

“Our Eric”

A celebration of EKCO,
EKCO Park, Cole Avenue
Southend on Sea
SS2 6BH

Anne Schwegmann-Fielding,
with Tamsin Evans
and Michael Condron

“Bellway Homes worked closely with Essex based artist Anne Schwegmann-Fielding and Southend-on-Sea Borough Council to create and produce a piece of art reflecting the heritage of the former ECKO site. It was clear to the artist after researching all things EKCO and speaking with former workers that a sculpture commemorating the main employer in Southend needed to capture Eric’s achievements, both in electronics and what he achieved for local people.

Anne worked with artists Tamsin Evans and Michael Condrón to realise this project, which we feel is a fitting tribute to one of the town’s pioneers.”

Cllr Kevin Robinson, portfolio holder for culture.

INTRODUCTION



From humble beginnings in a garden shed in 1922, Eric K. Cole went on to establish the EKCO factory in 1930 on a former cabbage patch field in Priory Crescent, Southend.

What started as a radio manufacturing firm, grew to be an international brand producing the must-have electronics and gadgets of the time. During the second world war they became a key developer of wartime technology including the electronics for radar and the first guided missiles, with Eric personally designing the circuitry used to help crack the enigma code.

At its peak the company was the main employer of the town, employing over 8,000 people in Essex. In its 40 years in business, EKCO produced everything from car radios and convection heaters to vital medical

equipment and the award winning Novaware.

Eric took great pride in his employees and was a pioneer in paid holidays, workplace pensions and apprenticeship schemes whilst also setting up a successful sports and social club, still running in 2020.



Eric Kirkham Cole CBE (1901-1966) stands relaxed upon the EKCO AD65 radio. The radio, made from Corten steel, reflects the shape and colour of his early Bakelite radios and forms the plinth, featuring one of the early logos on the back. His mosaic suit is created from 182 fired porcelain photographs of the EKCO factory, its workers and the products they made.

His posture and slight smile on his face of cold cast bronze, reflects the shy often diffident man, who although at the helm of a great company, often preferred to remain in the background.

The sculpture is a dedication to EKCO employees. “OurEric” stands on the plinth, but his suit makes it clear that more than just a brand, Eric built a community.



FKCO

Our Eric

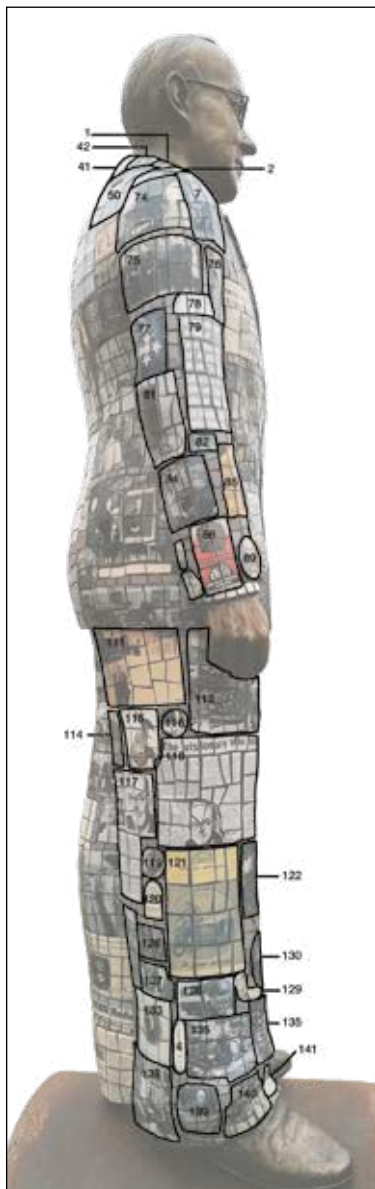
by Jimmie and Pamela Fielding
and Emma Stone

A celebration of Eric King's Eric GSA

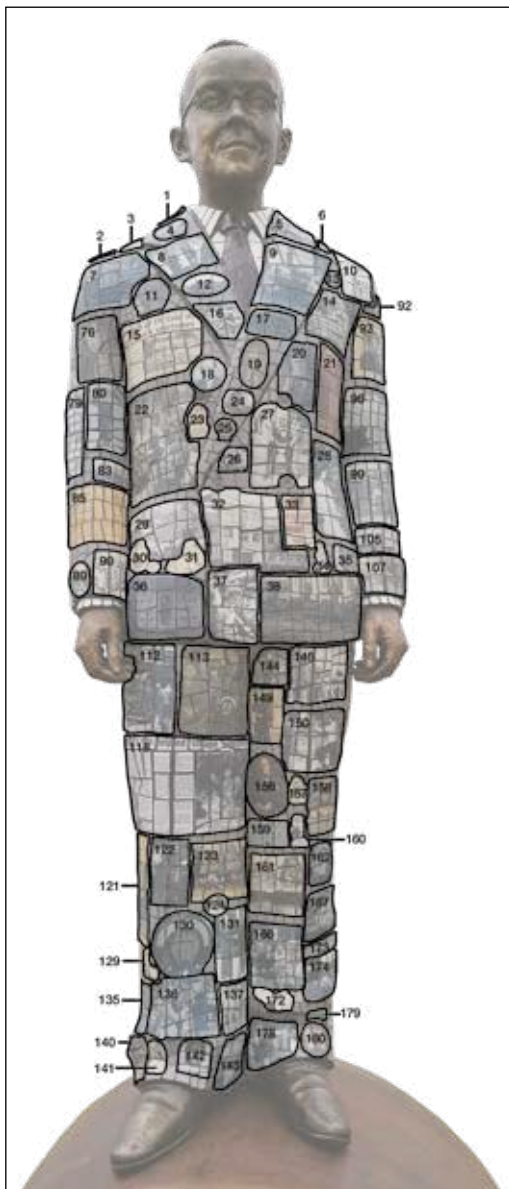
The Eric GSA was established in 1980.
It was the first GSA in the world. It was the
first GSA to have a GSA office. It was the
first GSA to have a GSA office.

2010

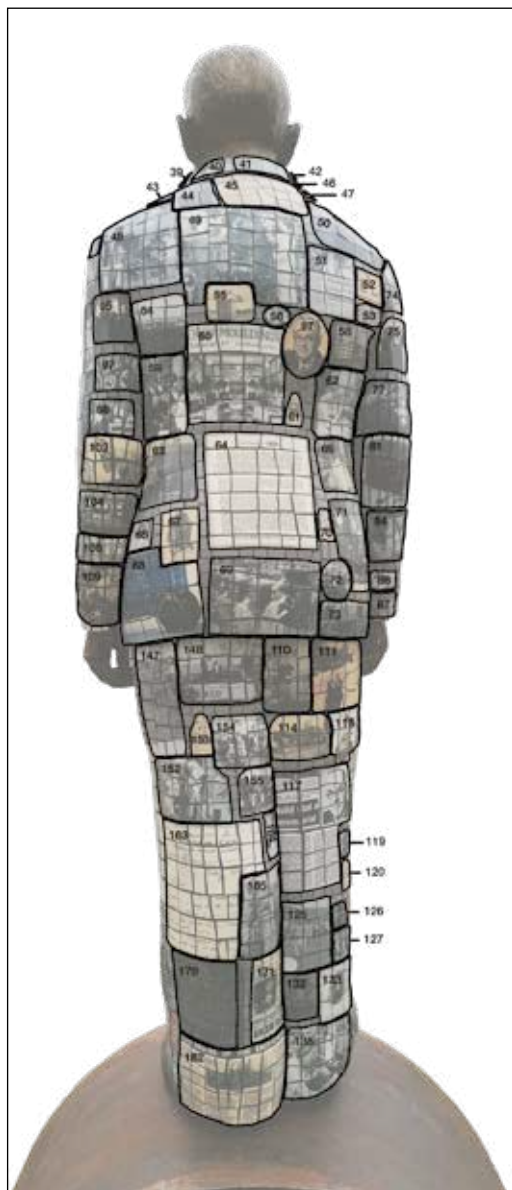
KEY to the stories behind the pictures



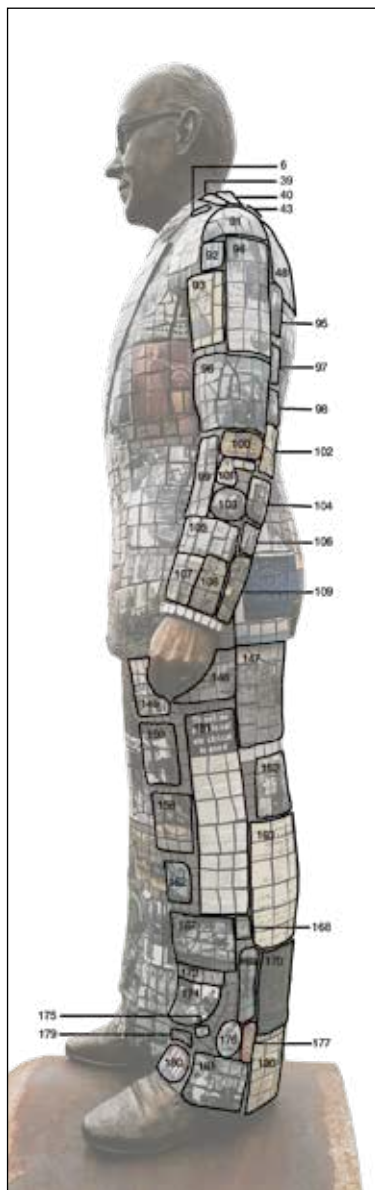
RIGHT ARM & TROUSER LEG



JACKET FRONT

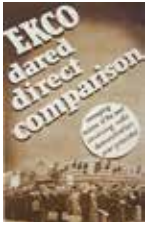


JACKET BACK



LEFT ARM & TROUSER LEG

JACKET FRONT



001

Advert
"Ekco dared direct comparison"



006

AD75 Radio 1939



002

T1154 transmitter fitted as standard equipment in British bombers



007

Public address van, a popular form of publicity in the 30's



003

Advert
"Ekco units, silent power"



008

Eric K Cole at function



004

AD65 Radio 1934 by Wells Coates



009

Workers at office window



005

Lorry outside EKCO factory



010

Advert
"what do you think of the new EKCO radio"



AD36 Radio 1935

011



Factory worker with television

016



EKCO company plane

012



EKCO logo, back of battery eliminator

017



AD65 Radio 1934 by Wells Coates

013



Photo Eric K. Cole

018



25th anniversary cake

014



Eric as a young boy

019



Press cutting "Memories of the town's sportsmen" December 2000

015



William Streatfield Verrells (Billy Verrells) Co-founder of EKCO, Chairman & M.D

020



021

Magazine Advert 1935



022

AD65 moulding line



M. J. MANNERS
"No auto, flask, barrel,
nor sign of savagery but here
made for gender, bed and
mercenary trade."

023

M.J. Manners,
Caricature from
a dinner menu.
Feb 1932



Large EKCO van

024



A22 Radio 1945

025



Oxygen dial
promotional photo

026



Advert Daily Herald
"page boys"
promotional photo

027



Female factory worker

028



W.S. Verrells,
Caricature from
a dinner menu.
Feb 1932

030



EKCO factory aerial
view 1945

029



E.K. Cole,
Caricature from
a dinner menu.
Feb 1932

031



032

Front of EKCO factory



Advert "Ekco units, silent power"

033



Battery eliminator

036



A.J. Barrett, Caricature from a dinner menu. Feb 1932

034



Mrs Shiela Curry, Assembly line

037



035

Eric with display



Service engineers, 1932. They covered the entire UK

038



EKCO Nova ware promotional photo

042

JACKET BACK



EKCO radio display

043



Nova ware designed by David Harman Powell, promotional drawing

039



EKCO VHF Television receiver, 1950's

044



Advert "Radiograms, Consoles, Receivers"

040



Eric's RAF permit – he had the highest civilian clearance

045



Advert EKCO "Small page boys"

041



Telephone

046



EKCO logo
red plastic



Eric's war pass
(front)

047

052



Bakelite presses



A1 MK V111
Airborne
interception radar

048

053



Factory workers



Original site
of the factory
(built 1930) was
a cabbage field

049

054



Eric at Egen
Electrics



Aircraft control
tower used in
testing of radar

050

055



Press cutting
"ESSC
Toastmaster
Jack Barlow"



Lemon squeezer

051

056



Photo Eric K. Cole

057



EKCO mouldings stand, British Industries Fair 1935

060



A23 Valve Radio 1946

058



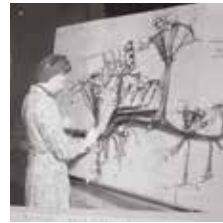
A.R. Frazer, Caricature from a dinner menu. Feb 1932

061



ESSC 25th anniversary dinner 1960

059



Making the cable-form for pilot's panel of a Lancaster bomber

062



063

EKCO horse and carts



Origin of EKCO summary

064



Assembly Line

069



EKCO Science lab

065



C. Borrowman, Caricature from a dinner menu. Feb 1932

070



Carnival Queen Ethel Wilson, Southend 1931

066



Presentation of Portrait by Frank. A. Salisbury to Eric on EKCO silver jubilee

071



B H Logger

067



Barry and Joan Peters with Eddie Mount ESSC "Our Eric" Open Day. Nov 2019

072



AD65 blueprint

068



EKCO lorries

073

RIGHT ARM



Advert
"Percy the page
boy"

078



Prince Phillip
at EKCO

074



Press cutting
"How EKCO helped
win the war"

079



Queen Mary with
Billy Verrells,
Eric K Cole

075



Advert cartoon
"Percy the page
boy"

080



Photo of
Eric K Cole
as a young man

076



Thermovent
Electric heater

081



E. K. Cole CBE
1958

077



Advert
"Radiograms,
Consoles,
Receivers"

082



Small EKCO van

083



Advert
"Sets, Consoles,
Radiograms"

088



Ladies watching television

084



Henry Cole,
Eric's father
1925

089



Wages Envelope

085



EKCO girls,
Goods inwards
1939,
Ada Laflin née
Reynalds and
friends

090



Plastic chairs

086

LEFT ARM



Mike Wright
apprentice

087



One of the tunnels
in the factory's
underground shelter

091



Plastic cutlery

092



Assembly Line wiring

097



Mrs Cole
(Muriel Bradshaw)
as a young lady

093



Worker checking
television wiring

098



Advert
RG23
Radiogram

094



Press cutting
"EKCO worker and
athlete Eddie Mount
1950's Southchurch
Park"

099



Eric with the
Duchess of Kent.
Oct 1947

095



B86 Radio box

100



EKCO War News

096



W. L. Jones,
Caricature from
a dinner menu.
Feb 1932

101



Mr. Richard "Spencer" Spencer

102



Cycling home from EKCO factory

107



Mrs. Laflin (née Millar) with her original 1960s record player

103



EKCO lab coat

108



Transmitter

104



Worker with drill press

109



EKCO Electronics works sign advertising for vacancies 1959/60

105

TROUSER (RIGHT LEG)



Advert EKCO "Small page boys"

106



Reception EKCO

110



Eric in Southend

111



Former worker
Eddie Mount, with
his EKCO archive.
2019

116



Factory Workmen

112



Press cutting
"Build Dad
a memorial"
2008

117



Wells Coates
designer of AD65
with Wyborn
(Amateur wireless
1934)

113



Press cutting
"Visionary who
helped shape
Southend"

118



Possibly ladies
hostel at one of
shadow factories

114



Peter Brown
co-author of EKCO
Sounds

119



Advert "EKCO
All-Electric Radio"
with globe

115



Nurse Rawlingson,
Caricature from
a dinner menu.
Feb 1932

120



EKCO service
bulletin
December 1931

121



Audrey Snee,
(Publisher EKCO
sounds), Anne
Schwegmann
Fielding, Tamsin
Evans (Artists)
Open Day ESSC
November 24th 2019

126



Factory worker

122



Minnie at
the social club –
EKCO and ESSC
“character”

127



EKCO FC
Borough
combination
Divison III
Champions
1934-5

123



EKCO lorry

128



Chris Poole Author
of EKCO Sounds

124



E. R. Pring,
Caricature from
a dinner menu.
Feb 1932

129



Barry Peters winning
at ESSC Sports day,
100 yards.
c1959

125



AD65 Radio 1934

130



Eric handshake

131



Eddie Mount receiving the Mile Cup 1950

136



Sally Bradshaw
Eric Cole's
mother-in-law

132



ESSC netball team.
Joan Peters
(front row second
from left)
1967/8

137



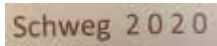
Richard Godsill,
Sally Bradshaw's
brother and first
EKCO "dealer"

133



Assembly line wiring

138



Schweg 2020.
Artist's signature

134



Derek Cole 2009,
with EKCO reliability
Thermovent made in
1948, which he was
still using

139



Assembly line with
Eric

135



National EKCO India

140



N. C. Robertson
(in charge of testing.
Deputy managing
director after the war). Caricature
from a dinner menu.
Feb 1932

141



Cowbridge House,
the nucleus
of EKCO'S
Malmesbury factory

145



Advert EKCO Radio

142



Reception area one
of EKCO factories

146



EKCO design team

143



Luftwaffe map of
Southend marking
out EKCO factory
top left.
August 1941

147

TROUSER (LEFT LEG)



EKCO float,
Southend Carnival

148



Assembly line
worker

144



William Streatfield
Verrells and Queen
Mary 1941

149



Car radio 1933
Olympia demo

150



Jerry Bruinker Chief
Engineer (far left)
Eric Cole and Tony
Martin Technical
Director (right) meet-
ing at US General at
Cedar Rapids, Iowa,
USA, c1952

155



Press cutting
“Timeline of a local
electrical legend”
2008

151



Portrait of Eric by
Frank. A. Salisbury

156



EKCO delivery men

152



Barry Kay,
Caricature from
a dinner menu.
Feb 1932

157



A. W. Martin,
Caricature from
a dinner menu.
Feb 1932

153



Advert “EKCO
All-Electric radio”
1931-2

158



ESSC Promotional
photograph. Lesley
Davies sitting at
the bar

154



Exit sign
underground shelter
ARS1 Blast door

159



Ivey Smith,
Caricature from
a dinner menu.
Feb 1932

160



Miss EKCO 1957
with Mrs. Cole

165



Metal worker

161



Wedding photo.
Eric Cole and Muriel
Bradshaw. Father
Henry Cole (with
moustache) behind

166



Mother and baby,
plastic child seat

162



Post Room

167



Letter to Marconi,
re patents infringed
1924

163



Vanity PT378 Radio

168



Advert "EKCO life
tested radio"

164



Minnie - EKCO and
ESSC "character"

169



EKCO receiver plaque

170



Nova ware cups and saucers

175



Advert "Model 64 Radio"

171



Mother with baby in plastic bath

176



C. Graham Hardy, Caricature from a dinner menu. Feb 1932

172



EKCO logo red plastic

177



EKCO NOVA logo

173



Factory worker

178



Prince Phillip and panel 1968 award for Elegant design for Nova ware, stacking tableware

174



Advert "Registered dealer"

179



THBEAR01 M23
Radio

180



Press cutting
"Sad demise of
EKCO empire"

182



Mother and baby
competition

181



Caricatures by Lissenden
from a Dinner menu
Feb 1932, presumed to be
the 3 weeks after the fire

Photographs for the sculpture came from various sources. Thank you to those who kindly gave permission to use them:

Southend Museums, The Cole and Muir families, Co-Authors of EKCO Sounds Peter C. Brown and the late Chris Poole, publisher Audrey Snee, EKCO Sports and Social Club and many, many former workers and friends of EKCO.

Particular thanks go to Audrey Snee for her tireless campaigning for a lasting memorial to EKCO.

Thank you all for sharing your memories for future generations in Southend.

Anne Schwegmann-Fielding

THE ARTISTS <http://www.anneschwegmann-fielding.com>

Lead Artist, Design and Mosaic

<https://www.tamsinevans.com>

Clay, Fibreglass and Bronze

<http://www.mcondron.co.uk>

Metal

For more information about EKCO and to download a copy of the brochure go to <https://www.southendmuseums.co.uk/our-eric>

The EKCO Sounds book is available from

<https://www.estuarypublishing.co.uk>

Southend Museum and good bookshops.

“What made Eric so special was how much he valued his staff. I think what echoes through time about the company, apart from the ‘round radios’, a completely new concept in radio design of its time, is that during a time of high unemployment in Southend and the surrounding areas, the company not only sat at the cutting edge of design and manufacture of its products, but employed from the local communities on a full-time basis.

They worked hard to meet the demand of the ever-growing list of clients both in the UK and overseas and Eric reflected this in the parties and outings he provided for the workers and their families. There was a time when most families in the town either had one of their number who worked for EKCO, or knew someone close-by who did”.

Peter C. Brown, Co-Author of EKCO Sounds.

EKCo

