



# GUGLIELMO MARCONI AND HIS GREAT PASSION FOR VAL GARDENA

Giulia Insam

Great Italian physicist and inventor, Guglielmo Marconi, was such an admirer of our beautiful Val Gardena that he used to spend his Summer and Winter vacations there. He preferred the Summer, which he considered an ideal time and so he spent there long periods of rest, according to the habit of those times, in order to enjoy the freshness and clean air of the mountains to the full. Unfortunately, there is not much documentation of his stays in Val Gardena (just 4 or 5), but we know that he was here many times and always a guest at Hotel Adler at Ortisei. People of those times say he was friendly and kind and that he loved to take long walks together with his wife Cristina Bezzi-Scali and daughter Elettra. He was open and available to conversations with the

people and had a warm and respectful relationship with the inhabitants of the Valley. One would commonly see him walking on the streets or having a cup of hot chocolate in a café in the company of his family. The square in front of the Municipality of Ortisei was dedicated to him, in honour of his many visits to the town. He was born in Bologna on April 25th, 1874, from a rich landowner from a small village in the Appennino Tosco-Emiliano, while his mother was from the South of Ireland, and that is why Marconi spoke Italian with a slight English accent. During his childhood, Guglielmo had many health problems and so the family frequently moved from Italy to England back and forth in order to find a better climate for their child.





*Guglielmo Marconi Ortisei 19-  
Maria Cristina Marconi*

Guglielmo Marconi with his wife Maria Cristina in Wintertime, in front of Hotel Adler in Ortisei, leaving on a horse-drawn sledge.

### Electrology: an innate passion

His passion for electrology (an area of physics which studies electricity and the behaviour of electrons) had been evident since his first years of study, when he showed an exceptional predisposition towards highly specialized scientific matters.

Marconi's studies focused on practical technological applications, their possible industrial use and their relative commercial value. His first technical project was at the age of eighteen.

The experiment he made at the early age of twenty led him to become the father of radiocommunication. He, in fact, had succeeded in making a bell ring by pushing a telegraph button located in the balcony, on the opposite side of the room. Such wireless telegraphy experiments marked the beginning of a long and difficult path which Marconi decided to take for the industrial development of inventions.

### The way to the patent

Marconi, foreseeing that his experiments would need a large amount of capital, decided to go to the Ministry of Postal and Telegraph Communications to make a request. He presented his invention of the wireless telegraph, and asked for a financing. His letter never received a feedback and was disposed of by the Ministry with "Alla Lungara", which meant "to the mental hospital" located in Via della Lungara in Rome.

Marconi decided to leave Italy for England. In 1896 he presented his request to the Patent Office in London, where the patent was registered that same year.

### Success

Through the years, Marconi obtained more and more results from his experiments. Through time he got to the conviction that the waves could cross the ocean following the Earth's curvature, and on the month of December of 1901, the first transoceanic radio signal was transmitted.

In 1907, the first regular public radiotelegraphic service through the Atlantic Ocean was inaugurated, giving the possibility to ships to send wireless SOS.

When in 1912, before sinking, the Titanic could send an SOS and Marconi, who was in the United States at that time, rushed to the port to welcome the 705 survivors. At an interview he declared that it was worth it to have lived to have given these people the possibility to be saved.

### Awards and honours

In 1909, he was awarded the Nobel prize for Physics in Stockholm.

In 1914, he was named life senator of the Kingdom of Italy. In 1929, Vittorio Emanuele III conferred him the hereditary title of Marquis. He was conferred 16 degrees "honoris causa", 25 high rank honours and 12 honorary citizenship. The July 18th, 1936 Royal Charter promoted Marconi as a Counter Admiral in the Reserve for outstanding services.

### His death

Rome, 1937. Guglielmo Marconi took his wife to the train station, she would go to celebrate their daughter Elettra's seventh birthday in Viareggio. After going back home he had a heart attack and died. That same day, the radio stations of the whole world interrupted their broadcastings for two minutes as a sign of mourning.