



Marconi Veterans Association Newsletter

Number 14
January 2012

Why didn't I start sooner?

The eternal cry of those who work to deadlines, and who doesn't? Material starts coming in for next year's edition even before the current year's has hit the doormat, but by then I've moved on to something else. Should I follow up the new emails now, or leave them for later, etc, etc? So here we are in January, with precious little time to get the issue ready for the printer at the end of the month, and I'm running into the late January conflict between this publication and the village newsletter. Both need the same PC and we're reluctant to lash out on a lap-top to cope with this once a year panic.

In this issue there is an emphasis on the years around 1912, and the company's maritime heritage. Marconi often said that the aspect of wireless which gave him the greatest satisfaction was its use in saving life and property at sea, and a major part of the company's early output was ships' communications equipment. In this issue we feature the loss in mid-Atlantic of the White Star liner SS Titanic, the bravery of her radio officer Jack Phillips, and his connection with the transatlantic telegraph station in Connemara. Perhaps the most significant event in the past year has been the donation to Chelmsford of an historically valuable collection of early marine radio equipment assembled by a former radio officer, Bill Waters, which he bequeathed to the town shortly before his recent death.

One hundred years ago

Peter Turrall, MVA Chairman

The annual reunion to be held on 14th April at the MASC will centre on two major events which took place in 1912: the opening of the new wireless factory at New Street, Chelmsford, under the name of Marconi's Wireless and Telegraph Company Limited, and the sinking of the White Star liner SS Titanic on its maiden voyage to the United States.

The New Street factory was built in a record fourteen weeks and was producing equipment for both the Royal Navy, the army and commercial ships, as well as transmitters and other communications equipment for many countries throughout the world.

The Titanic, which was constructed in Belfast, was equipped with wireless telegraphy equipment built at the Marconi Hall Street and Dalston factories. Two Marconi wireless operators, Messrs Phillips and Bride, were trained at the Marconi Wireless School in Liverpool and joined Titanic for its maiden voyage. Unfortunately Phillips went down with the ship but Bride was saved and was able up until the last minute to help Phillips send distress signals to other ships.

This year the Marconi Veterans Association President is Ron Stringer, himself a Marconi-trained Marine Wireless Officer who had many years at sea as part of the crew on various commercial ships. He later joined Marconi International Marine Company in a civilian capacity in Chelmsford.

Joining the reunion as our Honoured Guest is Tim Wander who, for many years as an engineer, was employed by Marconi Communication Systems at Writtle and New Street. He is an historian and has written a number of books including 'Writtle 2MT', the story of how Marconi started the wireless age. He has recently completed another book covering the early history of Marconi's with many interesting stories from people who were employed in the company during the years of its existence (further details on page 12). Copies of this book will be available for sale at the reunion or at a later date direct from the author.

Marconi factory, New Street

Each year we try and keep Veterans up to date with the situation concerning the Marconi factory at New Street which this year celebrates one hundred years since its construction in 1912. Since the last inhabitants moved to Basildon some four years ago the factory has remained completely empty, although on the odd occasion the concrete yard has been used by Essex Police for various training exercises.

With nobody using the site, there have been break-ins and a lot of damage has been done to the fabric, including the front building. Attempts have been made to shore up the areas where break-ins occur but nevertheless the site looks very desolate. Buddleias have grown everywhere and the windows on the front building have been boarded up to prevent further damage to the glass. The lovely front rose garden has been completely neglected and is very much overgrown.

We understand that Chelmsford Borough Council has made various attempts to tidy up the front but it is still in a **very** neglected state. Ownership of the whole site is with the administrators who, a few months ago, advised that a purchaser had been found. Apparently the purchaser dropped out at the last minute. Recent enquiries to the council have not come up with any new information on what will happen to the site.

Rumours always abound and one of these was that a major food store was putting in a bid. This we understand was not confirmed so we still await a decision on its ultimate fate.

Mailbag

As in previous years, a number of letters are from correspondents seeking information about former colleagues for research into their family history, or for the preparation of articles, books, etc. If no contact detail appears with the letter then please direct your reply or any correspondence for the enquirer to: Barry Powell, Secretary, Marconi Veterans Association, 22 Juliers Close, Canvey Island, Essex, SS8 7EP; 01268 696342; secretary@marconi-veterans.org or to the editor, Ken Earney, 01245 381235; email newsletter@marconi-veterans.org

Certain items on this page and distributed elsewhere throughout this issue are responses to letters or articles appearing in the 2011 edition which have already been posted during the last eleven months on the website. There is thus an inevitable but necessary duplication catering for those Veterans who have no possibility, or wish, to use the internet.

We have increasingly directed a number of correspondents towards the company archive at the Bodleian Library in Oxford to pursue their enquiries about family members or friends when we have been unable to provide an answer to their question. It was initially our experience that the Bodleian was less than helpful in dealing with such requests, but there is recent evidence that things are changing and enquirers making written requests have been successful. It is likely that the earlier reluctance on the part of the Bodleian could be attributed the incomplete state of cataloguing of the collection. The catalogue is now complete and can be accessed at <http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/dept/scwmss/wmss/online/modern/marconi/marconi.html> Full information about the Bodleian Library, its collections, services and how to access them can be found at: <http://www.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/libraries/collections>

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

Some observations on the 2011 newsletter

From VJ Bucknell, 28 March 2011

The Established Design Group Christmas dinner 1966

I appear in the top photo behind Fred Turner. It is difficult to distinguish many of the people in the lower picture, but I think the person next to the lady on the left-hand side of the table is M Southall who worked in the DO. (See page 11 of the 2011 edition. Comparing upper and lower images in Photoshop, the person to the right of this lady is obviously Bill Garvey. I now know who sent the photos because I still have them. Apologies to Roger Sweny - they should already have been returned by the time you read this. Ed)

The engineering side of Established Designs came under George Samson. I worked in the HF Comms section under Fred Turner, with Jack Cave. We were involved in solving problems on comms equipment which occurred during manufacture, and also when in use by the customer. One of the main equipments we were responsible for was the D11/D13 containers which were supplied to the army.

One of the large contracts we worked on was the supply of the many various containers to NATO when they moved from Paris to Brussels in 1966. We did the system engineering for this. It was a rush order and completed in a very short time. Another equipment handled was the VFT manufactured at Wembley. This was 'customised' to fit the customer's requirement.

Sadly Fred Turner passed away shortly after the completion of the NATO order and Mr Samson retired in the late 1960s. The section was broken up in 1969 and its members sent to other departments. After a short period in Building 46 I returned to HP Test in 1970.

A Channel Islander's musings

I was working in HP Test when Barry Bridel was there. At that time he was working in the section that tested the various units (ie drives etc) before being fitted in their transmitters. The person in charge of this section at that time was a Mr Douggie Hills, and it is very likely that this is the Douggie referred to in his letter.

Reflections on the 2011 newsletter

From Andy Sargent, 3 March 2011

The article from Barry Bridel 'A Channel Islanders' musings' brought back great memories. I spent the first few months of my working life in the pit then it was off to Colchester College. My first factory placement during my apprenticeship was in 1972 in High Power Test working for Doug Hills; however, I can't recall if Barry and my paths crossed at this time.

It started me thinking of other colleagues I met at this time and one name I recall is John Bucknell, and looking at the upper picture on page 11 'Established Design Group

Christmas Dinner 1964' can I suggest his name for the second from the right. Have no concrete reason for this suggestion, other than it looks a bit like him. Will look forward to the 2012 newsletter to see if I am right.

You appear to be right - see VJ Bucknell's letter above. Ed.

Former engineer in the Broadcasting Division

From John F Joyce, 25 February 2011

I departed Marconi in November 1971 for Canada. I was very sorry to learn of the Marconi Company's demise. When I founded my own company Jerome & Francis Co Ltd, in Canada, I copied many of its good practices.

The Old Telegraph Tower on St Mary's, Isles of Scilly

From Peter Laverock, 24 August 2011

I'm writing to let you know that I have leased the Telegraph Tower on St Mary's, Isles of Scilly, from the Duchy of Cornwall. The tower was built in 1814 for semaphore and then from 1904 was a Marconi wireless station operated for the Admiralty with the call letters TVP. The tower is my home, but I am willing to show people round if they contact me first. It's the highest building on the Isles of Scilly and has wonderful views.

This is a postcard of unknown origin showing the tower, probably in the 1920s, with a large wooden mast nearby. The coastguard houses behind lasted up to the early 70s when they were demolished and replaced with concrete bungalows. (*Smaller photo, by Dave Dunford, is of the tower as it is today.*)

I'm also interested in finding more information about the wireless station so that I can make a small museum on the ground floor of the building. Virtually no physical evidence of the wireless station remains but I do have plans, correspondence and photographs, mostly from the Bodleian Library. They came up with about 12 documents on the Telegraph Tower, including a black and white photo and some correspondence sent by Marconi to the Admiralty when he found out that they were trying to poach one of his best engineers!

There's a bit more information which I have from the Cornwall Archaeological Unit, which also goes into the semaphore era.



WWII radar parts for the Canadian War Museum

From Robin Webb, Almonte, Ontario, Canada (via the MOGS Forum), 23 December 2011

Bill VE3AAS, a ham radio friend of mine (now in his 90s but you wouldn't believe it) is involved in putting together an exhibit at the Canadian War Museum here in Ottawa. The exhibit is to show the development of airborne and ground-based radar that was used in Canada and where Canadian forces were deployed. Bill was assigned to the UK at the early part of the war (RCAF) to help with radar development. (I just found out that he knew Bill Quill).

The members of the team constructing the exhibit are looking for WWII hardware to show what was involved. Searches in Canada have not proved fruitful. A lot of the hardware came from the UK I understand.

Do any MOGS members (Roy for instance) know of any source of items that could be loaned or donated to the museum?

Information about the museum can be accessed if you Google 'Canadian War Museum'.

(They are making contact with IWM Duxford, ADRM Neatishead, Bawdsey Radar in connection with the search, and Roy Simons has replied via MOGS with suggestions to further their enquiries. If any Veteran can assist in any way please email Robin directly: robwebb@rogers.com Ed.)

Raid on Marconi's 1941

From Andy Begent, 3 July 2011

I have developed a website commemorating people from Chelmsford who lost their lives in the two World Wars. It can be found at: http://www.chelmsfordwarmemorial.co.uk/WW2/WW2_Home.html

I have recently added pages for the victims of the bombing of Marconi's in May 1941:

Harold Walter Bevers, George Cousins,
Cecil Vall Roberts Cutts, David Easton Davidson,
Charles Thomas Franklin, Alfred Howard Griggs,
Harold Joseph Harvey, Hector Francis Head,
Victor Arthur Joslin, Cyril Edward Maggs,
Herbert Joseph Pearce, Benjamin George Reed,
William Henry Scotchman, John Kenneth Smith,
George Frederick Vowles, Sidney Victor White,
Harry John (Pearce) Woods

I am keen to add photographs of the victims and wondered whether through the Veterans Association an appeal could be made to relatives or colleagues of the victims of the bombing seeking photos. I know it's a bit of a long shot, but even if only one or two photos can be found that would be progress. If you have any other suggestions as to how I might track down some photos that would be great.

**Marconi Day, Sandford Mill Museum, Saturday 21st April
10am to 5pm. Free entry - donations welcome**

Marconi spark transmitters**From Richard Shaw, 24 June 2011**

Further to Roman Buja's enquiry regarding the Marconi Spark Transmitter Type Y and Chris Gardiner's reply (MVA Newsletter No. 13, January 2011), although I have no information regarding that type of transmitter, I should perhaps point out that Mr Gardiner's statement that "spark transmitters ... did not exist as operational units by 1920" is slightly misleading.

In fact, the Marconi ¼ kW Quench Gap (QG) Transmitter Type 341 was certainly in service well into the Second World War as a standard emergency transmitter aboard many merchant ships, and formed part of the syllabus for the PMG 'Special' Certificate of Proficiency in Wireless Telegraphy.

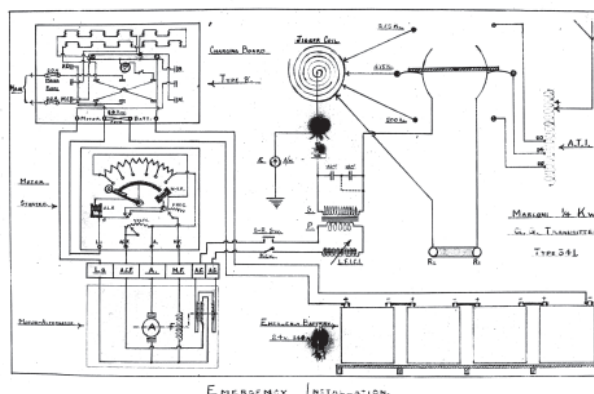
Mounted on a wooden base, the works were totally open to view from above, being protected from damage by a handsome brass-barred cage on each side. (What 'elf and Safety would say about it today can scarcely be imagined!) I enclose a photocopy of the circuit diagram of a typical Emergency Installation from my 1941 Wireless College notebook, now unfortunately spoiled by rust stains from the staples.

Secondly, in Peter Wright's 1987 best seller, *Spycatcher*, he recalls several fascinating tales of his and his father's association with the Marconi Company.

For example, Chapter 2 starts, "My father joined the Marconi Company from university in 1912 and began work as an engineer on an improved method of detecting radio signals. Together with Captain HJ Round he succeeded in developing a vacuum receiver which made the interception of long-range communications possible for the first time. Two days before World War I began he was working with these receivers in the old Marconi Laboratory at Hall Street, Chelmsford, when he realized he was picking up German naval signals. He took the first batch to the Marconi works manager, Andrew Gray, who was a personal friend of Captain Reggie Hall, the Head of the Naval Intelligence Department."

The early chapters contain several fascinating references to early work by the company, such as his account of working at nights and weekends at a "new, secure laboratory in a field at Great Baddow" (a Nissen hut), to unravel the secret of a Russian eavesdropping device found concealed in the American Ambassador's office in Moscow.

You may recall that the government made desperate efforts to stop the book being published; but as Wright and his wife had emigrated to Tasmania, he was able to get it published by Heinemann in Australia. It may be that they, or his co-author, Paul Greengrass, still have notes made during this time - anecdotes that, for whatever reason, never found their way into the book - and which could throw more interesting light on these early years in the Company's history if they could be unearthed. Perhaps a Veteran in Australia could make inquiries?

**Seeking Michael Reid****From Rozamund Waring, NSW, Australia, April 2011**

I am trying to find Michael Reid (Reid) whom I knew in my youth. I have little to go on except that he was training in radio/radar technology in 1954-55. He spent a lot of time in the Essex area, sometimes with young army officers. On one occasion on a weekend visit to friends in Chelmsford we visited Marlow(?) to see the Marconi Radar station. (*Her diary of the time says "...went to Marlow AND the Marconi Radar station."* She thinks the radar station would have to have been at a reasonable distance from the Chelmsford area. Ed.) He would now be in his late 70s. He was amusing, witty and clever and frequently would say "The Count and I were laughing". He was active in musicals etc. The family home at the time was in Northumberland.

I thought because he was in a related field to Marconi technology there might be a chance that one of your 'Geezers' may have known him even if he worked for a different organization. Sadly there are quite a few Michael Reids

throughout England which isn't helping. I know this is a long shot but I would be indebted if you could ask if any of the members of the Society has knowledge of or may recall him.

I would be most grateful for any help or suggestions you may offer. Some companies have staff records going way back but how to find them? I wish the Society and its hearty members the very best from Down Under.

Administratium**From Brian Nicholson. (Apologies you ex-administrators!)**

All Fools' Day has come a little early at Harwell. A nuclear research station, where physicists claim to have discovered the heaviest element known to science - administratium. It has no protons or electrons and the atomic number is zero. What it does have is one neutron, eight assistant neutrons, 10 executive neutrons, 35 vice-neutrons and 256 assistant vice-neutrons. Completely inert, it can be detected chemically because it impedes every action with which it comes into contact...

Wireless, Jack Phillips and The Titanic Disaster

The centenary of the sinking in mid-Atlantic of the White Star liner SS Titanic falls this year. This article centres on the bravery and dedication to duty of the ship's senior radio officer, Jack Phillips, who lost his life in the disaster. It is taken from chapters 12 and 13 of 'Wireless at Sea - the first fifty years' by HE Hancock, (MIMCO, 1950)



There is no doubt that wireless telegraphy was rapidly advancing in popular appreciation; but a far greater event was soon to emphasise the value of this comparatively new science, when the greatest sea disaster of all time, the sinking of the Titanic, on her maiden voyage, shocked the world. The Titanic was the latest and greatest product of British shipbuilding. She was the largest ship in the world and on this, her maiden voyage, was carrying 1348 passengers and a crew of 860. The story has been told so often that it is not necessary again to go into the harrowing details of the disaster. It suffices to say that of those on board the Titanic, a total of 1503 were lost; 504 passengers and 201 of the crew survived, and were picked up by the Cunard liner Carpathia. One tragic feature of the disaster was that possibly many hundreds of other lives might have been saved had it occurred an hour or so earlier; for it was later established that another ship, with one radio officer, was only twenty miles away. Her radio officer, however, had gone off duty after a long day's work and so did not get the Titanic's message.

At the time of the collision with the iceberg, the Senior Radio Officer, John (*Jack*) Phillips, was on watch; within a few minutes of the accident he was joined in the cabin by the Junior Radio Officer, Harold Bride. Almost immediately Captain Smith, the commander of the Titanic, entered the room and said: "We have run against an iceberg; the men are looking round to see what damage has been done, and perhaps it would be as well if you got ready for a call; however, don't send it until I tell you to do so".

About ten minutes later the captain was back again looking very serious, but his voice was steady as he said, 'Call help at once', and Phillips, using the main transmitter, radiated both the CQD and SOS distress signals calling for help.

The first ship to reply was the German steamer Frankfurt, which was 153 miles south-west of the Titanic's position. While the operator of the Frankfurt was reporting the news to the bridge, Cottam, the Radio Officer of the Carpathia, established communication with the Titanic, as a result of which the Carpathia immediately altered course to the scene of the accident. On board the sinking liner Phillips spent the last hours of his life in anxious activity, disturbed in his intent listening by the noise of escaping steam, the engines having been stopped for fear of an explosion. As there were no amplifiers of any sort, signals were very weak and could hardly be heard. After Captain Smith had informed both Radio Officers that the ship was not likely to remain afloat more than another half-hour, they began to get their things ready, putting on lifebelts and warm clothes. Then Phillips returned to the transmitter and sent another SOS. At that moment Captain Smith reappeared and said: "You have done everything that can possibly be done; now leave your post and think of yourself". Phillips, however, worked on for another ten to fifteen minutes. He replied to the Olympic which had just sent the message, 'Hastening as fast as we can', 'Come at once; engine room already flooded'. It was two o'clock.

Wireless Officer's Bravery

Phillips died at his post – as many a radio officer has done since that date. An eye-witness has told how, with the fore well-deck awash – when the women and children had been placed in the boats and cleared – the captain told the radio officers to 'shift for themselves', as the ship was sinking. Instead 'Mr. Phillips took the telephones up again when the captain had left and restarted work. Mr. Phillips tried to call once or twice more, but the power was failing and there were no replies'. Phillips was last seen standing on the deck house.

The news of the loss of JG Phillips was a source of great sorrow among his colleagues, but his splendid example of self-sacrifice gave them a feeling of pride in his bravery and cool demeanour in time of danger. Those who knew him personally knew that such conduct was characteristic of him. Phillips was a native of Godalming, and was educated at the local grammar school. He started his career as a telegraph learner in the Godalming Post Office, and in March 1906 he joined the Marconi school at Liverpool. In August of that year he was appointed to the operating staff, and sailed on various ships, including the Teutonic, Pretorian and Oceanic. He had also served on the operating staff of the high-power transatlantic wireless station at Clifden for three years until July 1911 (see '*Marconi in Connemara*', page 6). His example is one of the noble instances of devotion to duty which brighten the annals of wireless telegraphy.

There is, at Godalming, a memorial to John Phillips. It is in the form of a cloister near Godalming Parish Church. It has three cloistered sides and an arcaded wall, from the arches of which charming views are obtained. Around the memorial is a garden planted with shrubs and plants. On a memorial tablet is the inscription:

This cloister is built in memory of John George Phillips, a native of this town, chief wireless telegraphist of the ill-fated SS Titanic. He died at his post when the vessel foundered in mid-Atlantic on the April 15th, 1912. **Continued on next page**

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Those two or three years before the war of 1914-1918 were a tragic period in the history of merchant shipping. The disaster to the Titanic, which occurred in 1912, was followed in 1913 by the burning of the Folturno and the sinking in 1914 of the Empress of Ireland. On no occasion since then, with the exception of the war years when enemy action was responsible for the loss of many a fine ship, has British shipping suffered a major disaster with heavy loss of life.

Marconi himself had said many times that the aspect of wireless which gave him, personally, the greatest gratification was its use in saving life and property at sea. The first application of wireless was to ensure the safety of those who go down to the sea in ships and of the ships in which they sailed. Apart from the means whereby ships could communicate with other ships or with the shore, subsequent applications of the principles of wireless telegraphy have provided additional safety factors, such as the broadcasting of weather reports, time signals, warnings of dangers which might lie ahead, as well as checks on a ship's position by wireless direction-finding and the depth of water under her keel by echometer sounding device. In the sphere of safety at sea wireless has proved its greatest value, not only in the number of lives saved after disaster may have occurred, but in the prevention of accidents and avoidance of danger as a result of which the number of lives which have been saved is incalculable.

Marconi in Connemara

This article was published in a local newspaper in Connemara which has since ceased publication. It draws on material extracted from a book by Connemara local historian Kathleen Villiers-Tuthill 'Beyond the Twelve Bens, a History of Clifden and District 1860-1923', (www.connemaragirlpublications.com). It supplements photographs and articles on this topic that have appeared in the 2008, 2009 and 2011 newsletters. Following the item on the Titanic, above, note the paragraph below devoted to Jack Phillips.

In July of 1905, Marconi chose the Derrygimla bog in Connemara as the site for the largest Marconi station. Located three miles south of Clifden in County Galway, the 300 acre site on the Atlantic coast offered a direct signal across the ocean to Glace Bay, Newfoundland, Canada using the horizontal directional aerial which Marconi had just patented. The existing station in Poldhu, Cornwall, England was unsuitable for this aerial.

On 17 October 1907, the inaugural message was sent at 11.30 am from Lord Avebury to the New York Times. It was the first regular public radiotelegraphy for news and commercial purposes between Europe & North America. Marconi's Wireless Telegraph Company Limited offered cheaper and faster wireless communication between Europe and America than what had been available via cable services.

Derrygimla provided a natural supply of fuel, the peat bog, which was used to power the complex of commercial operations and staff buildings. A light railway line called the 'Marconi Express' transported the peat that was harvested and connected the station to the main road to ferry people, goods and equipment. On the main building there were eight wooden masts with aerials which were replaced in 1918 by four steel masts.

The station employed 150 permanent staff and about 200 casual staff. Among the permanent staff were 10 engineers, 25 operators and a number of maintenance men, along with 70 local men employed on the turf. The 200 casual staff was employed from February to September cutting and saving the turf and men walked for miles from all parts of Connemara to take up this work. Large quantities of turf were needed for the boilers.

The majority of the permanent staff were from outside Connemara, some lived in accommodation provided on the station, others rented accommodation in the locality. These were all skilled men and they were very highly paid. The wages paid to the local employees were also high and this was a great boost to the local economy, and saved many a man from emigration.

Derrygimla's most famous employee was the young operator Jack Phillips. After working at Derrygimla for three years, Jack requested a transfer and was assigned as Senior Wireless Officer to the SS Titanic on her maiden voyage. Jack has gone down in history as being the man who sent out the SOS distress signal that saved 750 lives. Sadly, he was among the 1,500 lost.

The Radio Officers who had been stationed at Derrygimla were held in the highest regard, according to Colman Shaughnessy of the Radio Officers Association. "The volume of messages exceeded by far the volume of any posting."

In 1913, a receiving station was built in Letterfrack, 12 miles north of Clifden. The Derrygimla operation continued to transmit messages. The Letterfrack station was not economical and was closed down in 1916.

On 15 June 1919, the first transatlantic flight ended on the bog near the Marconi station. Captain John Alcock and Lieutenant Arthur Whiston Brown crash landed the Vickers Vimy plane there and were greeted by the Marconi staff. A message to the New York Times sent from the Marconi Station confirmed their safe arrival across the Atlantic.

During the Civil War in 1922, Irish Rebels destroyed the Marconi station and it was never rebuilt. Traffic passed to the Caernarvon station in Wales.

The Bill Waters Collection

This article uses material drawn from reports on the 'This is Cornwall' and 'This is Essex' websites, and from the descriptive handouts written by Geoff Lovegrove of the Friends of Chelmsford Museums for displays at the Chelmsford Industrial Museum at Sandford Mill.

Lord Petre, in his address to the annual Veterans reunion (see page 8) made reference to the then very recent Waters Collection bequest to Chelmsford. Bill Waters, a retired marine radio officer of Pendeen, in Cornwall, amassed over a number of years a very large collection of Marconi marine radio equipment, manufactured in Chelmsford from the 1900s to the 1940s, and built it up into a number of ships' radio room displays in a barn at his home. In what was for us a fantastic piece of news this collection was bequeathed shortly before his death last year to the county town's museums. Two displays, dating from the 1900s and the 1920s have already been installed at the Industrial Museum at Sandford Mill. Further displays featuring 1930s and 40s installations are in the process of being set up there.

Bill Waters lived at Pendeen and started to take an interest in ships' radios as a young boy, when he would use a Morse set to hail passing ships. This turned into a lifelong passion and he became a marine radio operator in the Merchant Navy. During the Second World War he served as a Royal Navy radio operator and was involved in communications for the D-Day landings. Coming ashore after further sea-going service with International Marine Radio in the post-war years, he worked as a radio officer until his eventual retirement at the GPO Land's End radio station.

He converted the barn at his home in Pendeen into a nautical-style lookout tower, decked out inside as a replica of a ship's radio room to house his increasing collection. It included a recreation of the Titanic's radio room using genuine 1912 equipment. This collection was bequeathed to the Chelmsford museums just months before he died in Cornwall in April 2011. The bequest came about as the result of a four-year working partnership resulting in a 50-year friendship with General Post Office marine engineer Frank Kelly, 84, who came to live in Chelmsford in 1964. Frank recalled that he and Bill worked with Marconi equipment at the Land's End station in St Just back in 1960 for four years. He then moved to the Port of London with the Post Office in 1964 and lived in Chelmsford from then on.

He and his wife made frequent visits to Cornwall; it was during one of these visits following his wife's death that Bill expressed concern as what might happen to his collection of historic Marconi equipment made at Chelmsford and dating back to the 1890s. In an off the cuff remark Frank Kelly suggested that there was only one place for it to go, and that was Chelmsford. He agreed immediately and last summer he and Peter Watkins, a former radio operator and retired physics teacher, went to sort it out and ship it here to Chelmsford. Frank Kelly said last April: "Bill was a great character. He used to go to Falmouth when the ships were on the way to the breakers and grab parts at scrap value. He died only a few weeks ago but I know he died a very happy man in the knowledge that he had found a home for his collection." Peter Turrall expressed his delight at Mr Waters' gift, and described it as "the best thing to happen on the Marconi front for decades", as the equipment would shed light for the first time on what Marconi did in Chelmsford in the early 1900s. It also held extra significance for the Veterans since the Marconi Corporation disposed of its archive in 2003. Chelmsford's Sandford Mill museum's curator of sciences, Geoff Bowles, said the collection's historic value was on a par with the Great Baddow collection which was controversially handed over to Oxford University several years ago. "There's every bit of marine radio equipment you could want, from 1890 into the 1960s," he said. "The town owes Mr Waters a great debt of gratitude for freely giving us the equipment." Amen to that.



Replicas of ships' radio rooms on display for the first time to the public at the Open Day at Sandford Mill Industrial Museum on the 30th April 2011. The upper photo shows equipment from the 1900s, and that in the lower is from the 1920s. The displays have been put together by volunteers from the Friends of Chelmsford Museums

The 75th Veterans Reunion

The 75th annual Veterans' Reunion at the Marconi Athletic & Social Club in Beehive Lane took place last year on Saturday 16th April. Our President for the year was The Right Honourable The Lord Prior, ex Chairman of GEC, and the Guest of Honour Lord John Petre, Lord Lieutenant of Essex.

The toast to the President was proposed by Robbie Robertson. Responding to Peter Turrall when told he had three minutes to introduce Lord Prior, considering Lord Prior's history, replied "how about half an hour Peter?" In the event, in well under 2½ minutes, he gave "a pretty quick picture of a pretty special guy", a career of over 30 years as an MP, government minister and chairman of GEC, emphasising his value to the company through his interest in, care about and support for exports.

Lord Prior said he had enjoyed his time as chairman of GEC, and lamented how things had turned out for the company after his time. He remembered how Lord Weinstock was surprisingly indecisive over the matter of his succession, which caused Lord Prior a few difficulties. He expressed the gratitude of many for the work that Peter Turrall has done on behalf of the Veterans' Association.

There were reflections on the qualities of speech makers from his parliamentary days. A minister who frequently criticised his departmental speech writers got his comeuppance when, speaking in the House of Commons, he turned to the second page of a rather dreary speech to find written in large letters "Now you're on your own", and Churchill, a maker of wonderful speeches - always written out and delivered line by line. There was an occasion at a Conservative Party conference during his second time as prime minister when, having been not at all well for a long time, some way through the speech he forgot to turn over a page. He got to the end of it and realised that he had read it out a second time so he said to the audience "You must wonder why I have repeated myself - it was because I thought it was so important."

He welcomed the fact that the country now appears to have got over the idea that everything can be done by banking and that we're starting to think once again that manufacturing industry is important. He concluded with a word or two about the Marconi archives. He felt that the expected high cost of presenting and looking after them in Chelmsford was the factor that precipitated their move to the Bodleian Library at Oxford, but he believed they the Bodleian was doing a reasonable job for them.

Peter Turrall then introduced the Guest of Honour, Lord Petre, Lord Lieutenant of Essex, an extremely busy man who, in addition to his duties as the queen's representative and patron and president of various organisations, takes a great interest in numerous charitable activities and organisations for people with either physical or learning disabilities, and in animal welfare.

Lord Petre was very appreciative of the invitation as our Guest of Honour and gave a very entertaining and amusing flavour of his experiences as the county's Lord Lieutenant. He opened by saying that he was a little apprehensive as to what information about him Peter Turrall might impart in his introduction: calumnies abound in the ether. When he had tried Googling his name he got nearly 47,000 hits, including such as 'Nina in Lord Petre's bedroom! (*It might have referred to one of your ancestors sir; they led a somewhat colourful life in the Regency period. Ed*)

He spoke of the faux pas and misapprehensions made by people encountering him in his official capacity and particularly when in uniform - of the folk who speak to him warmly of his predecessor John Ruggles-Brise, maybe thinking "Ah, in those days we had a **real** Lord Lieutenant", of the occasion he was mistaken for a senior member of the Salvation Army, and another when, arriving rather early to take the salute at some function managed to find the person who appeared to be in charge who said "Ah yes, you've come to do the first aid haven't you."

A wonderful job, participating in an astonishing diversity of engagements from the solemn and moving, through the jolly and convivial to, on very rare occasions, the rather embarrassing disasters. Organising Royal visits in the county can combine all three of these elements but mercifully seldom the last, all navigated smoothly thanks the help of his excellent team. There were occasional mishaps, such as narrowly avoiding assassinating the Earl of Wessex in Thurrock on a Duke of Edinburgh's Award visit and learning the following day that the firm supplying the sandwiches for the lunch had to recall their entire product because of a listeria outbreak!

Then there was the time when the Prince of Wales, visiting the maltings at Mistley, recently converted into flats, was 'kidnapped' by a determined lady from one of the new flats. After the Prince had a cup of tea with another of the residents, and as the party was descending the stairs, the lady erupted from her front door, grabbed the Prince and took him aside in order to give him a lecture on her particular hobby horse, which happened to be mercury tooth fillings.

He concluded by reminding us that the name of Marconi is still a very tangible part of the heritage of Chelmsford and of the county as a whole. There are reminders: the town sign still bears the legend 'home of radio' celebrating the occasion when Dame Nellie Melba came to make that broadcast in 1920; the imposing mast at Baddow; the New Street works frontage; the (albeit rather camp) statue of Marconi near the Cramphorn Theatre; and what is now Selex continues to carry forward the tradition of technological excellence inherited from the original company. And now the wonderful news of the Waters Collection bequest to the town which could be considered to trump the artefacts lost to Oxford. So he was delighted to be present at the day's celebration and closed with "May the tradition long continue."

Len Webb and Sons

This photo shows New Street Transport Department driver Len Webb in the cab of his 3-ton Bedford lorry with, from left to right, his three sons Bernard, Peter and Arthur. According to Peter, who supplied the photo and is the last surviving member of the four, it was probably taken in the early 50s. The company name, Marconi's Wireless Telegraph Co Ltd, which was changed in 1963, the style of clothing, the design of the vehicle and the Photographic Department serial number on the back of the print all seem to support this supposition.

At the time Peter was in the DO of the Audio Department of Broadcasting Division, New Street, Bernard was a lathe turner in the Radar Division workshops at Widford and Arthur, who was later to become Materials Handling Controller of MCSL, was at New Street WIP stores.



JE Davies and the 1937 coronation of King George VI

A letter from Simon Vaughan, archivist for the Alexandra Place Television Society (APTS)

The Alexandra Palace Television Society, of which I am the archivist, has been in existence for the past 20-plus years. In this time we have gradually built up a very large archive, which now stands at over 6,000 items. Over this period some remarkable finds have been discovered, and I wonder if you can help with one of these – it's a long-shot, but just might produce some results. Anyway, this is what information I know already (taken from the Radio Times, June 1953):-

“An amateur enthusiast, Mr JE Davies, made a home telerecording of the BBC Television Service coverage of the coronation of King George VI in May 1937. He set up his 16mm ciné camera to film the images from the television screen. He was an employee of the Marconi Company (occupation unknown) in 1937, and by 1953 was the Manager of the Publicity Division of The Marconi International Marine Communication Company.

Mr Davies lent his home ciné film to the BBC for inclusion in ‘All Our Yesterdays - The Passing Show’, transmitted on 1st June 1953, to celebrate the past 100 years of the monarchy and the impending coronation of Princess Elizabeth, (*which was the following day*). This film of the 1937 coronation procession only exists due to the fact that ‘The Passing Show’ was recorded by the 35mm telerecording method then used by the BBC. The 27-second clip shows some of the procession as seen on the screen of a television receiver.

Mr Davies' camera was a 16mm Moviekon at f1.5. Synchronisation was difficult, as the camera had no frame speed to match that of the television picture. The amount of exposure would have been insufficient though, so Mr Davies compromised and used the frame speed setting on his camera, hoping that it would run in approximate synchronisation as well as giving better exposure. The results were good, although he felt that with the synchronisation and exposure difficulties the film did not do full justice to the quality of the television image in 1937. And, he recalled, the weather, dull and showery, must have been a handicap to the television cameras.”

And that is all I know! Where could I go to find out more about Mr Davies? He might still be alive - he could have been 20 in 1937, making him 90 now, or there might be a last known address for him, his immediate family might still be living. I'm searching for two reasons; firstly, there might be more ciné footage of pre-war BBC Television, and secondly, his family might not know he took this footage and it would be fantastic to be able to provide them with a copy of the film.

Obviously, I know this is a long-shot, but sometimes they pay off! I made a couple of enquiries to the Marconi Company soon after the footage was discovered on the 1953 telerecording of ‘The Passing Show’, but these were met with hostility, and so the trail ran dry. Although the BBC kept the 1953 telerecording they didn't keep a copy of Mr Davies' film, despite borrowing it on two occasions (the original showing of the 1953 programme and again for its repeat the following week).

I don't know if you will be able to help, but I wouldn't be doing my job as archivist very well if I didn't follow up all possible leads, or just let the trail go cold! I've provided the link (below) to an unlisted video on our YouTube channel so you can see the footage for yourself. The results obtained by Mr Davies are remarkably good, I'm sure you will agree – especially as this was filmed from the television screen only six months after the BBC service first started.

I look forward to hearing from anyone who can help in due course.

You can find the clip at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q2cQke01rao>

Who remembers seeing ‘All Our Yesterdays - The Passing Show’ before the coronation on the evening of the 1st June 1953?

The Secretary's bit

Well, here we go with 2012.

I didn't get the chance to slow down last year, so I guess it'll be another busy one! Aside from our visits to the caravan, we went on a coach trip to Belgium. The weather was mixed but we still managed to get to Ghent, Antwerp and Bruges. Our visit to Ypres for the evening service and Last Post was one of the highlights. It is wonderful that the people of Ypres still honour the dead of the First World War with such an emotional service – every night!

This year, we are planning a visit to the Floriade – along the lines of the garden festivals held in the UK between 1984 and 1992, but several times larger. They are held in Holland every 10 years and we first went to the 2002 Floriade between Amsterdam and Haarlem. This year it will be just outside Venlo, on the German border.

Following a suggestion from a Veteran, we are compiling a list of forenames and nicknames in an effort to make the various lists less formal and enable people to distinguish between Veterans with similar initials. So please fill in the spaces on the Subscription/Ticket application form.

With regard to the subscription, we regret that we must increase the rate to £6.00 per annum. The Association invariably operates with a deficit and this is the first increase since the subscription was introduced.

Please note that we have brought forward the date of the Reunion to Saturday 14th April in order to avoid a clash with the Marconi Day at Sandford Mill on the 21st. Our speaker will be Tim Wander and we will have on sale copies of his latest book on Marconi. Tim is a 'Friend' of the Association and, having heard him speak, I am sure you will find his talk fascinating. If you cannot be at the Reunion, he will also be at the Marconi Day.

I am still getting the odd order for the Photo CD and will have a few for sale at the Reunion. If we sell out, you can order one to be sent to you as soon as I have made it.

If you know of an ex Marconi employee who does not receive the Newsletter please urge them to contact me as soon as possible. It may be that they have moved or not replied to a confirmation request of a few years ago. It's also possible that they left with 21 to 24 years service and have now become Veterans by virtue of the recent reductions in service requirement

The 'Friends of The Marconi Veterans' Association' has been set up to cater for anyone who does not qualify as a Veteran but wishes to be kept informed of things Marconi. Numbers are growing slowly with, currently, over 20 members and any more would be welcome.

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

Please note that I am now retired and can be contacted at the address below. Finally, I would like to wish you all a very prosperous 2012 and hope to see as many of you as possible either at the Reunion or the Open Day at Sandford Mill.

Barry Powell, Secretary, Marconi Veterans' Association, 22 Juliers Close, Canvey Island, Essex, SS8 7EP

Phone: 01268 696342 (answerphone if we are out, please leave a message and I will ring you back)

Email: Secretary@marconi-veterans.org

Calling all Marconi veterans from 1944!

From David Barker, 30 May 2011

Email: dave_j_barker@yahoo.com,

If you worked for Marconi in Chelmsford during the war years, or if you know someone that did, I would love to hear from you.

My name is David Barker and I am desperately seeking somebody who knew, or knew of, my grandmother Elsie 'Joan' Green, to help solve a family mystery! She was originally from Saxmundham in Suffolk and worked at Marconi in Chelmsford (not sure on the precise location) in 1943/1944, but would have left after falling pregnant.

If you remember my grandmother in any way, or know of somebody that might, or even if you do not remember her but were working for Marconi in 1944 and can recall what

it was like, please, please, do not hesitate to contact me as I would love to talk to you.

There is an interesting possible connection here between Elsie Green and Ruth Ottley/Freeman (see facing page). I spoke about it with David Barker shortly before completing the newsletter. Both young women, unknown to each other as far as we know, lived in the same area near Saxmundham and worked at Garratt's in Leiston. Ruth was detailed in March 1943 to move to Marconi's at Chelmsford for the war effort. Elsie Green started working at Marconi's in 1943/4, but the family don't know how that came about. It's more than possible that the same official delivered to Elsie her marching orders, around the same time. David would be delighted if any Veteran can throw any light on her time at Marconi's. You can contact him directly by email, otherwise by mail to the secretary or editor. Ed.

All from a visit to a Suffolk steam museum

Last August my wife and I were staying for a few days in a farmhouse B&B near Saxmundham in Suffolk. During our last day in the area we visited the Longshop Steam Museum in Leiston, formerly part of the factory of Richard Garratt and Sons, manufacturers of agricultural machinery, steam engines and trolleybuses. On one of the display panels were 'The Reminiscences of a Garratt Girl'. Ruth Ottley had joined the firm at 16 or 17 to do war work, from the early days of WW2 until March 1943, when she was detailed by 'officials' to upsticks and move to Marconi's in Chelmsford as part of the war effort. There she met and married her future husband. The display panel acknowledged the article to Ruth Freeman of Chelmsford.

What had happened to Ruth Freeman at Marconi's? A check in the Veterans register led me to Pat Freeman, with a career in Marconi Comms, retiring as Manager of Customer Service Division in 1968, who in 1943 was working in the Crystal Department at Baddow, where he met and subsequently married Ruth Ottley after her arrival there. I met Pat recently, now living in a retirement home in Chelmsford, and came away with a potted resumé of his Marconi career and copy of the article below which appeared in the December 1972 edition of 'Link', the MCSL house journal. It describes what must be a typical web of relationships and friendships within the Marconi family of companies.

Pat Freeman joined the Marconi Company in 1937 after leaving King Edward VI Grammar School, Chelmsford. Called up before the outbreak of the war he was soon recalled to Marconi's where he was engaged in the development and manufacture of specialized quartz crystal units. In 1949 he transferred to the VHF Development Group and in 1957 was appointed leader of the VHF Special Designs Section. He later joined Telegraph Development Group working on error correcting equipment and was responsible for the design of the HU126 7-unit monitor. He subsequently took charge of a section concerned with the development and design of Marconidata equipment, then became Chief of Installations, Line Communications Division. He finally retired as manager of Marconi Customer Service Division.

Following his retirement, partly as a result of his marriage to the Garret Girl, who sadly died three years ago, he developed a consuming interest in steam traction engines. For some years Publicity Officer of the East Anglian Traction Engine Society, he has a number of books on the history and use of steam engines to his credit. He is still active in EATES, and now, with his daughter June continues to make contributions to the society's journal and website. Ed.

They say that one wedding brings another. But certainly a wedding brings old friends and relations together from the four corners of each family. Pat Freeman of Writtle recalls the day when he and his wife Ruth went for the first time to see their son Tony's fiancée's parents, Jack and Margaret Parker. "Directly I saw Jack I thought I recognized him, but could not place him. Then the penny dropped. We had worked together as friends in the boys' shop at New Street; and there was a lot to talk about as we had not seen each other for thirty years." Tony Freeman and Christine Parker were married in October. Over a hundred relations and old friends assembled to wish them well.

Looking around at the guests during the reception Pat was interested to see how closely many of them were linked with the Company. He had met Ruth his wife while they were both working in the Crystal Department at Baddow during the war. Their best man was Jimmy Aikman who also worked there, and Pat had been his best man when he had married Joyce, a Marconi girl. Jack Parker, Christine's father, is now working for Jack Sutton on TV transmitter assembly in Building 29, and Margaret Parker worked in Section 16 at New Street during the war. Jack's brother-in-law Les Beard works at Waterhouse Lane.

Ruth's brother George Ottley works in Envelopment at Writtle. George is a keen cricketer and has bowled very successfully for Marconi elevens since he joined the Company over twenty years ago; Pat's sister Eileen worked at New Street for a time. Her husband Jim Joslin is now in the Works at New Street; Pat's other sister, Norah, worked in the Crystal Dept. at New Street, and his father worked in the Crystal Dept. at Baddow for many years. Crystal Dept. was so important that it was divided into two.

June Freeman, Pat's daughter, was one of the bridesmaids. She worked at Writtle during vacations and is now at college learning to teach mentally handicapped children. His son Tony, oddly enough, has not actually worked for Marconi. But he has played football for them all his life. His father was Vice-Chairman of the Marconi Football Club.

Christine has not worked for the Company either. Her connections with it are happy memories of children's parties. Tony and Christine now have a bungalow in Burnham. They both work for the Royal Insurance in London.

The band at the wedding—it was an evening reception—was a young group becoming increasingly well known, Time Out. Its leader, Ian Ruddle, works in Systems Planning, Writtle, in fact, in the next hut to Pat. And the photographer who put the happy gathering on record, a camera club friend of Pat's for twenty years, was none other than Company photographer Les Dyer.'



Top right, Pat and Ruth Freeman (who is that beside Pat?) at a garden party in the late 90s, and below left, Pat at a book signing in 1997

36 years with Marconi and AWA NZ

Henry (Herbert) Hall, 5 September 2011

I have only recently come across mention of your Association on the Internet and found what I read of considerable interest. I wonder why after all these years this is the first mention of your existence. I would have thought that someone who knew me would have been in touch many years ago. *(Henry was not on the register of Veterans so not known to us - another case of information not always being passed on by personnel departments when an employee attained 25 years of service. This situation has now been remedied; Henry appears in the register as Revd HP Hall and knows where to find us on the web. Ed.)*



I worked for Marconi at Chelmsford for 20 years until I resigned in 1970 (see photo above) to join AWA New Zealand. I first worked in the Radar Division, then in the Export Department later renamed the International Division and served as the company representative in Pakistan for six years from 1957. I also served for a while as Managing Director of Marconi South Africa before returning to Chelmsford to join the Radio Communications Division. For them I travelled the world but mainly in the Far East and eventually arrived in New Zealand in 1968. I was successful in securing large contracts for radio communications equipment for the New Zealand Civil Aviation Department and the military. It was then that AWA offered me a post as manager of their Broadcasting and Radio Communications Division, and as I liked the country and its people decided to accept and emigrated.

I worked for AWA until I retired in 1986 and after enjoying some years playing golf, became very interested in religious affairs, left the Anglican Church and became a priest with the New Zealand groups of the Free Church of England. After my wife Irene died of Alzheimer's disease I finally gave up working and retired to a very lonely and peaceful life on my own here at Waianae, about 60km north of Wellington - the best place in the world!

I keep myself amused with my computer and have written my memoirs and many other stories of my life. I visit my daughter in Wellington every Sunday and keep in touch with my son by Skype who lives in Sudbury, Suffolk. Sadly I have few friends now as most have passed on and I officiated at their funerals.

I am sure Peter Turrall and perhaps some others still remember me and I would love to hear from them when convenient.

Marconi's New Street Works 1912 – 2012

Birthplace of the Wireless Age - by Tim Wander

With the centenary of the New Street Works fast approaching ex-Marconi engineer and historian Tim Wander has spent the past year or more putting together a history of the famous factory. The book has just gone to print and is due out in February. At over 370 pages, with more than 130 photographs, the book charts the history and development of the site and tells the stories behind the world beating and world saving technologies that were developed there. New Street was the birthplace of many technologies that have shaped and changed our modern world including radio, broadcasting, television, radar, satellite communications and even the computer and the technology behind the mobile telephone.

But most of all the Marconi New Street centenary book tells some of the personal stories of the men and women who worked there from the 1930s onward. Well over a hundred people have contributed to a unique oral history - everything from a paragraph or humorous anecdote through to a career history. With careful editing they have been woven together to form a permanent record of the factory and the people who served there.

The New Street story recounts many stories of the famous factory across one hundred years. It respectfully remembers the losses of wartime but also recounts happier times of comradeship, laughter and a sense of belonging that will perhaps never occur again. This was the goal behind the new book and Tim genuinely believes that it is important that all the memories and reminiscences of past years are recorded for future generations.

Many of the photographs in the book are previously unseen and span the entire history of the New Street site, including some taken earlier this year inside the main factory showing the dreadful state of decay and dilapidation now rain water has got into the site though the vandalised roof.

'Marconi's New Street Works, 1912 – 2012. Birthplace of the Wireless Age' by Tim Wander will be available direct from the publishers in mid February – see www.authorsonline.co.uk - and on sale at the Veterans reunion in April. A full review of the book will appear as soon as it is available.

Tim Wander has previously published '2MT Whittle The Birth of British Broadcasting', (1988 and a new rewritten edition in 2010), 'Marconi on the Isle of Wight' (2000 with a new revised edition due out 2012) and 'A Kind of Magic – The Birth of the Wireless Age' – also due out early in 2012. For more information see 2mtwhittle.com.

An outing to the Farnborough Air Show in 1954?



Roger Sweny produced the original of this photo at last year's reunion in the hope that some Veterans might identify more of the Airadio DO, Writtle workshop and admin staff than he has managed so far. Most of the names below have been provided by Geoff Pearce, who believes it was at the start of a visit to the SBAC air show at Farnborough, most likely in 1954.

From Airadio DO: 2 Roger Sweny, 3 Peter Reader, 5 Gordon Harris, 7 Ron Moore, 12 ?Fred Swain?, 14 Geoff Pearce, 15 John Moody, 18 Albert (Steve) Millen, 20 Dick Finch, 21 Ken Bevell, 22 Arthur Wagstaff, 23 Ray Archer, 25 Peter McKenzie 'Ukelele Geordie Pete', 26 Arthur Gosling.

From Writtle workshops and admin: 4, 6, 8, 9, 13 Mrs Fenner, 16, 19 Bill Nurse, 24 Dudley Shearman - Site Secretary and probable trip organiser, 27 John Rash.

Name and department unidentified: 1, 10, 11, 17.

Airadio people make money

Eric Walker

I seem to remember that somebody requested anecdotes about MWT which may be used in a booklet. Here is one that might perhaps cause a ripple or two...

At the time when FN Sutherland (Francis Neil) was General Manager, the top man, Airadio staff were at Basildon. I had occasion to go New Street to discuss where our products were to be manufactured. Green Satin and Blue silk were made at New Street but, because the new designs were small, it was agreed they would be made at Basildon.

Hearing of my visit 'Suthy' invited me to join his lunch-table among his senior managers. There was some banter between the New Street managers about my presence, a stranger.

Suthy sensed this and he thumped on the table and said 'Gentlemen, as I see it I have two parts of my business – the Airadio people who make money, and the rest of you, who don't!'

The lunch continued, with some red faces.

Grandparents' answering machine

Good morning.... At present we are not at home, please choose from one of the following options, or leave a message after you hear the beep....

If you are one of our children, press 1 and then select the option from 1 to 5 in order of 'arrival' so we know who it is.
If you need us to stay with the children, press 2
If you want to borrow the car, press 3
If you want us to wash your clothes and ironing, press 4
If you want the grandchildren to sleep here tonight, press 5
If you want us to pick up the kids at school, press 6
If you want us to prepare a meal for Sunday or to have it delivered to your home, press 7
If you want to come to eat here, press 8
If you need money, press 9
If you are going to invite us to dinner or take us to the theatre then start talking - we are listening !

Beeeeeeppp

Further memories of Yatesbury
From Cyril Taylor, 26 February 2011

I was most interested in the leading article on page one of the latest association newsletter. I do not know if this refers to you or to the editor, Ken Earney. However, I am sure that you will direct it as appropriate. (*My apologies. I don't know whether or not it's accepted journalistic practice, but please assume that any article appearing on the front page without attribution is by the editor.*)

In 1946, during my apprenticeship with the company, I was called up for National Service in the Royal Air Force. During the whole of 1947 I was being trained as a Wireless Fitter, the first six months on 'Basics' at No. 2 Radio School, Yatesbury and the second six months on 'Advanced' at No. 1 Radio School, Cranwell. After training I was posted back to Yatesbury as an instructor (this was the fate of two of us who passed out top!).

For much of my time during 1948 at Yatesbury I was teaching the T1154/R1155 equipment to which you refer. Enclosed is a photograph of my T1154/R1155 laboratory which I took at that time. The photograph was taken on a very cheap camera using the now discontinued 127 film. The original negative is long-lost but I have kept a contact print for the past 62 years or so.

When I returned to the company in 1949 I continued with my apprenticeship and was then employed in Aircraft Test, first at Writtle and then at the old Skating Rink in London Road (now gone). I was working on what was then the last word in aircraft communications equipment; I think it was the AD107. A far cry from the quite primitive T1154/R1155 combination.

By the mid-1950s I had transferred to Marconi College in Arbour Lane as a lecturer and eventually principal lecturer where I stayed until my retirement in 1989. My earlier teaching experience at RAF Yatesbury stood me in good stead.

Another coincidence. After the time when Cyril Taylor was testing AD107s at New Street, I was servicing AD107/114s from our Comet 4s in the Radio Servicing Section at RAF Watton in Norfolk. I can also remember having a visitation from two Marconi Field Support engineers (I later found out they were Eddie Ratcliffe and Phil Flowerday) whilst I was in one of the aircraft, out on the airfield, investigating a problem of tripping supply circuit breakers on the system. It transpired that the diameter of the trunking installed for the cooling air supply was inadequate. Ed.

**A royal visit to New Street, and the Christmas Special**

Charles Boyton

While watching the recent celebrations for the Duke of Edinburgh's 90th birthday on TV, I was reminded of the time he visited Marconi New Street. Marconi had just developed a large-screen colour projector. It was a fearsome device, using three projection tubes (RGB) running at 50kv EHT. These were focussed on to a screen approximately 6ft by 4ft. The development engineers had set up a demo for the Duke in part of the Test Department where I was working at the time.

So that the rest of the department could see what was going on, we installed a monitor in our area and a TV camera in the demo area with one of our lads manning it. The Duke duly arrived, with an entourage of managers and local press.

On our monitor screen, we saw the Duke take a quick look at the screen and then make a beeline towards the temporary partition behind which was the mass of wires and electronics which powered the display, to see how it worked! He had to be tactfully restrained by a manager, who explained it was rather unsafe due to the very high voltages employed!

Our view of the proceedings then became confused as the Duke disappeared and the camera panned rapidly to and fro. We discovered afterwards that there was supposed to be an opportunity for the press and the company photographer to take pictures, but the Duke had other ideas and had pushed our chap out of the way and was using our camera to take pictures of them.

Now writing in the run-up to Christmas 2011, I was reminded of another incident because of all the repeats and specially recorded shows we get on TV at Christmas time.

When I was working in TV Test in the late 1970s, I sometimes used to go out on service visits, and thereby hangs a tale. London Weekend Television operated a small continuity studio on behalf of the British Forces Network in Germany so the lads and lasses could watch their favourite shows. The studio had a Marconi Mk9 camera, and a Mk9 portable camera as standby.

Stan Moore from customer service came to see me with an urgent request to fix the portable camera. He said "I can't understand it, the unions have banned the use of portable cameras. They say they will put the film crews out of work, but they want it put into use". I went up the next day and found it had been switched on every day since being installed, but never used! I spent a while checking it over, and eventually found a faulty component in a board in the control unit. I knew that replacing it would necessitate re-testing the whole board, so made arrangements to take it back to New Street and get it repaired by the night shift.

Continued on next page



Marconi Football Club in the 60s

The lower picture is of the team after winning the Border League cup in 1960/61. MVA treasurer Don Mott is in this photo. He would like some help with the missing names in both pictures.

What is known appears below left. If anyone can help, or wants to contest our belief please get in touch.

Above

Top row: Gordon Blackburn, Dave Dawson, Ray Dixon, ?, Ray Garwood, Eric Lummis, Tony Wade, Cyril Budley, ?.

Bottom row: George Watson, ? Evans, Bob Adams, ? with ?, Don Harper, John 'Inky' Pearce, Frank Gresty, Arthur Webb.

Right

Top row: ?, ?, ?, John Marden, Cyril Budley, Alf Rogie.

Second row: Gordon Blackburn, Ernie Wright, Ray Dixon, Maurice (Morris?) Greenland, Tom Page, Eric Milburn, Dave Dawson, Don Mott, John Pearce, Tommy (Tony?) Wade, ? Holloway, Arthur Webb.

Third row: Fred Jones, Dudley Hull, Arthur Evans, Brian Shelley, Bob Telford, Don Harper, Frank Gresty.

Front row: George Watson, Barry French, Peter Roberts, Bert Harper.



Continued from previous page

As the next day was Friday I hoped to complete the repair early and get away before the rush. I returned the next day, fitted the board, expertly mended and adjusted by the lads on nights. I was relieved to find that the camera was now working fine, and just needed a bit of 'tweaking'. I left it in the hands of the grateful technicians, and got ready to leave.

I was having a coffee in the canteen when someone came rushing in from the studio to say that the camera had suddenly lost one of its three colours! So back I went to do some more fault-finding. Fortunately it was an easy fault to find as the three colour amplifiers were all on one board. The faulty component turned out to be a rare type of diode, and most certainly would not be in their small stock of spares. I told them the bad news.

They urged me to stay on while they tried to locate a supplier for the diode, as they **had** to have the camera for the weekend. They dispatched a courier on a motorcycle to collect the precious spare. It was while we were waiting in the canteen for his return that the penny dropped! It wasn't the company who required the camera, it was the technicians; the very people who had banned its use!

It had become the custom among the various ITV stations to make their own Christmas show. The technical staff made and recorded a short comedy show to be seen only by them, while the viewers were watching 'Morecambe and Wise' etc. They competed with the other stations for the prize for best show. Obviously it is difficult to make a show using only one camera! Fortunately this tale has a happy ending, as the part duly arrived, and the camera was working once again. Everyone was happy, except me, as I had to make my way home in the Friday rush hour.

Paul William 'Bill' Gibbs, 1922 - 2009**This brief biography was provided by Bill Gibbs' daughter, Pauline Harrowell**

Born in South London on the 2nd March 1922 to wealthy parents, Bill and his sister enjoyed a privileged upbringing with a governess until their parents split up in 1928. The unfortunate children, having been abandoned, were separated and spent an unhappy time in care whilst their father, originally from Herefordshire, began a new life as a schoolmaster in Kent and their mother, from Yorkshire, reinvented herself as a spinster and worked until her retirement for the Post Office Telecommunications in London, spurning all the attempts her children made to re-establish contact in later life.

The children were eventually taken by their father to Woolwich where he found - rather by chance - a wonderful foster family for them. This was a warm, loving working-class family who already had three children of their own but still found room in their home for two more. Bill's foster father was an active trade unionist and his influence was lasting. Bill and his sister thrived in this very different world where, instead of the private education they had been prepared for, they attended the local school. Bill left school at the age of 14 and took a job as an office boy with a firm in the City.

With the outbreak of the war, he volunteered for the Royal Navy and trained as a Wireless Telegraphist, the first steps in the career he was to follow throughout his working life. In February 1942, his wartime career took a dramatic turn when his ship, *Arbutus*, was torpedoed while on convoy duty in the North Atlantic. He was 19 at the time. Luckily after many hours on a life raft in the freezing water of the Atlantic he was picked up by another convoy vessel. The rest of his wartime service was spent in the warmer waters of the Mediterranean, the Adriatic and Africa.

Peacetime saw Bill using his skills learned in the navy at the REME workshops in Woolwich where he worked repairing radios. It was there that he met Doris Amphlett. They married, set up home together and not long after daughter Pauline was born. Hearing that there were job opportunities for technicians at Marconi in Chelmsford that brought with them the chance of a new house in Basildon New Town, Bill and Doris took the plunge and became 'New Town Pioneers'. He worked hard professionally, eventually becoming a senior test engineer in avionics and working on projects like the Harrier. He retired in 1987.

He had a variety of interests. As well as being a keen gardener producing both fruit and vegetables on his allotment and in his garden Bill was an accomplished amateur brewer and country wine maker. He brought his technological methods, thoroughness and attention to detail into play at every turn and, as a member of the local horticultural society, regularly carried off trophies at the annual show. His elderflower wine was the stuff of legend. He was also a gifted watercolourist.

Bill was very active in his community - repairing talking book equipment for blind people, serving on neighbourhood committees, being an active member of his horticultural club, his art circle and a well-loved member of his local church. When Doris died suddenly in 2000, Bill, who had never cooked before, turned his hand to the kitchen and was soon producing meals that Doris, who was a fantastic cook, would have been proud of.

Diagnosed with cancer of the oesophagus in 2007, Bill fought the disease whilst continuing to live his normal lifestyle, attending church activities, painting, gardening and visiting the Marconi Social Club. He died peacefully at home, in his sleep, on 22nd December 2009. He is survived by his daughter Pauline and two grandchildren, Elly and Alex.

**Alice Elizabeth Shedd****From Liz Harrold, née Shedd, 25 February 2011**

Ibelieve that my paternal grandmother Mrs Alice Elizabeth Shedd of Manton, Rainsford Lane, Chelmsford was an ex-employee. I wonder if this was the case? If so are there any records remaining. She died in 1980 aged 80. As my father has dementia I am putting together a family history on his behalf. Any information would be welcomed.

Our records for Marconi Veterans show a Mrs A Shedd as being employed by the then Marconi's Wireless Telegraph Company from 1922. Veterans had to have worked for 25 years to qualify so she would still have been employed by Marconi in 1947.

Liz Harrold was directed for further information to company archives held at the Bodleian Library, but warned about the earlier lack of success of some enquirers.

In memoriam

We report the death of those Veterans notified to the secretary from the copy date of the last newsletter to the 31st January 2012. We extend our sympathy to the families of those mentioned.

RC Allen, WVR Barbone OBE, RC Baxter, JV Beard, J Bibby, DG Blair, WK Claydon, Mrs ND Collison, MJ Court, JR Crockett, A Dawson, EA Drewery, GT Edwards, H Elliott, DH Evans, H Fitton, PW Gibbs, WD Godden, JB Haines, CA Hale, AF Hart, RJ Hawes, PJ Heffer, TA Lavin, MA Lawrence, GCR MacDonald, CAR Mackley, AF Mayhew, PCJ Milton, DJ Mumford, LG Murdy, PJ Murray, L Norton, R O'Neil MBE, TC Pennock, RS Purdy, RC Seaton, AB Sievewright, P Slade, GH Thompson, H Thurgood, JT Turley, HA Waller, Mrs ME Wolfe, RFW Wright, E Zaremba.