

Should I go back?

Another fourteen page edition this year. At the last committee meeting at the beginning of December I reported that I appeared not to have enough material even for twelve pages due to a lack of contributions. I needn't have worried. Regrettably though, despite the appeal in the last edition, nothing from lady veterans.

As an ex-Avionics man I'm very pleased to have two or, stretching a point three, items on aeronautically related subjects. And that prompts me to digress a little – I beg your indulgence but the end point probably chimes with many of you.

In the 60s a popular local trio, Talisman, entertained audiences in Essex and beyond with a mix of songs, much of it their own material with folk/jazz/blues/cabaret influences, with purely acoustic guitar and bass accompaniment. I think they appeared before audiences at the MASC on a number of occasions. Who remembers Chessy Harrington's rendering of Piaf's 'Non, je ne regrette rien'? Anyway, one of their numbers, entitled 'Never try to go back' told of the likely disappointment for anyone attempting to revisit the fondly remembered places of their earlier years.

I share with a handful of other Veterans the interesting experience of having been stationed at RAF Watton in Norfolk in the 50s. During WW2 it had been the home of RAF and USAAF units, the latter a maintenance unit responsible for repairing battle-damaged Liberators from surrounding operational bases. In my time it was the Central Signals Establishment, involved in cold war signals intelligence and countermeasures activities, flying a motley variety of interesting aircraft.

Regularly holidaying on the North Norfolk coast from the 60s onwards, my wife and I detoured that way to have look whilst returning home in 1993. The old place was there much as I remembered it, but in the guardroom local enthusiasts had set up a very good museum, devoted at that time principally to its WW2 history. They intended later to widen the collection to cover the cold war period. The visit brought back a number of fond memories.

Forward to 2009, again after a holiday in Salthouse, we returned for another look, and to see the museum's new material. Disaster, the guardroom was no more and whole area was a very sizeable housing development. The former pattern of internal roads had been incorporated into the layout of the estate, bearing names like Mosquito Close and Liberator Avenue, but otherwise it was unrecognisable. It was of course a very appropriate use of what had become a brown-field site. We have to move on, but it caused me a moment or two of sadness.

The moral is, think carefully before you decide to go back, but if you must, do a little homework first of all – a spur-of-the-moment visit might bring disappointment.

Congratulations to...

...Phil Robinson, CBE

Phil Robinson, Senior Vice President of SELEX Communications, was awarded a CBE in the June 2009 Queen's Birthday Honours List for services to the defence industry. Phil joined the Marconi Company in 1968, working initially at Baddow in Satellite Communications engineering. In 1982 he moved to MCSL to lead a large development group, then moved progressively through more commercial roles and was involved in a number of organisational restructurings. He managed the integration of Marconi Selenia with the communications business of BAE Systems to form Selex Communications in 2004/2005 and has held the position of Senior Vice President of Selex since then.



The following message was sent to him by Peter Turrall on the 24th June on behalf of the Association "I have only just heard that you have been awarded a CBE in the Queens Birthday Honours List. Many congratulations, and on behalf of the Marconi Veterans' Association, we are delighted this award has been made to you."



...Stan Church, MBE

Stan Church, formerly Manager, Spares and Repairs, MCSL, was awarded the MBE in the New Year Honours list for voluntary service to conservation in Essex. Stan retired in 1982 and has been volunteering with BTCV Essex for many years, working on Galleywood Common and at the Essex Wildlife Trust Reserve at Hanningfield. He is also a member of the Chelmsford Cycling Action Group which campaigns for improved facilities for cyclists in the Chelmsford area.

Photo of Stan courtesy of the British Trust for Conservation Volunteers.

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 in this issue, particularly on this and the next page, are responses to letters or articles appearing in the 2009 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.

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

More reports of social and cultural activities please

From Alan Hartley-Smith, June 2009

Many thanks for the set of newsletters received today - I've just scanned through the lot and totally disappeared down memory lane!

It is a good happen-stance that first I discovered MOGS and then that I could now join the Veterans having previously missed out on the 25 year rule. I hope to contribute some reminiscences of my technical career (I worked one-on-one with RF O'Neill, and with Roy Simons at Baddow) and I have some related souvenirs. Unfortunately I relatively recently passed on some stuff to the RAF ADRM at Neatishead, so you may care to contact them to at least be aware of what they have, and incidentally, a link-up with them could be a useful attribute (see www.radarmuseum.co.uk) as much Marconi equipment is installed and demonstrated there, so well worth an article. I noted that an item by Roy on the DH&D Labs at Baddow is in the contributions backlog, which could be associated with this.

Could I suggest that, as mention has already been made of two extra-mural activities, namely sailing and bowls, others could also be featured, as Marconi folk both in the many clubs within the MASC and round the town contributed more than generally appreciated to the cultural and social life of Chelmsford - in my case it was through the Marconi Dramatic Society (mention of Joan Wrigley stirred that memory - she was Secretary in my time). I still have posters, programmes and other bits and pieces that could go to the museum, and I know other members are still around. Also, several of us contributed considerably to the Chelmsford Arts Festival's fifteen year run, another unique event for which I still have records.

Wartime work at Marconi's, Chelmsford

From David Townsend, Doncaster, November 2009

Can anyone help with David Townsend's appeal. The book 'Marconi at war' has already been recommended to him.

My mother Dorothy Lewis was sent to work at the Marconi factory in Chelmsford during the war (1942 I think) when she turned 18 years old.

She has recently expressed a desire to find any information of life at home during the war and I have been looking into this. I am writing to you in the hope you may be able

to point out some documentation such as a book or booklet or even film which may specifically include the vital work carried out by people such as 'Mum' during those desperate times in our recent history.

You may contact me via email at davidlt@talktalk.net
Many thanks for your help.

EMI Tower

From John Pearce, March 2009

Re the article by Arthur Barton in number 11, I worked at EMI from 1953 to 63 and knew the tower well. We were told that it was used as a practice bomb-aiming target for the H-bombers forming our nuclear deterrent. This caused some anxiety whenever a con-trail appeared!

Can any ex-H-bomber crew member corroborate this tale? Ed

Postscript to the EMI Tower article

From Arthur Boyd-Barton

I worked at Marconi Basildon for 23 years as Barton, retiring in August 1990. Family history searches linked me to Charles Boyd, Surveyor General of Customs, died 1857. There is an electrical connection too, all great-great-grandfather's belongings were lost en-route to London due to a lightning strike (nothing to do with trade unions). Best wishes to those who remember me.

Memories of Building 46

From Tony Curtis, 27 February 2009

I was surprised and delighted to see my memories of the time spent with the Marconi Company, Chelmsford, included in the 2009 Newsletter. I take great personal satisfaction in being lucky to have been associated with the engineers I worked with there.

Corrections to the 2009 edition

Do you remember John Scarlett... page 3, last line, the telephone number lacked a digit - the correct number is 01621 853841; **Dimming the lights in Building 46**, page 8, last sentence omit 'be'; **Marconi's telegraph station at Derrygimlagh**, page 3, picture caption, second line, second word is he, not here; Chelmsford Museum, page 12, first sentence, replace *an new built* by *a new extension built*.

Arnold Weinstock and Brian Skingley From Prof Bernard de Neumann, Feb 2009

Anyone's management style should not be above criticism and making official oral reports should never be an easy ride. I too, in common with Keith Chittenden and John Williams, think that Weinstock's strategy was not the best, but one has to admit that it did work, which is more than can be said for that of Simpson, Hurn and Mayo whose joint unfettered ambitions and deceptions destroyed Marconi plc. During Weinstock's time the City was reportedly envious of GEC's carefully accumulated and nurtured large hoard of cash which Simpson et al set about squandering.

Tony Curtis's piece 'Dimming the lights on Building 46' reminded me that I did some mathematical work for Brian Skingley on multi-channel communication channels, which eventually led to the computer software MODSIM. MODSIM (Modulation Simulator), developed at Gt Baddow, was widely used around Marconi/GEC and was one of the first 'engineering software' systems to utilize the Fast Fourier Transform algorithm.

Did the company use Maldon West station as a store? From Brian Pask, Ilford, January 2010

I am at present working on articles for publication by the Great Eastern Railway Society on the railway from Maldon to Woodham Ferrers and have come across a reference to your company using the disused station buildings at Maldon West for storage. Is it possible to confirm from your records that this use did in fact take place? If so, could you say roughly when this was? It must have been some time between 1939, when Maldon West station closed to passengers, and early 1954, when the buildings were demolished. Could you also confirm whether it was the platform buildings or the booking office at street level which were used, or both?

Barry Powell has explained to Brian Pask that, because of the company's convoluted history due to mergers, restructuring and so on over the years it is highly unlikely that records of this time exist, except perhaps in the memories of some Veterans. Would anyone who can help please contact Mr Pask, through Barry Powell in the first instance?

Register of Veterans

The website now carries continuously updated lists of Veterans, living and deceased. Have a look at them and let the secretary know the names of any individuals you believe to be incorrectly listed.

Thanks to Friend Mike Plant for contacting Barry in June last year with details of a number of individuals known to him who were wrongly classified. This demonstrates that the new system seems to be working.

SWBs Galore From Ron Kitchen

I noticed the reference to these in the Newsletter. When I passed out from RAF Cranwell and was posted to RAF West Drayton, I had the job of testing SWBs in vehicles. It seemed to be a bad choice of location for high capital cost equipment with Doodlebugs and their successors being around in that area. We had a gun on the HQ roof but it was never manned as a successful hit might have proved to be a massive own goal! As it happened, in my time there the nearest one was a quarter of a mile away. My next contact with SWBs was when I was posted to Egypt (El Hagg) where we had two underground stations. I was involved in the one which had both the SWBs (I think SWB 10 but my memory is not reliable), and the installation was used with teleprinter circuits. We also had aircraft channels using American lower power equipment. Every time we had a sandstorm, the American equipment went into what we called hysterics - and often incurred damage. The SWB carried on without a problem - in fact the only problem was occasional excessive local temperature - red line operating!



On leaving the RAF after 14 years and joining Marconi I found myself again involved with transmitters of all sorts, this time from the radiation safety point of view. This included visiting quite a few customers' premises.

There has been quite a lot about SWBs in a number of issues of the newsletter. For all you non-Comms folk, like me, who are not all that sure what the SWB is, above is a photo of one (from the RAF Museum, Henlow's collection). This model is the SWB 8. SWB, for short waveband transmitter - affectionately known as the 'Swab' - whose model numbers ran into the high 'teens from the original designed in the 1920s by CS Franklin. The SWB sold in its hundreds to civil and military customers worldwide. It was a staple product contributing to the company's success over many years. A Marconi icon. Ed.

Max Stothard

Veterans who remember Max Stothard may be interested to read the current (Winter 2009) issue of Granta Magazine, online link - <http://www.granta.com/Magazine/Granta-109-Work/Essex-Clay/1> - which has a memoir of him and the early days of the Marconi estate from a book by his son Sir Peter Stothard 'On The Spartacus Road', published recently - <http://www.amazon.co.uk/Spartacus-Road-Spectacular-Journey-Through/dp/0007340788>

I find television very educating. Every time somebody turns on the set, I go into the other room and read a book. Groucho Marx

News from the secretary

18 months! - Where did that go? It doesn't seem that long since I retired.

The death of my father in October and getting Mum through it took up the rest of the year. 2009 was mainly spent tidying up her home so she could sell up and move onto Canvey, near us. Pretty brave for someone of 89! We did, however, find the time for a few visits to our caravan. We find Norfolk so relaxing, just a few days leaves us feeling quite refreshed. Here's hoping 2010 will let me slow down (some hope!).

The Photo CDs were a phenomenal success, selling nearly 200 - about double my expectations - your response made all the work Eric and I did, sorting out the photos and designing the insert/label, well worthwhile. And an important word of thanks to Margaret (Eric's wife) and Chris (my wife) for their invaluable help. Also thanks to Mike Plant, Mel McGann and Eldred Owen for allowing us to include their photographs.

I have just updated my PC and, hopefully, it will make things easier dealing with reunion ticket applications and keeping the membership records up to date. Again, thanks to my wife for her patience with me as, every time I use my computer, she loses half the workspace in our kitchen.

If you know of an ex-Marconi employee who does not receive the newsletter please urge them to contact me as soon as possible. It may be that they have moved or not replied to a confirmation request of a few years ago. Or that they left with 21 to 24 years service and have now become Veterans by virtue of the 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. It has been well received with around 15 members so far.

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 from SELEX Communications and can be contacted at the address below.

Finally, I would like to wish you all a very prosperous 2010 and hope to see as many of you as possible at the reunion.

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

BAE Pensions

We recently received the following email from one of our Veterans. The letter, and an initial comment below it in italic, has already been posted on the MVA website.

I was contacted in November last year by BAE Pensions (Xchanging) to be informed that they have found in an audit that they have made an error in calculating my pension which I took out 3 years ago. As a result I have been asked to repay approximately £3,000 and take a drop in my monthly pension by £30 per month.

I believe that there may be other pensioners that will be in a similar situation and I'd like to try to contact them.

It is difficult to try to take professional advice on such a sum as the costs would far exceed the amounts involved. So far I am dealing with The Pensions Advisory Service who are being helpful in trying to understand how such errors happen? (Apparently they are not uncommon!)

I am in the process of contacting all and sundry to seek assistance so if you have contacts on the BAE Pension Scheme I'd be most grateful. As the old Marconi Pension has been absorbed by so many other companies it is more complicated than many.

I am wondering if you might be able to assist please?
Thanking you in advance.

In the present circumstances it is impossible for the Marconi Veterans' Association to offer any direct assistance in this matter. We have no legal expertise within the organisation. However, if other Veterans have had similar problems with the BAE Pension Scheme it may be that a small group acting together could achieve a satisfactory solution to the problem.

If anyone with a similar problem would like to contact us we will put you all in contact with each other.

Marconi Old Geezers Society - MOGS

This item was posted on the website last July

We have been advised by the moderator, Ian Gillis, about the above society. It is an informal group of ex-Marconi employees who may not all be Veterans. They run a forum on Yahoo that can be accessed at <http://finance.groups.yahoo.com/group/mogs/> and where more details of the society can be found.

From the point of view of meetings it will be of particular interest to those living in Chelmsford and district but their forum is open to people worldwide.

If you are logged in to the forum there are some good photos of the 2007 Veterans' reunion in the photos section.

Marconi prominent in Chelmsford Museum extension

Last year's newsletter reported the plans for an extension to Chelmsford Museum in Oaklands Park. The formal opening of the new extension by Sir Andrew Motion, last years Poet Laureate, took place on 22nd January and featured all the Chelmsford industries - Marconi, Hoffmann, Cromptons and Christy Bros - in the new Bright Sparks gallery.

To the fore is an excellent display of Marconi cameras, transmitters and other items of equipment which cover the manufacture in Chelmsford over the last hundred years. In addition there are voice recordings on the opening of the Chelmsford and London Wireless Stations which were to be the founding stones of the British Broadcasting Company (later the British Broadcasting Corporation), and recordings of the first broadcasters, as well as other well known Marconi personnel. The displays include items from the museum at Sandford Mill, and a few artefacts loaned from the Marconi collection at the Museum of History of Science in Oxford.

Museum hours: Mondays - Saturdays - 10am to 5pm, Sundays 1pm - 4pm: tel: 01245 605700: www.chelmsford.goc.uk/museums

International Marconi Day at Sandford Mill, Chelmsford, Saturday 24th April 2010, entrance free, 10am to 5pm



This annual event commemorates Marconi's birthday. It's the chance to visit Marconi collections including the ship's radio room and the exhibition in the Marconi Writtle broadcasting hut, from where the first broadcasts were made in 1922. The Chelmsford Amateur Radio Society members operate a number of stations at the site throughout the day, the contacts worked by them being of particular interest to the youngsters, who are much in evidence.

Stow Maries aerodrome

In May 2009 RS Performance, a bespoke performance car and engine constructor, approached MVA for assistance. Originally located at Hoddesdon, Herts, it had recently acquired and moved its business to the former WW1 RAF aerodrome site at Stow Maries, between Maldon and South Woodham Ferrers. This airfield was in its short life (1916-1919) home to 37 (Home Defence) Squadron, Royal Flying Corps and then, after 1st April 1918, 37 Squadron, Royal Air Force. The partners in the business, Russell Savory and Steve Wilson, have a long-standing interest in aviation history and a wish to restore the site as near as possible to its WW1 condition as an historical and wildlife centre. On completion, towards the end of 2010, it is planned that there will be a museum with full-time curator, guided tours and lectures on the site's history, and a visitor centre for the study of local nature and wildlife.

The approach to the MVA was to ask if we can help with anything in the way of information, documents or artefacts that might be put on display either on temporary loan or permanently, showing a Marconi connection with the site. Our limited enquiries have not yet yielded any such connection. Chris Gardiner dipped into WJ Baker's 1971 book 'The History of the Marconi Company'; it seems the use of radio in WW1 was quite significant. By the end of 1915 Marconi was manufacturing transmitting sets for aircraft weighing only 20 pounds. About this time some Marconi engineers were given commissions in the RFC to assist with the radios' use. By the end of the war the RFC had 600 aeroplanes fitted with radio and 1000 ground stations, and telephony was introduced around 1915 or 1916 for air-to-air transmission. This was only one way, from the leader to his wing, and was partly because of the need for speed of command and partly because the pilot could not manoeuvre the aircraft and operate a Morse key at the same time.

There is reference to 39 Squadron being transferred from North Weald to Biggin Hill in 1917 and the squadron wireless officer, FS Mockford, having to fit the aircraft with radios and train the crews in their use. The Stow Maries website mentions that its squadron, no.37, relocated from Stow Maries to Biggin Hill in March 1919. No reference is made of radios but it seems likely that between 1917 and 1919 all the aircraft in 37 and 39 squadrons would have had radios fitted. FS Mockford joined the Marconi Company after WW1. No mention in any of this of specific Marconi equipment however.

RS Performance has been made aware of our support to the Sandford Mill industrial museum when questions of where to donate archive material arise, and the Marconi archive/Oxford Science Museum situation has been explained to them. That said, if any veteran feels able to help RS Performance in any way would they please get in touch directly with Ivor Dallinger, Curator, Stow Maries Aerodrome, Cold Norton, Essex. Mobile - 07816997125 email - curator@stowmaries.com



Anyone interested should look at their informative website, www.stowmaries.com

Sopwith Pup image Mark McEwan and Airlines.net

Some rather interesting and, at times, hair-raising events

By Ray Walls and Peter Burlong; ex Airborne Navigation Aids Development.

In the early 1960s, the Aeronautical Division (as it then was) of The Marconi Company developed the world's most successful and widely used civil Doppler Navigation System – the AD 560. The first customer was BOAC for its Vickers VC-10 and Super VC-10 fleets. Subsequently it saw service with some thirty-five other long-haul airlines including QANTAS, Air New Zealand and South African Airways in Boeing 707 and Douglas DC-8 aircraft. A high-speed variant, capable of operating at Mach 2.0, was fitted to the prototypes of the BAC/Aerospatiale Concorde.



Prior to entry into service the division carried out extensive flight trials to confirm the accuracy of the distance flown and velocity measurements, the lock/unlock performance over smooth surfaces such as a flat calm sea and the overall system accuracy, including the Track-Guide Computer.

The aircraft used for these trials was a Vickers Viking 1B, G-AHOP shown left. This was a civil derivative of the WW2 Wellington bomber designed by Barnes-Wallis.

The trials team, in addition to the two pilots, comprised an observer, a camera operator and four or five engineers to operate recording equipment and take notes of the system's performance. As flying at very low altitudes (typically 500ft) could be turbulent, a prime requirement was a strong stomach.

The tests to confirm the accuracy of the distance flown and velocity measurements were carried out along an 18nm straight stretch of canal (the Bedford Levels) from Earith in Cambridgeshire to Denver Sluice near Downham Market in Norfolk. Easily identifiable 'fix' points (intersections of roads or the railway with the canal) at the start and end of the run and at seven intermediate points were established. These 'fixes' were photographed using a single-lens reflex camera coupled to a drift-sight that looked vertically downwards from the aircraft. The system output a pulse every 0.1 nautical mile. These pulses were recorded on paper tape together with a pulse from the flash contacts of the camera. Thus we were able to determine accurately the distance measured by the system between fixes. The photographs were compared to large-scale maps to determine the accuracy of the fixes and these, in turn, enabled us to correct the recordings on the paper tapes. A typical fix point as seen through the drift sight is shown on the right.

In order to investigate 'height-holes', a phenomenon of the frequency modulated continuous wave (fmcw) techniques employed by AD 560, a series of runs was carried out at altitudes between 500ft and 1500ft at 100ft increments, ie out at 500ft, back at 600ft, and so on. The aircraft was not equipped with a radar altimeter so in order to determine our altitude accurately we sought to make the best use of the data available to us. We concluded that the optimum method was to use the geometry of the camera/drift-sight combination together with the width of the roads at the fix points to calculate the aircraft's altitude. In order to facilitate this, a young engineer, armed with a surveyor's tape, was despatched to Norfolk on a Saturday morning to measure the width of all the roads and bridges at the desired locations. Fortunately in those days traffic in rural Norfolk was pretty light!



The flights were seldom uneventful and were subject to some rather interesting and, at times, hair-raising events. As the northern end of the canal, near Downham Market, was fairly close to the approach path into RAF Marham and the southern to RAF Wyton, it was sometimes necessary to effect a sharp left-hand turn after making the final fix in order to avoid aircraft landing at the bases. On one occasion we weren't quite quick enough and the aircraft was thrown about quite violently. On looking out of a side window, one of the engineers noticed a Victor bomber crossing our path UNDERNEATH us! On another occasion, we broke cloud near Marham and observed a battery of Bloodhound anti-aircraft missiles tracking us. We never discovered if they were serious or just practising!

There were lighter moments. One day in early February, we had planned a series of flights and the aircraft was waiting at Southend airport. Unfortunately the land around the canal was flooded which meant that we would be unable to identify our fix points; we had to find an alternative location. We consulted the maps and found a straight stretch of road across the Fens from Ring's End to Peakirk just northeast of Peterborough. On our first run, flying at 500ft, we saw a truck coming towards us along the road. Something must have distracted the driver (a large aeroplane bearing down on him at 500ft perhaps?), as on our return run we passed his truck lying in a ditch!

Finally we checked the complete system. The chosen route started overhead Chelmsford Cathedral and finished over the Happisburgh lighthouse on the north-east Norfolk coast. The pilot was asked to fly a straight line using a meter displaying guidance information generated by the Track-Guide Computer (exactly the same information as would ultimately be sent to an

autopilot). The cloud base was around 3000ft. We took a fix on the Cathedral at 2500ft then climbed above the cloud to around 4500ft. When the computer warned us that we had less than 10nm to run to our destination, we descended and broke cloud at around 2000ft. And there, right on the nose was the Happisburgh lighthouse!

In March 1964, we participated in BOAC's route proving trials with the VC-10. This involved the Division having an engineer on board every flight that BOAC made; to places such as Lagos and Kano in Nigeria, Khartoum in the Sudan and across the Atlantic to Montreal. The prototype VC-10, G-ARTA, is pictured right taking off from the Vickers airfield at Wisley.

The trials were not just aimed at testing the aeroplane but all of its on-board systems. This meant that, generally, two complete crews, cabin staff as well as flight deck crew, were carried. All personnel on board, contractors representatives as well as the airline's stand-by crew, were given a full cabin service just as if we were fare-paying passengers.



As we have said, the purpose of the flights was to check out and prove all of the on-board systems. In our case that meant noting the accuracy against ground-based aids such as radio beacons and recording other parameters such as signal-to-noise ratio and if, and when, the system unlocked when flying over calm water or desert.

Finally we had to determine that the system could be coupled to the aircraft's autopilot. This meant spending several hours in the radio bay, situated under the floor of the forward galley, with a tape recorder (see left) recording the electrical signals that would ultimately be fed to the autopilot enabling the aircraft to fly accurately from waypoint to waypoint.

The VC-10 made its first fare-paying flight from London to Lagos on the 29th April 1964. It remained in service until 1981 and, in 2009, still held the record for the fastest crossing of the Atlantic by a sub-sonic transport aircraft.



G-ARTA taking off from Wisley in August 1962. Photo courtesy of P Robinson (copyright BAE-SYSTEMS) and Jelle Hieminga (www.vc10.net)

The Birth of British Radar: The Memoirs of Arnold 'Skip' Wilkins

A number of radar Veterans may well be familiar with this book by Colin Latham and Ann Dobbs, published in 2006, and may be interested to know that Colin is now engaged upon the revision of the first edition. This time on his own, since sadly Ann, his wife and co-author, died in 2008. I contacted him to get a little more information on what additional material the second edition will contain, and this is what he gave me:

I have now completed all the new text and obtained a number of new illustrations which, together, will make the new version about double the size of the first.

The essential core of the book - Arnold's memoirs - remains intact but there are several new sections covering his life both before and after the war, and a description of how the UK radar chain expanded, plus a brief history of the Radio Research Station whence Wilkins and Watson Watt (and others) were recruited for radar in the early days. The book also includes - perhaps for modern readers unfamiliar with the background of radar technology - an attempt to place Wilkins's work in its historical setting. His successful CH early-warning radar system for the RAF was a major milestone in established radio engineering. It is said to have contributed to the RAF's success in the Battle of Britain and thus Hitler's cancellation of his plan to invade the UK in 1940.

Having completed my task of preparing Edition 2 the responsibility now rests with other DEHS (Defence Electronics History Society) members who deal with contractual matters with chosen publishers. I can't give you a publication date at the moment except to say that it is our intention for it be during 2010.

Defence Electronics History Society

The Defence Electronics History Society is likely to be of interest to Veterans who haven't already come across it. It focusses on the development of electronics as applied to the defence of the United Kingdom and other countries over a period which will coincide with the careers of many Veterans.

The society has a web site www.dehs.org.uk that gives an outline of the organisation. While the site does not include archive material, it does list recent Transmission Lines newsletter articles and a range of DEHS publications. The contents of these publications cover UK and overseas defence electronics activities from WW1, through the Cold War, to recent times. All DEHS publications and events are available to non-members, although DEHS would welcome Marconi Veterans to join. DEHS and colleagues from IET and IEEE are hosting CAVMAG 2010 - an international conference on the origins and evolution of the cavity magnetron - at Bournemouth University on 19/20 April 2010 - see www.cavmag2010.org.uk for details and to book.

Wartime Marconi Memoirs

John Brown, ex-Comms Division Design Office

On leaving school in 1942 (half way through WW2) at the age of seventeen I moved from my home near Marlborough, Wiltshire, to Chelmsford to take a course in radio engineering. I did this with a view to doing a few months work at the Marconi Wireless Telegraph Company before joining the RAF. Things didn't work out quite as planned, and much to my dismay at the time, I failed the RAF medical. Consequently 'those few months' at the Marconi Company turned out to be just over forty five years.

The remainder of the war years were spent in Receiver Test, mostly testing, calibrating and fault finding on maritime receivers and direction finding equipment. The tuned circuits those days were notoriously unstable and variations in the parameters of the thermionic valves added to the necessity to individually calibrate each receiver, the tuning scales were then engraved or in some cases hand-written in black ink on tubular white scales.

I was 'billeted' in a home where there was no bathroom. Another colleague suffered the same problem, so we met up during the week to enjoy a bath and a game of billiards at the Social Club which was situated above the canteen in the building next to the New Street railway bridge. There were frequent air-raid warnings but mercifully few actual air raids. On one such occasion my friend and I were in adjacent baths when the siren sounded and instead of dressing and rushing to the air-raid shelter we decided to stay put. This time the emergency was real and all the lights were switched off. I cannot remember just how long my friend and I were left soaking in our baths in utter darkness, waiting for the all clear to sound.

About the same time I was a member of the works fire brigade. There were some duties when we remained on the premises and others when we were 'on call' should the siren sound. One night in the small hours the siren sounded and I crawled out of bed to make the five minute cycle ride to New Street. There had been a string of incendiary bombs dropped across the works and the Fire Chief (Bill Mundy) ordered me to 'keep an eye on' one which was harmlessly burning itself out in the cycle sheds. When everyone was happy that there were no fires still burning we met in the canteen for a 'char and wad' before being sent home for the remaining few hours of the night.

Arriving for work at 8.30am we were astonished to find a large hole in the canteen roof which must have been burning merrily away while we were enjoying our cuppas down below.

The fire brigade was not normally allowed to operate outside of the works premises, but when Archer's suet factory across the road caught fire so spectacularly (*Apparently even Lord Haw Haw reported it. Ed.*), rules were ignored and we assisted the town brigade. Ever afterwards if any item of equipment went missing it was always said to be 'lost in the Suet Factory'.

A mostly enjoyable National Service, thanks to Marconi training

Charles Boyton, ex TV Test, New Street

I hope this contribution is usable as it not so much about my Marconi experience, as how my time as a Marconi apprentice greatly improved my National Service in the RAF. Incidentally, regarding your request for more contributions to the 'Book of Memories', I have previously submitted several items to earlier issues of the Newsletter and would be happy for these to be included in the book.

During my time at Marconi's, several of my colleagues were ex-RAF, and their time in the service gave them a good grounding for their work in civvy street. Well, my Marconi apprenticeship gave me the same advantage when I did my National Service. Although I was a craft apprentice, my passion was radio and I was fortunate to spend the last nine months of my time in Building 46. My call-up was deferred until I completed my apprenticeship in October 1954, at the age of 21. I found being that bit older helped me to cope better with service life.

The next bit of good fortune came when I went for my job interview during 'square bashing' at RAF Hednesford on Cannock Chase. This interview determined whether you ended up as a cook or a clerk. When my interviewer found out that I had been a Marconi apprentice, he told me that I could take a trade test, and if successful I would be a Ground Wireless Fitter, with the rank of Junior Technician. He was very enthusiastic about Marconi's as he had dealings with the company. I omitted to tell him that I had been indentured as an instrument maker, or I would have probably ended up as an airframe mechanic or something!

His problem, however, was that he did not have the facilities at Hednesford for me to take the test, which should have been offered to me while at Cardington when I collected my kit, so he placed me on a radar mechanics course and told me to apply for the trade test as soon as I arrived.

And so, after a welcome home leave at Christmas, I arrived at RAF Locking near Weston-super-Mare in January 1955. The mild Somerset weather was a welcome change from the bleak cold of Cannock Chase. I promptly applied for and got my trade test. Fortunately it was the multiple-choice variety. There were two papers, one theory and one on the equipment. I knew enough to pick the right answers on the theory, but as I hadn't seen the transmitters etc yet, much less worked on them, this

Continued on page 9

M

Everything in those days was live

Here are two of five photos found by Terence Pegram in a local junk shop. He sent them to me in April 2009 thinking that they might be of interest to Newsletter readers. At the time he thought they related to one of TDU's demonstrations, and noted that a young Cliff Michelmore was identifiable in two of the pictures. He finally managed to track down one of the people in the group photograph - Martyn Clarke - who has supplied the following information. Ed.



All the photos tie together, taken in 1957 at the Marconi Studio in London. I worked on the programme doing both sound and telecine, everything in those days was live (no video tape then) which made things very interesting. The bosses at TV Centre never saw what was going to happen until we went live and then it was too late.

Picture 3, the group (below - on the back is written Eric, Arthur, Ross, Martin and Ted) shows Ross Isles, second from left, who went to Australia in late 50s, and Arthur Kemp, third from left, who went on to do studio installations in Cyprus and was very proud of bullet holes in his car he collected during the conflicts. I am the fourth from the left. Of the other two guys, the Christian names are familiar but I can't remember the surnames. We also used guys from Radar as they had video experience.

Picture 1 (of a bank of monitors, not included here, which has 'Neds Pantry' written on the back) shows the monitors in Production Control and the 'Ned' reference on the back refers to Ned Sherrin who was a trainee director/producer working under Donald Baverstock. He went on to be involved in shows like 'That Was The Week That Was' and many others. (In recent times he was the presenter of Loose Ends on Radio 4 on Saturday evenings until his death a couple of years ago)



Picture 2 is the party at Studio M for the last time we did Tonight on 15th November 1957 (not included here).

Pictures 4&5 are of the Tonight programme in our studio. The mic boom operator is Martin Boothman, another Marconi apprentice. The Cameras are Mk 3s. (Only picture 4 is included, above right, and shows Cliff Michelmore on the right of the set.)

I have a very rough video copy of the last night we did for Tonight. Initially we were going to do 6 weeks but landed up doing 9 months.

We had a very nice letter from the Tonight team saying how much they missed being at Studio M and were now not so free, being at Lime Grove and the top brass monitoring them all the time.

If anyone would like to see the three pictures which have not been included please get in touch. Ed.

Continued from page 8

paper was a little tricky! In fact it was almost total guesswork. I passed with almost full marks on the theory and about half marks on the equipment, which the examiner said was the opposite to most of the students on the course.

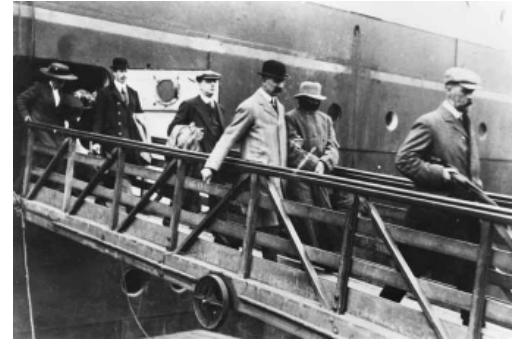
Next I was given a practical test. For this, I was left alone in a classroom with a transmitter and an Air Ministry publication (handbook). I had to find the faults that the instructor had put on it and get it fully working. He came back after a couple of hours and wanted to know why I was taking so long. I showed him the list of faults I had found and explained that I spent the last hour or so trying to tune it up so that the front panel meter readings corresponded to the handbook. He laughed; 'Don't worry about those' he said, 'We modified it to suit our requirements, you have passed'.

I had to spend a further six weeks at Locking getting familiar with the equipment. I was given a list of handbooks (APs for short) that I could read up in the library. Although Locking wasn't running wireless courses at that time, all the equipment was in the classrooms and I could spend as much time as I wanted getting familiar with the various types of gear, as long as I used rooms that were not booked for classes. I was not supervised, and was more or less left to my own devices. I was in a hut with a class of radar mechanics and each morning I would wait for them to march off to their classes before going to the library or an empty classroom.

At the end of this time I received my Junior Technician's stripe (worn upside down) and a posting to Binbrook, a Bomber Command station in Lincolnshire. The great thing was I received pay at my new rank from the first day of entry in October, so I had over four month's back pay to come, amounting to over £40. If I had taken the standard fitter's course, it would have taken nine months on the lowest rate of airman's pay. My time at Binbrook was mostly enjoyable, thanks to my training at Marconi.

The arrest of Dr Crippen

2010 is the hundredth anniversary of the first occasion when wireless telegraphy proved to be instrumental in the arrest of a criminal suspect, the murderer Harvey Hawley Crippen. Also significant is that the events involved the use of wireless at sea. Since the anniversary is the theme of this year's reunion, it is thought the story, although reasonably well-known, bears repeating. The following is an edited extract from the MIMCO publication 'Wireless at sea' by HE Hancock. Ed.



Police officers escorting Dr Crippen from SS Montrose

The finding of the body parts of his wife had led to a warrant being issued for the arrest of Crippen and his mistress Ethel Le Neve. After interrogation by Scotland Yard, the pair had fled the country and sailed for Montreal on the liner SS Montrose. Their descriptions had been circulated and published in the press. The girl had cut her hair short, and was dressed as a boy, but it was not long before the ship's master, Captain Kendall, realised that they bore a striking resemblance to the missing pair; and so in the evening of July 22, 1910, he telegraphed the company's offices in Liverpool to say that he believed Crippen and Le Neve were on board the vessel. The company at once informed Scotland Yard, who communicated directly with the master by wireless and procured further details which convinced them that the clue should be followed up without delay.

From that point until the time of the arrest wireless telegraphy kept the police in touch with the ship. On Saturday July 23 Chief Inspector Dew set sail for Canada in the SS Laurentic, which was due to reach Canada in advance of the Montrose. So began a race across the Atlantic upon which the eyes of the world were fastened, and its interest lost nothing through it only being possible to follow the progress of the contest between the two ships from such charts and diagrams as the newspapers provided. Day by day the certainty that the Laurentic would overhaul the Montrose was the one topic of conversation.

It was at this stage in the history of the chase that the powerful agency of wireless came to be realised. The first message had already indicated that if the fugitives were on board the Montrose this modern accomplishment of science would track them down. How completely it had defeated the hope of escape, for the first time in its application to criminal investigation, was very quickly proved. There was something intensely thrilling in the thought of these two passengers travelling across the Atlantic in the belief that their identity and their whereabouts were unknown, while news of both was being flashed with certainty to all quarters of the civilised world.

Three police officers, including Inspector Dew - all three disguised as pilots - went off to the Montrose in a small boat rowed by three sailors. Crippen was promenading the deck with the surgeon of the Montrose. The supposed pilots went on board and walked along until they passed the spot where Crippen was standing. Then, as Dew was able to get a good quick look at Crippen, he gave the preconcerted signal and the arrest was made.

Great credit was due to Captain Kendall for his prompt appreciation of the part which wireless could play in such an emergency. This, perhaps, was not surprising for Captain Kendall was second officer in the SS Lake Champlain at the time that vessel - the first British ocean-going ship to be fitted with Marconi's apparatus - was equipped for wireless telegraphy. He no doubt remembered the first wireless message which that vessel received off the South of Ireland. It was from Marconi himself, wishing Captain W Stewart, the master of the SS Lake Champlain, every success with the wireless system.

Coaster design competition

On page 12 Peter Turrall makes mention of a competition to design a coaster for the 2011 reunion and suggested possible themes:

The seventy-fifth anniversary of the first annual veterans' reunion.

The one hundredth anniversary of the publication by Campbell Swinton of ideas for 'distant electric vision'.

The one hundredth anniversary of the formation of the Marconi Press Agency, publisher of 'The Marconigraph' and its long-lived successor 'Wireless World'.

The one hundredth anniversary of the acquisition of the New Street site.

Veterans are invited to submit their ideas, a detailed design is not necessary, although it won't be disqualified from consideration; the committee is simply looking for an outline on which the detailed design can be based. The deadline for submissions to the secretary, Barry Powell, is by this year's reunion on Saturday 17th April. They will be judged at the committee meeting following the reunion, early in May. The winner will be notified accordingly, and the result published on the website. No prizes, just the kudos of being the originator of the design of the 2011 coaster.

Money frees you from doing things you dislike. Since I dislike doing nearly everything, money is handy. Groucho Marx



Who remembers the Marconi Silver Band playing at a broadcast by the BBC of 'Workers Playtime' some time in the late '40s? This took place in the Girls Pavilion, later demolished to make way for Building 720. The photo belongs Bryant Prior of Hatfield Peverel: his father Vic, who worked in Packing, was a band member and is seen sitting in the rear row amongst the trombones, fifth from the right, face partly obscured. Bryant only knew a handful of the members, and is not too sure, but thinks the trombonist second from the right on the same row is George Turner who may have worked with Vic in Packing.

Ken Clements recalls that only the last ten minutes of the show was actually broadcast, the programme material was being transmitted back to Broadcasting House by telephone landline which went down at the start of the show. We'd be keen to hear from anyone who recognizes any of the band members, or can remember any other amusing anecdotes or details of the programme, eg artists taking part etc.

Marconi New Street hopes of heritage centre vanish

Peter Turrall, Chairman, MVA

The chances of Marconi Veterans setting up a heritage centre in the front building of Marconi's in New Street have virtually vanished. The new owners of the site, Messrs Ashwell of Cambridge, are in administration and there is no doubt that the site will eventually be sold on.

Marconi Veterans would have been given by Ashwells up to £50K for the building to be upgraded and set up as a public viewing heritage centre portraying all that Marconi's manufactured and constructed over a period of one hundred years. With co-operation from Chelmsford Museum Services and particularly the Industrial Museum at Sandford Mill this would have been a wonderful portrayal of all Marconi's achievements.

The windows facing New Street have been boarded up and vandalism inside the building has already taken place as security on the site is minimal. Part of the complex has been given planning permission for a car park but it is unlikely that the proposed skyscraper flats and other modernisations, including a heritage trail and improvements to the Chelmsford railway station will ever be completed. This is a very sad story but nothing can be done until new owners are appointed and possibilities of including heritage etc, are discussed with them. This could take up to five years or more.

An opportunity arose just before Christmas to view the original Marconi Wireless and Telegraph Company factory in Hall Street Chelmsford which was opened in 1899. Anglian Water, who owns the site, will be vacating shortly to new headquarters at Hanningfield reservoir. The site will be sold for housing, mainly conversion of existing buildings into flats, and unfortunately this too will befall the Marconi part of the site.

The old engine house built in the 1850s will become available for rental, subject to the necessary planning permissions, where it is hoped an Arts and Heritage Centre can be established. In due course our Committee will be examining the possibility of setting up some of our equipment and ephemera here but the attraction has somewhat diminished now that we cannot do this in the original Marconi factory.

The 2009 Veterans Reunion

The 73rd annual Veterans Reunion at the Marconi Athletic & Social Club in Beehive Lane took place on Saturday 18th April.

Our president for 2009 was Veteran Phil Robinson who is the Senior Vice President of Selex Communications in the UK, introduced by Veteran George Hill, OBE as 'a Marconi man' through and through. In his address, after agreeing that he was proud to be called a Marconi man, Phil outlined how Selex Communications had developed from Marconi Communications as he felt that in many ways Selex was the natural development of Marconi, particularly as the workforce was substantially the same. Selex's parent company, Finnmechanica in Italy, was a similar arrangement to the old GEC with a range of activities covering defence and communications.

With the move from New Street in Chelmsford to Basildon, Selex now has much better accommodation and a better working environment. It employs about 800 people on the site and has become the preferred supplier of some military communication equipment to many organisations throughout the world. He finished by noting that change is now the order of the day, and one has to learn to adapt to it.

Our special guest this year was Mr Roger Casale who is the independent political adviser to Selex Communications and Finnmechanica UK Limited. He was introduced by our chairman, Veteran Peter Turrall.

In his address Roger outlined how he had become a labour MP for Wimbledon, his home town, in 1997, and what he is now doing since ceasing to be an MP in 2005. In his time in parliament he was chairman of the All Party British-Italian Parliamentary Group and Parliamentary Private Secretary at Foreign & Commonwealth Office. Since leaving parliament he has run a management consultancy business with involvements in the UK and Italy. In his capacity as independent political adviser to Selex and Finnmechanica he mentioned the difficulties he experiences when speaking with MPs about technology.

As has been usual at recent reunions a coaster was produced to mark the year 2009. In this case it reflected on the departure from New Street and the death of our former Patron Sir Robert Telford. All the coasters can be viewed in greater detail at http://www.marconi-veterans.org/gallery/main.php?g2_itemId=16

...and now, the 2010 reunion

Plans are well advanced for our 2010 reunion, which takes place on Saturday 17th April at the MASC in Beehive Lane, Chelmsford, commencing at 1.00pm. Doors open at 12 noon. We will celebrate 100 years since Marconi's wireless telegraphy equipment proved instrumental in the arrest of the murderer Dr Hawley Harvey Crippen at sea on board the transatlantic liner SS Montrose. Our reunion will revolve around this momentous achievement.

I am pleased that Ron Bradbrook, formerly Engineering Manager, Broadcast Transmitters, MCSL, will be our president and he will be introduced by Raymond Rowe, formerly Assistant Technical Director, MCSL, who has been one of our past presidents and is equally well known as Ron in the transmitter industry.

The guest speaker, following the theme of criminal capture, is ex-Chief Superintendent George Harris of Essex Police who was involved in police investigations for some of the more notorious Essex murder cases. I feel sure we are in for a very enjoyable afternoon of nostalgia and experiences.

...and 2011

Turning now to our 2011 reunion, on the 16th April, a special occasion when we will celebrate 75 years since the first reunion took place in London, with president at that time the company founder Marchese Guglielmo Marconi. Some 50 employees with 25 years or more service with the company enjoyed at that time a sumptuous meal at one of London's top restaurants.

Times have certainly changed as nowadays we have nearly 250 members attending reunions. We are very pleased that Lord Prior, former chairman of GEC, has agreed to be our president for 2011. We are now looking to the possibility of having somebody connected with the communications and broadcasting industry to be our guest speaker. More information on this in due course.

Design a coaster for the 2011 reunion

You will see on page 10 of this Newsletter that we are inviting contributions for the design of the coaster for 2011. I do hope a number of you will put ideas forward for this. Apart from it being the 75th anniversary of our reunions, it is also 100 years since one of our engineers, Campbell Swinton, elaborated on his ideas for 'distant electric vision' such as radar and television as we know it today.

Also 100 years ago, Marconi formed a new company called the Marconi Press Agency Limited. This company was to be the flagship for all press and publicity activities of the parent company and introduced the famous illustrated journal entitled 'The Marconigraph'. This was the first journal in the world to deal exclusively with wireless matters and two years later, its title was changed to 'Wireless World' – a magazine which is still going today although under the auspices of another organisation.

100 years ago plans were drawn up for an improved factory complex on the site of a cricket ground used by the Chelmsford Church Institute in New Street. The Church Commissioners were the owners and final negotiations were completed in 1911 ready for the construction of the complex in 1912, recently vacated by a Marconi unit and now up for sale again.

Peter Turrall, Chairman, MVA

Unveiling and dedication of the Marconi Memorial Plaque

This ceremony took place in Chelmsford Cathedral on Sunday 25th April. The plaque commemorates the seventeen employees who were killed by bombs falling on the New Street factory on the night of 9th May 1941. It had been mounted in the foyer of Marconi House in New Street since its creation and although seen by many Marconi employees over the 67 years until the site closed in 2008, it had been seen by few members of the public or the relatives of the victims because of site security restrictions. Its re-erection in St Peter's Chapel in Chelmsford Cathedral makes the list of names visible to all.

The ceremony was incorporated into the traditional service of Choral Evensong. The lessons were read by Robbie Robertson, Patron of the Marconi Veterans Association and Dawn Swindells from Washington DC, USA, granddaughter of Charles Franklin, a victim of the bombing. The sermon was delivered by the Very Reverend Peter Judd, the Dean of Chelmsford, in which he widened the theme of the remembrance of the seventeen, to reflect on the legacy of Guglielmo Marconi, of the inventions and products of the company which affect the present-day lives of people worldwide. He commended the Association in its efforts to keep alive knowledge of the Marconi legacy and, in an aside, mentioned the welcome and long-awaited installation of the statue of Marconi in a public, albeit less than prominent, place in the town.

Followed by many of the victims' relatives and Marconi Veterans who were present, the clergy and choir then processed to St Peter's Chapel for the unveiling by Lady Telford, widow of Sir Robert Telford, Life President of the Marconi Company and the dedication by the Dean. The service concluded with a further hymn and the blessing.

After the service there was a small exhibition of photographs and other mementos of the event.

The full text of the Dean's address is available on the MVA website: any Veteran not able to access the internet please ask the secretary for a transcript.



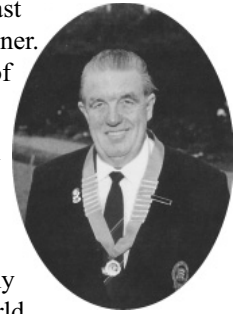
Apologies for an omission

The last edition of the Newsletter carried a notice on page 10 about the impending unveiling and dedication reported above. This included a list of names of those commemorated on the plaque, but with one name, that of DE Davidson, omitted. We apologise for any distress caused. Ed.

*We do not remember days; we remember moments.
Cesare Pavese*

Arthur Spooner 1934 - 2009

With regret we report the death last August of Veteran Arthur Spooner. Arthur had served on the committee of the Veterans' Association since 2000.



He joined Marconi Communication Systems Limited in 1955 following national service in the RAF. In the early days of his career he travelled extensively installing various company products in many countries of the world but mainly Africa, Europe and the Middle East. In the later years he was a charge-hand in the New Street factory responsible for the assembly of many products including communication and television items.

Sport played a large part in his life. He played hockey for the company in the early sixties, and then took up bowls which was from then to be his life-long passion. Active with the Marconi Bowls Club as player, chairman, president, and steward of the bar, co-operating with his wife Dot who organised the catering arrangements. Despite his own and Dot's health problems in more recent times he continued to support the Baddow Bowls Club and the Marconi Veterans' Association.

Moves to relocate Marconi Statue

There was news in May last year of a new move in Chelmsford to have the Marconi statue moved from where it languishes behind the bus station to a more prominent position in the town centre.

The idea of having the statue in the town centre was suggested many years ago by the Essex Chronicle when it was still in the foyer of Essex Record Office. (*This report is in our website archive for May 2004.*) The move to the town centre was rekindled by the Dean of Chelmsford, the Very Reverend Peter Judd, in his sermon during the service to re-dedicate the Marconi Memorial Plaque on 26th April.

The thrust for the move was been taken up again by the Chronicle and in the edition for 21st May the paper had most of the front page and two other pages on the subject, including the possibility that the Hall Street works may be used as a cultural centre now that Anglian Water are selling the property. The Essex Chronicle articles can be found at <http://www.thisistotalessex.co.uk/news/CHELMSFORD-Let-s-Marconi-limelight/article-1021870-detail/article.html> and <http://www.thisistotalessex.co.uk/chronicle/turnMarconi-culture-hub/article-1021854-detail/article.html>

In addition, a petition was started to request the statue be moved. The petition titled 'Save Marconi Heritage' can be found at: <http://www.ipetitions.com/petition/marconi>. However, on the 29th January 2010 it had only 139 signatures, and twelve of those were duplicates. Peter Turrall has a book with 120 in it but considerably more than this is needed to have any hope of influencing opinion!



The Writtle Lancaster

Terence Pegram, formerly at GEC-Marconi Research Centre

In the 2009 Newsletter, no 9, on page 5 Eric Walker made mention of the Lancaster aircraft at Writtle. Here is a photo of the Lancaster which was sent to me by Terence Pegram, together with some information about its arrival at Writtle. Ed.

Many Veterans from the Chelmsford area will remember the Avro Lancaster bomber that was located for some years after the war on the Marconi Writtle site.

I recently came across a photograph of it whilst it was being erected by an RAF team of riggers. The photo is the property of Colin Dadd, who was part of this team, and in the picture he is standing on the right, next to the starboard main wheel.

Colin cannot remember its date. His best guess is 1948, but he remembers that the team were billeted at North Weald airfield and used to lunch at the British Restaurant in Writtle.

My recollection of the Lancaster is seeing it across the river whilst walking from Chelmsford towards Writtle, and it was a very impressive and unexpected sight. I remember that a central tail fin was added to it, for the purposes of research, making it look very much like its predecessor, the Manchester.

I wonder if this is the only existing photograph of this aeroplane? Some comments from other Veterans would be welcome.

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 2010. We extend our sympathy to the families of those mentioned.

SR Allerton, LE Argent, GR Boyce, AJ Butt, RM Carroll, LH Clayden, KC Collins, WA Dix, JL Doe, R Emery, HW Flack, PFJ Foakes, A Fulcher, PAJ Geier, C Griffiths, RV Hall, Mrs RGE Hammond, A Harvey, AN Heightman, DARF Johnson, SAW Jolliffe, DW Jones, TJ Kay, PC Lacey, B Lee, P Lee, R Maertz, RJ Mitchell, AS Munday, CR Orange, FG Ottley, DC Price, JTW Reid, JB Renwick, DR Robinson, JM Robinson, BL Sargent, MJB Scanlan, FJ Selmes, PEU Shrimpton, LT Simpson, HA Skinner, AG Spooner, SL Steele, SR Tydeman, KA Tyler, RL Varney, AM Williams, Rhys J Williams, NH Willis, JS Wood.

Vice Admiral Sir Phillip Watson KBO, LVO

Marconi Veterans' Association regret to announce the death just before Christmas of Sir Phillip Watson who between 1981 and 1985 was Chairman of Marconi Radar Systems in Chelmsford.

Sir Phillip served in the Royal Navy for 36 years, rising from the rank of Lieutenant in 1941 to Vice Admiral. Among a number of ships in which he served was the Royal Yacht Britannia.

The Marconi Veterans' Association has placed an entry in the online book of condolences: a memorial service will be held at St John the Baptist Church, Bodicote, Oxfordshire on Saturday 20th February.