



## Press release

### Essex brings Marconi story to virtual world for centenary celebrations

04 June 2020

This month Essex will mark the centenary of the first ever public entertainment broadcast from Chelmsford by pioneering company Marconi, and the people behind the celebrations have not been deterred by the Covid-19 pandemic.

The series of events planned this month to commemorate Marconi's centenary will now be livestreamed to audiences across Essex and beyond.

They include a live radio play of the Marconi story with a recreation of the ground-breaking first broadcast by opera star Dame Nellie Melba who sang across the airwaves on 15 June 1920.

Among the individuals bringing the historic radio event to life are author, playwright and specialist consultant to Chelmsford City Museums, Tim Wander; playwright Felicity Fair Thompson; former Marconi engineer Alan Hartley-Smith; and local historian Alan Pamphilon who worked for a Marconi company EEV (now Teledyne e2v).

Alan Pamphilon, who has produced a [virtual walking tour](#) from Marconi's first factory in Hall Street to the second premises at New Street, said: "Being associated with Marconi and the city which brought the electronic age to the world, gives me great pride.

"The centenary is a chance to highlight Marconi's phenomenal achievements and all those many local people who made it possible. The Marconi legacy is still very much alive today through the innovations and breakthroughs of those who now work for Essex companies that have evolved from Marconi's early roots."

The Marconi celebrations, which form a major part of 'Essex 2020', a year-long celebration of science and creativity across the county, include:

**10 June - Dame Nellie Sings! A night that changed the World** - Tim Wander tells the story of Marconi's journey to the momentous transmission in 1920.

**15 June – Radio play ‘*The Power Behind the Microphone: The First Radio Broadcast Centenary*’ including a recreation of the revolutionary broadcast livestreamed by Chelmsford City Theatre at the exact date and time of the original 100 years ago. BBC Essex and Chelmsford Community Radio will also broadcast the play as part of special Marconi programmes.**

**16 June – A World without Marconi** - Alan Hartley-Smith discusses Marconi’s outstanding contribution to the world of technology.

**22 June - Hello CQ! This is Writtle 2MT calling** - Tim Wander relays the story of radio station 2MT in Writtle and its charismatic leader Peter Eckersley who became Britain’s first regular radio broadcaster and the first Chief Engineer of the new BBC.

Councillor Dick Madden, Cabinet Member for Essex 2020, Essex County Council, said:  
“Essex 2020 is all about celebrating the county’s pioneering past and present day innovators so there is no question about the key role the incredible and inspiring Marconi story must play in this.

“The many different people and partner organisations involved with the Marconi celebrations are continuing the spirit of innovation and creativity demonstrated by Marconi 100 years ago and imaginatively adapting their plans in response to Covid-19 - I can’t thank them enough. Essex is truly proud of the legacy of Marconi and the invention of radio which changed the world forever.”

Key organisations that have been instrumental in bringing the Marconi celebrations to life include Chelmsford City Council, Chelmsford City Museums, Chelmsford City Theatre, Chelmsford Civic Society, Chelmsford Science and Engineering Society, Essex Records Office and former Marconi company Leonardo in Basildon.

Further Marconi themed events are scheduled throughout the year including an exhibition at Hylands House, the unveiling of commemorative plaques and a series of events on ‘The Future of Wireless’.

**For more information about all the Marconi celebration events visit [www.essex2020.com](http://www.essex2020.com)**

**Ends**

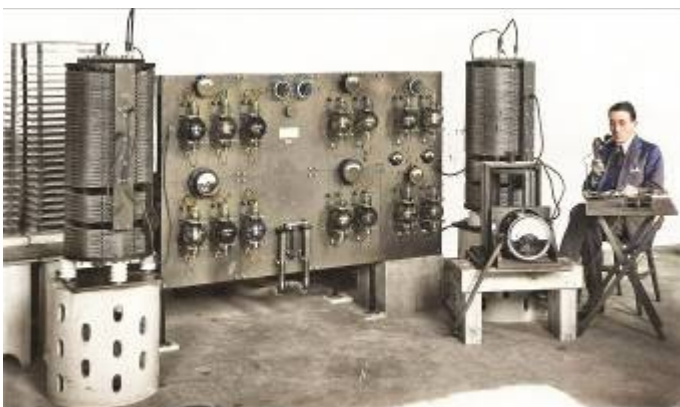
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**Image caption:** Dame Nellie Melba sings across the airwaves at the Marconi studio on 15 June 1920.



**Image caption:** Guglielmo Marconi, the pioneer of wireless radio



**Image caption:** Marconi engineer W T Ditcham in front of the Melba transmitter.

**For further information:**  
Rachel Cass, Genesis PR

Email: [Rachel.Cass@genesispr.co.uk](mailto:Rachel.Cass@genesispr.co.uk) Tel: 01473 326400 or 07951 714208

## Notes to Editors

1. Essex 2020 – A Year of Science and Creativity, is the county's biggest ever public celebration of Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Mathematics (STEAM).
2. As a result of Covid-19, Essex 2020 has for the foreseeable future become a virtual celebration, with many event organisers re-imagining their events and offering them online instead.
3. Essex 2020 is inspiring people, businesses and communities from every part of Essex through a year-long, county-wide programme of science, technology and arts inspired events, workshops, exhibitions, talks and more.
4. The Essex 2020 ambition is to forge new and lasting partnerships between business and industry, the arts, education and grass roots organisations, driving innovation and prosperity in the county.
5. It has been created by Essex Partners and was inspired by Anglia Ruskin University's successful bid to host The British Science Festival, which boasts an international profile. The British Science Festival comes to Essex for the first time in its 189-year history in September 2021 (rescheduled from 2020 due to the Covid-19 crisis) and will be hosted by Anglia Ruskin University at its Chelmsford campus.
6. Essex Partners comprises organisations dedicated to improving the county. This includes-county and district/borough authorities, Active Essex, Anglia Ruskin University, Basildon & Thurrock University Hospital Trust, Diocese of Essex, Essex Community & Voluntary Sector, Essex Police Fire & Crime Commissioner, Essex Partnership University Trust, Mid-Essex Clinical Commissioning Group, Mid-Essex Sustainability and Transformation Partnership (STP), The Essex Alliance and the University of Essex.
7. All businesses, schools and colleges, community organisations and individuals who wish to submit a STEAM-related event or activity to the Essex 2020 programme or simply want to find out more can get involved at [www.Essex2020.com](http://www.Essex2020.com)