



Press information

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NATIONAL TRUST MARKS CENTENARY OF MARCONI'S 'FIRST GREAT MIRACLE' – 100 YEARS ON

Wireless signal achieves a record distance over the horizon in January 1901

On 23rd January 2001 the National Trust in Cornwall will be celebrating the restoration and opening of the oldest surviving purpose built radio station in the world; and marking the centenary of a momentous event in the development of wireless communication.

The Lizard Wireless Station at Bass Point on the Lizard Peninsula was built in 1901 and became the venue for one of the greatest achievements in communication history. On 23rd January 1901, Marconi received a wireless signal from Niton Wireless Station on the Isle of Wight – 196 miles away. This was the longest distance over which a wireless transmission had ever been made and was to change the story of communication forever.

In 1996, the National Trust bought the **Lizard Wireless Station** using funding from Enterprise Neptune – the Trust's campaign to protect the coastline of Britain. The building in its spectacular cliff top setting was thus saved from inappropriate redevelopment, and has been restored to its original condition with the assistance of generous sponsorship from Cornish Linen Services. The National Trust has also worked in partnership with the Trevithick Trust - which after careful research has been able to install a set of replica equipment in the Wireless Station - and with local radio enthusiasts, so that the site provides an enjoyable and informative visitor experience.

The Event – 23rd January 2001

To celebrate the restoration and opening of the **Lizard Wireless Station**, and to coincide with the centenary of Marconi's remarkable achievement in wireless telegraphy, the National Trust is recreating his historic signalling event one hundred years to the day when it first took place. A replica transmission will take place during the morning of 23rd January, and also at 1630hrs, which commemorates the actual anniversary of the precise moment when the original transmission was received.

The Lizard Wireless Station is to be let to the Trevithick Trust for its first year of operation and will be used by local radio enthusiasts, as well as being open regularly to the public. To mark this co-operation, the presentation of a ceremonial key will take place at the Station at 3pm, when Rear-Admiral Sir Robert Woodard KCVO DL, Chairman of the National Trust in Cornwall will formally hand over the building to Mr Dick Meyrick, Chairman of the Trevithick Trust.

The Background

Since 1894 Marconi had been experimenting with wireless transmission, trying to increase its range so it would have a practical application and commercial future.

During the next few years this gradually took place, and in 1897 Marconi was able to set up '**The Wireless Telegraph and Signal Company Limited**' to develop and manufacture his telegraphic equipment.

By 1900 however, even with the range of wireless transmission now reaching some 70 miles, commercial interest was lacking. In order to improve sales, and thus allow Marconi to continue his experiments with long-distance signalling, the company decided wireless telegraphy equipment would be leased to ship owners. In 1900 the **Marconi International Marine Communications Company Limited** was formed to handle maritime business.

Marconi himself however, as a prelude to his attempts at trans-Atlantic communications later in 1901, needed to prove to sceptics that wireless signals could successfully be transmitted a significant distance over the curvature of the earth's surface. **The Lizard Wireless Station** was chosen for the test, and communication history was made when a morse signal was received from the Isle of Wight on 23rd January 1901 – a distance of 196 miles.

The Future

Marconi was to again make history on 12th December 1901, when the first trans-Atlantic signal was sent from nearby Poldhu Wireless Station on the Lizard to Newfoundland in Canada.

A celebratory event is being planned to commemorate the achievement on 12th December 2001 at the Poldhu site which is now owned and managed by the National Trust following its gift by the Marconi Company in 1937 and 1960.

The results of Marconi's experiments changed the history of communication forever, and were to lay the foundations for the development of radio and television.

Ends

For further information please contact Debbie Peers, Press Office, National Trust Regional Office, Lanhydrock, Cornwall on (01208) 265225 (dir line)/m 0777 324 9752. On 23rd January please use mobile number or that of the Housel Bay Hotel (01326) 290417.

Notes for Editors

PRESS CALL/PHOTO OPPORTUNITY: Tuesday, 23rd January 2001, 10.30am ,The Housel Bay Hotel, Lizard Village to be followed by a site visit to the Lizard Wireless Station. Members of The Trevithick Trust and local radio enthusiasts will be available on site to answer technical queries.

The Wireless Station is approximately 10 minutes' walk from the hotel along a cliff path. Transport will be available from the hotel in the event of inclement weather.

The Housel Bay Hotel is signposted from Lizard Village (tel: 01326 290417). Nearest BR Station is Redruth (Paddington to Penzance line) – 40 mins drive; Newquay Airport – approx 40 miles from the Lizard (daily flights ex Gatwick).