

John Logie Baird's Coulsdon Television heritage up for sale

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John Logie Baird was born in Helensburgh and during his working life lived and worked in London and Bexhill forming the Baird Television Development Company of London. Baird invented one of the first television transmission systems. His system used a bright light shining through multiple holes in a spinning Nipkow disk.

In March 25, 1925, he gave the first public demonstration of televised silhouette images in motion, at Selfridge's Department Store in London, He televised a ventriloquist's dummy named "Stooky Bill" talking and moving, as its painted face had a higher contrast than a human face which had inadequate contrast to show up on his primitive system. In 1926 he able to transmit television pictures from Glasgow to London by telephone.



His chief engineer was Benjamin Clapp who lived in Warwick Road Coulsdon. In February 1928 the pair developed the idea of using wireless transmission. To prove this they decided to transmit a broadcast from London to New York. They obtained use of a receiver in Hartsdale a village near New York. In their London laboratory studio a man and a woman sat before an electric eye. The pictures were transmitted by telephone to Benjamin Clapp's house in Warwick Road Coulsdon, where he had a 200ft Radio mast running round the garden on a number of large polls (*I am not sure if he has planning permission*), from there by wireless using short wave radio to New York (*amazingly this only required 2KW of power*). The Following Youtube video of Pathe News "Seeing by Wireless" has a picture of the machinery and Benjamin Claps back garden. www.youtube.com/watch?v=W_vZEiz1ibk

In a dark cellar in Hartsdale before an assembled audience of Benjamin Clapp, Captain O.G.Hutchinson, managing director of the Baird Company, R H Hart the owner and operator of the receiving station and a reporter from Associated Press. The image and accompanying sound was received, although blurred it was clear that it was a man and a women and movements of their face could be clearly seen while the sound resembled that of a bumble bee. Baird had many other firsts including sending a radio message to a ship in the mid-Atlantic on their return from New York on the steamship Berengaria on the 4th March 1928. The first colour TV signal transmission in 1938 from Crystal Palace to the Dominion Theatre in London. He was the first use of the abbreviation TV.

The BBC adopted both Baird's mechanical system and the alternative Marconi EMI Cathode ray system for broadcasting in 1935. However, the BBC decided that the Marconi EMI system of 405 lines was the better system and in 1937 adopted this system as standard until the change to 625 lines in 1967 which was more suitable for Colour transmission. Baird died in Bexhill in 1946 aged 58 (*there is a John Logie Baird Blue Plaque outside Bar Italia in Frith Street Soho*), while Benjamin Clapp died in Warlingham in 1990 aged 96.



The Transatlantic transmission from Coulsdon is represented by one of the Finials in The Coulsdon Art Trail.