



### Marconi's Hall Street Works - The World's first Wireless Factory

In 1952 the Chelmsford Board of Health first developed the site behind the building opposite, then known as the "Milkiny Yard" to sink an artesian well with an engine house and pumping station. This provided a fresh water supply to the area which was intended in part to address a local outbreak of cholera.

In 1858 John Hall built a steam driven silk mill and houses for his workers in what became Hall Street. He successfully worked the mill until 1881 when the Government repealed the silk duties and French imports caused the Essex silk industry and the Hall Street mill closed in 1883. Somerset Court and Irons & Barrow then re-located the silk mill, operating from 1885 until 1892. For the next 17 years the famous furniture storage was housed on by W.C. Wooley & Son.

In January 1898 the young Italian inventor, Guglielmo Marconi converted the Mill opposite to become the world's first wireless factory.

For the next 13 years Marconi was to build the first generation of his new wireless equipment and effectively start the wireless age. Since the Hall Street Works would supply equipment to the Royal Navy, Trinity House and maritime shipping companies and the huge Admiralty and Colonial transatlantic stations, in December 1901, against all the odds, Marconi managed to receive a wireless message sent across the Atlantic Ocean, over 2,100 miles, and much of the equipment was built in the Hall Street Works.

The ground floor workshop c. 1905

The Hall Street Works then supplied all the equipment for Marconi's growing network of coastal wireless stations and started to equip increasing numbers of ocean ships. The factory supplied customers across the globe including the Amazon Basin, Hawaii, Congo, Tahiti, South Africa, Canada and even to both sides in the Balkan War of 1912. It was Marconi wireless equipment manufactured in Hall Street that allowed the ill-fated RMS Titanic to call Hall Street over 300 miles when the great ship was hit in 1912 and over 760 people when the RMS Lusitania was sunk in May 1915. This successful use of wireless for safety at sea effectively generated a new and vast market for Marconi's equipment.

Marconi left the Hall Street site in 1912 when it moved all its operations across Chelmsford to its new purpose built wireless factory in New Street.

Half Street works with Guglielmo Marconi (left) c. 1900

After the First World War, the Hall Street building reverted to use as a furniture warehouse until 1945, when it was taken over by British Road Services. It was then bought by Pickfords Removals in 1958. The Essex Water Company moved into the building in 1974 and undertook a major restoration. They left the site in 2008 and the building has now been converted into luxury apartments.

The Workers Public House started in 1902. The landlord Joseph Bertrams was undoubtedly very pleased when British Coastal purchased the site to convert the town's first wireless factory from silk to the wireless age. The house has been used for the production of the wireless working site by the workers from the Marconi Hall Street works.

The ladies of the sewing workshop. Thought to have been employed from the silk mill due to their experience of handling threads.

**Chelmsford City Council**

Marconi's Hall Street Works: Unveiling of the Historical Board, "Woolpack" Public House, 13th September, 2018