternoon, I saw a low loader lorry on its way towards London with this Fire Engine strapped on the back. On the Monday I rang New Street and asked where was this Fire Engine going. It turned out somebody had agreed without any consultation, that the Fire Engine would be sent to the Midlands for permanent display at a Motor and Transport Vehicle exhibition.

Unfortunately as an agreement had been signed for the permanent display of this Fire Engine at the Exhibition, it was impossible to retrieve it for the Ingatestone people.

A true but very sad story and one which Marconi's should never have let happen.

Memories of the 1914-1918 War (part 1)

by Laurence Sweny

Towards the end of July 1914, I went with my parents, my two sisters and my brother to Worthing, Sussex, for our summer holiday. On August Bank Holiday, I persuaded my mother to take me to Shoreham Aerodrome, where there was to be a flying display, in which many famous aviators – familiar to me from the pages of the papers 'Flight' and 'Aeroplane' (of which I was already, at the age of 15, an avid reader) were to take part. I, in company with many people twice my age, fondly thought that, despite the newspaper reports and the speeches of the politicians of the previous two or three years, War with Germany was so senseless that it could not take place. Even the realisation that, on the hot, sunny afternoon, our ultimatum to Germany had less than 12 hours to run did not prevent me from being shocked by hearing, when we entered the flying ground, that the start of the display had been postponed owing to the tense international situation, and that no aeroplanes would be permitted to leave the ground. We stayed on, hoping that the ban on flying would be lifted later in the day, watching the aviators standing about in little groups, hands in trouser pockets, obviously asking each other what was to happen next. One or two of them were to die in flying accidents within a few weeks.

But the longer we waited, the lesser became the likelihood of flying; especially as we saw an incessant procession of trains, crammed with soldiers or fully loaded with guns, passing eastwards along the nearby railway. At that moment, we did not realise that we were watching the British Expeditionary Force on its way to France, nor that the men who crowded the carriage windows to catch a glimpse of the grounded aeroplanes would later become known as "Old Contemptibles". There was no flying at Shoreham Aerodrome that day: that night, all bright lights on the pier and promenade at Worthing were extinguished. We children were fast asleep when the ultimatum to Germany expired, but I recall a feeling of great excitement when, at breakfast the next morning, my father told us we were at war. The news was not allowed to interfere with our holiday – the last we were to spend together as a family.

Within a few months, our life at home had changed completely. The town was suddenly invaded by the University and Public Schools Brigade of the Royal Fusiliers, and four soldiers were billeted on us. When they arrived, they had no uniforms nor weapons, nor quarters of any kind. Wearing their civilian clothing – which, in most cases, was quite inadequate – they spent their days drilling with wooden staves, or on long route marches. They got up very early in the morning, usually waking us in the process – and went to bed very early, often completely exhausted by unwanted activity. We children enjoyed having the soldiers with us, for they taught us new games, such as blow-football on the dining-room table. But for my father and mother, things were very different. My mother, even with the help of our maid, found the running of the house and the upbringing of her children immensely complicated by having four great men in the house, whose boots were frequently caked with mud, and who often came in, soaked to the skin, clambering for baths. Nevertheless, she and my elder sister found time to help in the evenings at one of the canteens in the town. My father, always a lover of peace in his house, and a great reader, suffered from the comparative lack of privacy. But neither, to my knowledge, ever complained about the disturbance to a long-established way of life.

During 1915, the Local Defence Volunteers were formed, and I joined the

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company in our neighbourhood. It was commanded by a schoolmaster who had been commanding officer of the Officers' Training Corps at Epsom College, the armoury of which was placed at our disposal. So, from the outset, we were able to parade with real weapons, which increased the keen-ness of the many teenagers in the company. Many members of the company were supporters of the local Rifle Club, whose range was made available to us. My father was a keen shot, and I was greatly pleased when he gave me his rifle. We drilled twice a week and paraded on Sunday for route-marches or trench-digging on the slopes of the Surrey hills at Caterham and Warlingham. Firing practice on the range usually took place on Saturdays. The uniform worn by the L.D.V. consisted of cap, tunic, breeches and puttees of a greyish-green colour. There were frequent comments from the local inhabitants about our resemblance to German prisoners-of-war! We also wore a red brassard on our left arms, inscribed 'L.D.V' in black letters.

When the Zeppelin raids on London and the Home Counties commenced, the town experienced another invasion; this time, of women, children, and elderly couples from the inner suburbs, trying to find refuge from sleepless nights and fear. Some of the people were verging on complete nervous collapse, and my mother found it very difficult to turn them away from the house when they called, pleading for shelter. Many people travelled out every evening from London and such places as Clapham, Balham, Wandsworth, and Streatham, preferring the prospect of a night without shelter to the nerve-wracking experience of an air-raid. But how different the attitude of many local people – including myself and some of my friends – who would go up to Epsom Downs at night, almost hoping to be the spectators of a raid on the Metropolis.

At this time, I paid frequent visits to the aerodrome at Brooklands which, on the outbreak of war, had been taken over by the Royal Flying Corps. From the shelter of gorse bushes on an embankment overlooking the flying-ground, I would watch aeroplanes of many types – including some in the experimental stage – being flown. I also used to go over to Hounslow where, from a railway bridge, I would watch aircraft from the aerodrome on Hounslow Heath. Thus, and by enthusiastically reading all the technical journals I could lay my hands on, I did my best to keep in touch with the progress in aviation – a subject which had fascinated me from the day, in the summer of 1911, when I was present at the land, near Beckenham, in Kent, the first aeroplane to fly from France to England with a passenger.

As I approached my 17th birthday, my father began to give more thought to my future. He had always hoped I would make a career in the Royal Navy, but, probably owing to the general upset caused by the War, it seemed unlikely that I should be able to pass the Entrance Examinations. The future was, therefore, somewhat obscure. Probably feeling that my liability for service on the Western Front would thereby be postponed, he had the notion of articling me to a friend of his who was a big sheep -farmer in New South Wales. I did not see eye to eye with him, for I had set my heart on going into aviation. At the end of the 1916 school summer term, I decided against Australia, and, without consulting my father, joined the Royal Naval Air Service. When I told him of what I had done, my father's sole comment was "Well, old boy, your life is your own!"I got my first taste of Service life at the Royal Naval Air Station at Cranwell, in Lincolnshire. At that time, Cranwell was probably one of the largest air stations in the world. It comprised two very large aerodromes; an airship station capable of housing all types of lighter-than-aircraft, from the two-seater "Blimp" used on anti-submarine patrols, to the 300-ft long rigid ships which were to be the British reply to the Zeppelin and Schutte-Lanz ships of the German Army and Navy; and three training establishments. It was regarded as a somewhat secret place, and letters to those serving there had to be addressed to H.M.S. Daedalus, c/o G.P.O., London. This name had more than a passing interest for me since it had been borne by a Royal Indian Navy ship which my grandfather had commanded. Daedalus was, of course, the father of the legendary Icarus, who tried to fly with a pair of wings made of wax. Whether The Lordships of Admiralty were well advised in giving this name to their largest flying training station must be a matter of opinion.

My training as an air observer occupied nine months, during which I took intensive courses in wireless telegraphy, navigation, signals, and elementary aircraft engineering. We lived rigorously in a large, hutted camp. During the winter I spent there, we experienced a long spell of very cold weather – so cold, that the water supply was completely frozen for nearly a fortnight. One night was so cold in our quarters that a pair of my boots, wet from snow, froze, and were never again wearable. But there was plenty of football, boxing, gymnastics, and athletics, to break the monotony of life on the Lincolnshire Wolds. I was a keen runner in those days, enjoying cross-country runs in the winter and track events in the spring. And there were interesting types among those training with me. One boy, of my own age, was already an Associate of the Royal College of Organists, and spent much of his spare time studying musical composition in order to reach the standard required in the examination for Fellowship. Another had joined the Royal West Kent Regiment at the age of 15½ , had endured six months of trench life in France, and had received the most stringent punishment for being found asleep at his post, before his real age was discovered. I also became friendly with a boy who wrote much poetry, and who was never far away from a copy of Housman's 'A Shropshire Lad'.

The full story (including Part 2) of Memories of the 1914/18 War is on our web site:-

www.marconi-veterans.org

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Obituary: Mr Boleslaw Sosin

Mr Boleslaw Sosin OBE died on 7th January 2024 at the age of 102. He was born in Poland, what follows is a summary of his career:-

August 1949

Having completed war time service in the Army (Signals) and University studies, I joined the Marconi Wireless Telegraph Company in the Antenna Development Group under Mr. C. Gillan and was promoted to Section Leader in November 1955.

The VHF sound and television broadcasting was rapidly expanding and with common antenna working there was need for various VHF filters capable of operating at the high power generated by the transmitters. The techniques for designing such filters were not known and I developed design methods and designed varieties of those filters which were used throughout the world.

These included FM transmitter combining filters, sound and vision combining filters, vestigial sideband filters, harmonic filters, as well as a very precise filter for a VHF radar transmitter for suppression of interference. The design principle and optimisation laid down by me are still used and are also applied today to UHF filters operating at high powers.

Suitable test equipment was not available and I developed specialised measurement equipment using directional couplers. It is of interest to note that the modern Vector Impedance Meter of H.P. is based on the same principle.

Ferrites became available but any previous attempt to design RF transformers were not successful until I analysed the fundamental properties and again laid down design principles. Not only are the transformers which I designed then still being sold, but the design principles are generally used nowadays.

February 1957

Transferred to Transmitter Development Group under Mr. V.O. Stokes. This was a complete change of speciality. The first job I completed was the design of 20 kW UHF (200 MHz) television transmitter which was previously abandoned as impossible. The design was very successful, the transmitter incorporating many novel features, later adopted for general application.

One of the features was the use of quarter-wave phasing between the two output valves to obtain a 'reflectionless' effect. The main reason for the success was the very careful design of the anode tune and grid circuits after measurements of static characteristics of the valve and optimising circuit parameters, a technique which is today standard practice at microwave frequencies but which was not used previously.

The major achievement of this period was the development of HF wideband transmitters which at the power of 1 kW covered the whole HF band without any tuning and was suitable for operation with various modern systems from CW to SSB. The transmitter was the major step forward and a large number of new techniques had to be employed. The transmitter was also well ahead of its time, as indicated by the fact that a version designed in the next period (H1OOO) is still a current Company product.

Furthermore, the complete design, without changes, was repackaged into the Navy's cabinet and became their standard equipment (NT 203 series). Also, the most modern ICS-3 HF transmitter equipment contains the wide band amplifier with practically no changes.

July 1963

Promoted to Group Leader of a newly formed Advanced Development Group, comprising 5 to 10 engineers and being part of the Transmitter Development Department. The completion of work on the wideband transmitters was the major task of the group, as well as many new technology areas (such as wideband penultimate stage, neutralising and auto-tune pick-up transformers etc.) in a 7.5 kW transmitter (HIIOO) which was being developed in another group.

The initial work on 30 kW SSB transmitter (H1200) revealed problems with anode tune circuits due to the requirement of a very high VA with consequent high component costs and difficulty in servo tuning.

This problem was resolved by optimisation of a complete pi-L network. The method I developed is still in use today and contributes to the success of the present Hl140 transmitter.

During this period my attention also changed to low power equipment auxiliary to transmitters. In this content the work on wideband mixer was not successful and was overtaken by a modulated synthesiser (Hl500) developed elsewhere. However, under my direction, the group developed a complete HF drive system utilising the synthesiser and developing a comprehensive modulator and medium power wideband amplifier (H1600 series). A large number of these drive systems have been sold and only recently new equipment is becoming available.

The group also developed a failure proof 1 MHz reference distribution system which was again widely used, not only at transmitter stations, but also at the receiving sites.

October 1965

With the re-organisation I became Engineering Manager of the Special Technique Department responsible to Mr E.F. Cranston, Technical Manager. The department consisted of some 10 to 23 engineers, also some design office staff.

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Continuation of work started in the previous period was the main task at first. With the introduction of larger transistors, design techniques for medium power HF wideband amplifiers were developed and are again widely used. However, research into power varactor frequency multipliers reached a successful conclusion but the 'technique was not used because of the advent of power UHF transistors.

At this time I initiated study work on a digital synthesiser.

October 1967

I took charge of the High Power Transmitter Department forming a High Power and Special Techniques Department. The department now consisted of 37 engineers and design office staff for part of the time.

A large part of the resources were allocated to various major communication projects, 'Maro' being an example, and necessitated the development of control systems and remote control equipment for both transmitter and receiver stations. With a large range of equipment on sale (MST and others) post design work, and particularly contract development, occupied considerable resources of the department.

The department also provided a test equipment service for the whole engineering area of the Radio Communication Division.

A laboratory model of solid state 1 kW transmitter was produced but the design was not continued because of the estimated high cost of a solid state transmitter, as compared to the equivalent valve equipment.

I introduced computer aided design facilities into the department.

The H2900 receiver needs special mention. The old valve communication receivers had good reception performance but were lacking in frequency stability with consequent difficult tuning. The introduction of transistors allowed a design of "synthesised" receiver (MST), which lacked in performance. My terms of reference was to design a point-to-point transistorised receiver to replace the MST receiver, which would have a reception performance better than the old valve receivers, but containing a built -in synthesiser. The target was achieved, although the receiver was not a commercial success because of the collapse of the point-to-point HF communication market and by not taking advantage, by sales, of our two year lead in other markets,

Our competitors were by then able to produce a much cheaper version of a high performance receiver. The design of this equipment was a particularly difficult task for me because, due to the high performance needed, we were pushing technology to the limit. A new digital synthesiser had to be designed with a very high signal purity, various mixers and amplifiers needed to be of high linearity and miniature components had to be used, e.g. micro-circuits for the first time.

The staff available to me for this work consisted mostly of inexperienced engineers; Italian graduates who left after training to be replaced by British graduates who then had to be trained again. I had to "carry" the team.

The ICS-3 contract was won against stiff competition, although we would have been suppliers of transmitters anyway, because of my wideband transmitter. It was necessary to convince ASWE that technically we were able to produce a receiver and drive equipment to the exceedingly high performance necessary for co-sited working on a warship.

Armed with the H2900 receiver, I set-up a team to show successfully that we could improve the critical areas to the new high standard. The design program, development cost and equipment cost was carefully prepared and has since been proved to be remarkably accurate.

March 1972

By the inclusion of the Low Power Departments to my responsibility, an HF Department was formed consisting of some 60 engineers in six groups. In addition to a steady load in the field of HF communication, I was now responsible for the development of all ICS-3 equipment (receivers, drives, transmitters and auxiliary units) to be produced in MCSL. The year saw rapid progress. Whilst managing this large department in the programming of work, financial control, staff administration, preparation of budgets etc.

I found that the department lacked a sufficient number of skilled and experienced engineers to lead various teams. I had to assume technical responsibility of this exacting project and laid out the basis of the design on nearly all major parts of the ICS-3 equipment. In fact, in that year I was doing two jobs simultaneously. I left the project well on the way to success (as is proving now) and the department which was well organised, capable of completing the ICS -3 project and able to undertake the rapid development of new commercial equipment (which it did under new management).

March 1973

Appointed Chief Scientist for HF, Broadcasting Transmitters and Microwave Departments. Responsibilities extended to cover all engineering areas of Marconi Communication Systems being responsible directly to Mr. I.B. Alexander, Engineering Director.

I conducted an analysis of the HF communication systems and have shown a number of controversial points. My findings are now at last being accepted in Europe and outside.

I have also successfully completed management, both contractually and technically, of Project Definition Study (Stamp) for ASWE, which included subcontracted work to Baddow Research and also MSDS Frimley and MSDS Portsmouth.

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1985

Awarded the O.B.E and also the Nelson Gold medal for personal contribution to GEC. Author of 19 technical papers and over 40 patents. I was a consultant until 1990.

Obituary: Joe Ryan

By Ron Stringer

Mr Joe Ryan who joined in 1951, died on July 16th 2024. He was 93 years old.

Many Radio Officers who joined Marconi equipped new builds in Japanese shipyards during the late 1960s and 1970s, had an opportunity to meet Joe Ryan who, at that time, was the Company's sole technical representative in Japan and, to a lesser extent, Korea. A former Radio Officer with the Company, he worked in close co-operation with Cornes and Co., our Japanese representatives and was responsible for supporting their engineers in the installation and sale of our equipment in that country. This was during the surge of movement of shipbuilding activity away from the UK and Europe to Japan, and British ship owners were quick to seize the opportunities of speedier and cheaper construction offered by the heavily invested Japanese shipbuilders.

Every week several new installations, complete suites of radio rooms and navigation packages, including radars and echo sounders, would be despatched from the Elettra House stores in Chelmsford, destined for new builds in shipyards all round Japan. All would be installed by Cornes' engineers from their local offices, under the supervision and guidance of Joe Ryan. Everyone knew Joe and, apart from travelling around the country, assisting on site, he was in constant contact with Chelmsford - to harry the stores department about delayed or missing parts, pressing the installations department for updated drawings and feeding back information about new problems with equipment to the service and development engineers. Joe was a great believer in the products and had a strong drive to ensure that the installations ran smoothly.

Joe worked in Japan without support for many years, returning to the UK from time to time only to be updated on new products as they were introduced. He married Emiko, a local girl, and continued to work in Japan until he was badly injured in a collision with a car whilst crossing the road. Repatriated to the UK, he made a near-complete recovery, being left with a limp but was still very active. He and his family (Joe and Emiko had a daughter, Karen by that time) moved to South Shields, to work as a technician attached to Marconi Marine's Newcastle depot. He subsequently transferred to the Chelmsford Head Office where he worked with the installations and service department, where his product knowledge and experience was invaluable.

The family lived within easy walking distance of the Marconi Club so, in his retirement, Joe's daily constitutional often took him in that direction, and most lunchtimes he could be found loyally supporting Ireland's greatest export in the bar. He shared his nation's mastery of the English language and was a great raconteur, with an unmatched store of tales of his time at sea and in the shipyards of Japan. He was a founder member of our Playgroup's monthly pub 'lunches' and, until the Covid pandemic interrupted such gatherings, hardly missed one. Latterly, problems with his damaged legs began to become more of a problem, causing him to spend several spells in hospital post-Covid. The most recent one sadly ended on 16 July, 2024, when he died in Broomfield Hospital, Chelmsford.

Joe (always Joe, never Joseph), such a lovely man, will be sadly missed by his many friends around the world.

Extras

We sometimes get long articles which we are not able to put in the printed version of this newsletter due to space limitations, but will include them in the on-line version

www.marconi-veterans.org
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Included here are two articles from Robbie Sims about his trips to India.

The full 'Memories of the 1914-1918 War' article (part 1+2).

V25.03

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 2023 – Dec 2024:-

Mr. RJ Baker, Mr. J Brown, Mr. RS Brown, Mr. WJ Brown, Mr. AE Browning, Mr. AG Butt, Mr. RS Chadwick, Mr. MJ Cozens,

Mr. FJ Crilly , Mr. NG Davies, Mr. TH Deane, Mr. E Francis, Mr. DF Halstead, Mr. AR Hare, Mr. BP Higgs, Mr. HJEW Lawrence,

Ms. CAB Marshall, Mr. DJ McKeogh, Mr. FR Overend, Mr. MR Plaw, Mr. WB Robertson, Mr. J Ryan, Mr. BC Sayers,

Mr. RF Sims, Mr. BM Sosin, Mr. B Southwell