



BY APPOINTMENT
HER MAJESTY THE QUEEN
SUPPLIERS & MANUFACTURERS
OF RADIO AND TELEVISION
ROBERTS RADIO LIMITED.



BY APPOINTMENT
H.R.H. THE PRINCE OF WALES
MANUFACTURERS & SUPPLIERS
OF RADIO RECEIVERS
ROBERTS RADIO LIMITED.

The History of ROBERTS RADIO

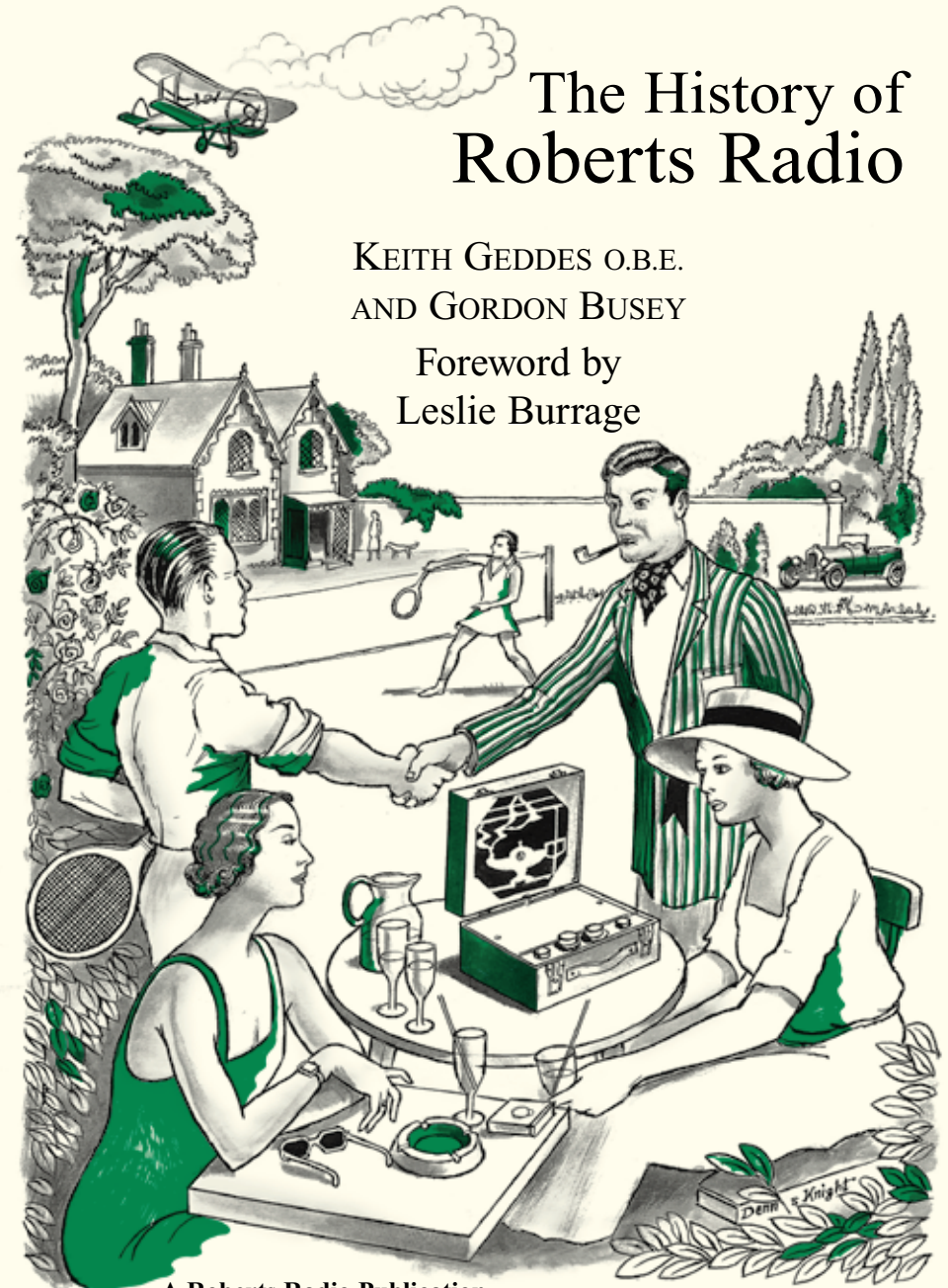
80th
Anniversary Edition

KEITH GEDDES &
GORDON BUSEY

The History of Roberts Radio

KEITH GEDDES O.B.E.
AND GORDON BUSEY

Foreword by
Leslie Burrage



A Roberts Radio Publication

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K. G. & G. B.

'Changes and a New Millennium & Roberts' 80 Years of Innovation'
Jean Miller, 2012

*Illustration on previous page:
An early Roberts' portable in a setting typical of the period
(Dennis Knight, 1987)*

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Leslie Burrage

FOREWORD

With any change of ownership of a company there always comes some degree of uncertainty, both among those employed and their customers, particularly one which had been founded and run by a single family for over 60 years. The purchase of Roberts Radio by the Glen Dimplex Group towards the end of 1994 was, in some ways, no different but the result proved very positive.

I recognised the value and potential in this business and remain as passionate today about the brand and Roberts' unique heritage and strong values as I ever was.

Roberts has remained true to its founding principles of providing exceptional quality and service thus enabling us to compete, lead and in many cases out-live other major global brands. Roberts' unique company ethos has ensured we survive the difficult times by running a lean operation with an extremely loyal and stable work force. One member of our team, Stan Vandenberghe, started working with Roberts in 1942 and nearly 70 years on he remains a key member of our sales team.

Protecting the brand has not in any way held Roberts back. We have broadened its consumer profile to include and embrace all age groups. The introduction of new products including DAB and FM iPod docking systems and internet radio has enabled us to appeal to a younger more technically astute consumer. Today's consumers are more demanding and have technology requirements that continue to evolve at an incredibly fast pace. Roberts has remained at the forefront of the radio market with world firsts including Solar DAB technology and Pause/Rewind facilities. Another important development is our expansion overseas which has become a lucrative part of our business. Our brand reputation has enabled us to establish Roberts in markets across the globe from Japan to Australia, America to Europe and this is just the beginning.

Roberts is celebrating its 80th Anniversary this year which in itself demonstrates major success. Unfortunately many global companies have failed to succeed even with substantial resource behind them; this clearly proves the value of protecting your brand.

I often reflect on how the business began and how it has developed over the years. One of the highlights for me is how The Royal Family has embraced Roberts throughout our long history. From Her Majesty The Queen, through the wider Royal Household and across the UK and Global Markets, we have an amazingly loyal fan base. We remain hugely grateful and completely committed to them and our wonderful Roberts brand, over which we recognise we are merely passing custodians.

Leslie Burrage
Chief Executive



SolarDAB – a World First



SOUND 100 – DAB/FM iPod docking system with CD. New for 2012.

ROBERTS' 80 YEARS OF INNOVATION

Extended digital applications and styling combines with continued technical innovations.

Having set yet another 'First' for the industry through the launch of a portable digital radio in late 1999, the next decade proved to be more challenging. It was also extremely rewarding in terms of demonstrating how a brand known perhaps best for its styling and heritage has not only kept pace with, but been firmly at the forefront of a number of technical innovations.

Whilst the migration from analogue to digital listening has perhaps been slower than might be hoped, especially by the broadcasters, the wealth of additional features have made the choice for digital, once explained, unequivocal. The initial advantages over analogue were extensive. The listener was introduced to 'digital quality sound', a wider choice of stations coupled with scrolling text information, reduced interference and easy 'one touch' tuning. Digital listening continues to evolve in ways we could never have predicted. Listeners demand greater choice and wider support services in ways and at times that suit their own busy lifestyles.

An early addition to digital radios from Roberts was the 'PausePlus™' facility which enabled the listener, through the press of a button, to pause transmission, to stop listening and then restart without losing any content. Further enhancement of this was to add a 'listen again' feature to be able to enjoy a particular programme or piece of music outside of the standard broadcast time. This feature is linked to Internet radio, another Roberts 'World First'.

The additional benefit of Internet radios harness the strength of the world wide web (through a broadband connection) to almost exponentially increase the number of radio stations available. This has proved greatly popular among expats living abroad, allowing them to keep up to date with any number of 'home' broadcasts ranging from their favourite football team's progress to the happenings in Ambridge. It has also proved invaluable with holidaymakers and business travellers, whilst foreign nationals living in the UK can access stations from their home countries right around the globe.

The last decade has seen an explosion of advances in electronics for largely screen based applications through computers, iPods and i-Pads, gaming and social networking to name but a few. Roberts has continually adapted and evolved its product range to reflect the ways that people listen to music. Downloading music tracks is now, for many, the way forward for music listening rather than by buying CDs. This method has allowed access to a vast array of music from a wide range of sources and offers the ability to organise them at will. Here the 'SOUND' range of products also provide iPod docking stations for quality playback whilst charging the iPod or iPhone at the same time. Through the development of such products, Roberts has been able to broaden its customer base to appeal to all age groups.

Further evidence of how Roberts has continued to keep pace with technology has been the development and introduction of 'ColourSTREAM' to the 'SOUND' range of products, combining a DAB/FM and Wi-Fi Internet radio with a dock for an iPod or iPhone. The touch screen display allows easy navigation through the

source options or stream music from a PC. The sound quality is enhanced by using stereo speakers within an acoustically tuned quality wooden cabinet. The ColourSTREAM, like its other SOUND siblings, effectively replaces the need for any other audio system in the home.

Design and style has been synonymous with Roberts since its outset and this is amply seen through today's product range. For some, generally older listeners, the radio provides a key point of contact with the outside world and is regarded as a 'friend' rather than inert object and hence needs to be attractive. Here the 'Revival' series of radios which take their origins from the 1950's has been a cornerstone of the digital product range almost from the outset. In recent years the range of colours has been adjusted to reflect changing fashions and have been joined by a number of 'Limited Editions'. These include a series of Cath Kidston florals, a Gloss piano black and a Union Flag. This last offering was designed initially for a feature on Royal Warrant Holders, but its enthusiastic reception was such to prompt a move to full production. Its launch coincided with The Royal Wedding in April 2011 and it continues to attract much attention as we enter Her Majesty The Queen's Jubilee Year.

Roberts Radio has enjoyed strong links with The Royal Family for many years and currently holds two Royal Warrants from The Queen and The Prince of Wales. That the 80th birthday of Roberts Radio coincides with The Queen's Diamond Jubilee and the Olympic Games being held in London, is sure to produce some further special editions to commemorate these milestones.

Whilst the development of digital and its widening range of applications has formed a key thrust of Roberts' energy, the range of products offered continues to be designed to suit all tastes in terms of style, function and budget. Many competitors have exited the analogue sector, due more from an influx of imported, largely low quality entry level products decimating margins, than in the knowledge that, at some point, analogue frequencies will be switched off. Roberts has continued to innovate and develop a range of models across both the analogue and digital formats for the global market.

Clock radios remain an important part of Roberts' business and 80% of these are still analogue models. More classic styling is offered through both the 'Revival' analogue models and 'Classic' range. However, niche markets are another area where Roberts' ingenuity has produced a winning formula time and time again. The 'Sports' range has proven for a number of years to be the ideal solution for the revered 'Test Match Special' broadcasts as well as Radio 5 Live. Coming in pocket sized format, with the addition of earphones, adds to the listening pleasure. Other specialist models include a 'wind up' radio for travellers, a water resistant 'shower' radio and from the 'rugged' range, the 'Terrain' with impact resistant casing for outdoor workers and the 'Poolside' water resistant model. Another key area is 'world radios' which include short wave, pre-sets on some models and neat carrying cases for regular travellers.

Not resting on their technology achievements over the past decade, Roberts has looked at ways of conserving energy and the environment within their product range.



Stan Vandenberghe – The longest serving Roberts employee

First emerging around 2008 was the 'ecologic' range which was developed to reduce power consumption and improve battery life. Around the same time the 'solarDAB' radio was launched which could be powered by solar, battery or mains but also incorporated a built in battery recharge facility. More recent engineering developments have further enhanced Roberts' market leading position on environmental responsibility. In 2012 the majority of portable radios will carry the 'eco' label, denoting a minimum standard of environmental performance achieved by technologies such as Switch Mode Power Supply to lower operational and standby power consumption, Extended Battery life and built-in battery charging for rechargeable batteries. In addition these products are endorsed by the Energy Savings Trust for their energy efficiency. Here Roberts strives to not only meet but exceed the required levels.

One of the factors which has been part of the Roberts Radio ethos since its formation has been a sense of purpose and passion for not only radio in all its guises but a passion for maintaining the Roberts brand. As a brand with integrity and a lust for innovation, Roberts continues to highly value its loyal retailers and consumer base. Consumer queries are dealt with by a dedicated team based in West London while the trade accolades do much to confirm the high regard to which the brand is held. At the recent ERT awards ceremony, it was Roberts Radio who was voted 'brown Goods Supplier of the year; no mean feat among the rafts of global players in the brown goods market. Roberts continues to build relationships with its key retailers who are predominantly Independent dealers. Like Roberts, they

have evolved their businesses to meet the changing customer demands in terms of products yet retain their strengths of offering excellent product knowledge and customer service. In an era where the Internet is becoming both a threat and an opportunity to all retailers, Roberts has kept pace with needs by regularly updating its website to be easy to navigate, to inform readers and direct them to appropriate stockists.

The Roberts Radio Company today, whilst being part of the Glen Dimplex Group, a privately owned Group based in Ireland, has been allowed to retain both its identity and independence to move forward without undue bureaucracy, to forge ahead in its chosen field and to always place the brand, its products and innovations as its drivers. Along with the other Glen Dimplex Group companies, which include household names such as Belling and Morphy Richards, the brand names have served to add trust and heritage and be retained for their strengths. This strategy differs from some competitors who have axed many well-known brand names after purchase. The ongoing success of Roberts, especially during the last few of the 80 years where financial turmoil of an unprecedented nature has rocked the global economy, must be in part attributed to the value of the brand along with the insatiable desire to bring further improvements and innovations to the rapidly changing market.

So what bodes for the 80th birthday and beyond? New products which will be on offer include the ever popular 'Revival' in Union Flag colours, appropriate for the key celebrations taking place in 2012, The Queen's Diamond Jubilee, The London Olympics and the Roberts Radio 80th anniversary. In addition, a new 'Vintage' digital radio has been launched to mark the anniversary. Whilst these models offer retro and classic styling respectively, this belies their technical capabilities. More overtly of the era is the launch of the 'ConnectЯ' app for iPhone users to use as a remote control which can connect to many Roberts internet based products in the home. This, once again, confirms the part Roberts continues to play in the fast developing digital age.

Not only has Roberts Radio made its mark on the UK radio industry and all its developments over the past 80 years but has spread its wings to the international stage where sales are expanding. For the future it will undoubtedly continue as an ambassador for increasing the ownership of digital radio.

CHANGES AND A NEW MILLENNIUM

The first half of the 1990's was to be the most difficult in the history of Roberts Radio. From the time that Chairman and Managing Director, Richard Roberts, was diagnosed with cancer it became apparent that there was no logical successor to take the reins. Despite assembling old friends which included former managing director of Comet, David Hewitt, to advise the Company, the focus would never be the same. After Richard Roberts' death in late 1991, to which the large gathering at his memorial service demonstrated the extent of his standing among the industry, his wife and her son-in-law were appointed to the Board.

The economic conditions, however, were such that the market at the time for 'traditional' styled quality products was losing share. The shift was to products that were largely imported often integrated with other audio formats and bought on price. This made it difficult for the disparate Roberts Board to successfully compete and exposed a lack of defined and viable long term strategy. What made matters more difficult was a lack of capital to make the necessary investment in new technology and manufacturing methods. In an attempt to remain in the mainstream market, some production was moved to the Far East and a venture into the specialist market for short wave radios for World Listening was undertaken. Production of



The Revival 250 series – fifties style 3-band radio. Re-launched in 1993 in the original red leathercloth and extended to sixteen different fashionable colours by the year 2000

high quality TV and audio cabinets continued under the Dynatron brand but with diminishing success. A highlight of the period however was the launch of the 'Revival' range of radios with retro styling taken from the 1950's. These models, albeit with some design and vast technology changes, remain in the range today. The trend for nostalgia, despite living in an increasingly digital era, appears to remain unabated both in the UK and across the Globe.

Efforts to raise capital for expansion were to fail and the only viable way forward was for the Company to be put up for sale. With such a unique heritage, the time to attract a buyer took longer than had been anticipated. As it turned out, the wait brought acquisition by probably the most appropriate partner to be able to bring Roberts Radio into the next millennium, the Glen Dimplex Group. At the time of the purchase, the Group's only exposure to consumer electronics was limited to a mass market range through the Morphy Richards brand. Its other operations were primarily in electric heating and domestic appliances.

Initially integrated within the consumer electronics division of Morphy Richards, it soon became apparent to the new management that the brand demanded its own identity if it were to survive and flourish. This led to setting the Company up as a separate division within the Group. To lead the operation and give the necessary vision, drive and passion, Leslie Burrage was appointed as Chief Executive, who was well respected within the whole electrical industry and brought a wealth of experience. The Company was relocated from West Molesey to Mexborough South Yorkshire but a number of key personnel from within the very experienced engineering, sales and technical teams were retained.



HRH The Prince of Wales greets Leslie Burrage, Chief Executive, Roberts Radio, at a Royal Warrant Holders' day at The Orchard Room, Highgrove, July 2000



Revival Kempton Rose – a limited edition Revival finished in the Cath Kidston Kempton Rose fabric



DreamDock – a clock radio with a dock for iPod / iPhone and superior sound quality, launched in 2012



Vintage – a modern twist on a traditional style DAB and FM radio



SportsDAB 2 – a limited edition Union Flag version launched in celebration of the Olympics 2012

Under the new ownership, the Roberts Radio Management had access to considerable funds for product development; an area which was proving more and more critical for commercial success. However, the need to harness technical innovation has been closely dovetailed with a respect for the heritage of the brand in terms of styling appeal and offering ease of use and features appreciated by customers.

A clear target as the Company moved toward the Millennium and beyond was to widen the brand's appeal, particularly to younger people in order to secure a viable market for the future. With the strategy in place, the development team has strived to place Roberts at the forefront of 'anything that is radio orientated'. This has culminated in continuing the Roberts tradition of being 'first' with a number

of innovations, whilst designers have firmly positioned the range to appeal to those demanding both contemporary and traditional styles. Here the continued success of the 'Revival' range of retro styled radios continues to evolve whilst Sound Systems fit neatly with modern interiors.

In addition to design enhancements, this period brought some unique products to the brand's portfolio; World radios with the unique permission to have BBC WORLD SERVICE engraved on the products and for sports fans, the personal 'Sports radio' range included the first 3-band personal radio; able to pick up Test Match Special which was then only broadcast on Long Wave.

The most significant development, however, was in true Roberts Radio style, another 'First', that of a portable Digital Audio Broadcast (DAB) radio which was launched in November 1999. The move to digital broadcasting has been the most significant and exciting change in radio since its inception in 1922. In conjunction with the BBC, which has been the primary provider of the infrastructure, Roberts has led the way in driving this new and innovative market. The benefits to the listener are clearer signals without any signal drift, an ever widening range of stations to listen to and visual content such as news, weather, traffic and content relating to the broadcast itself. Since its first launch, the applications of digital broadcasting have been extensive as new ways of interacting and connecting between the latest electronic products have exploded; a fraction of these being referred to later.

When the first generation digital radio from Roberts was launched, the 'Classic 2000,' few would have been able to predict how quickly or into what guises and applications the 'digital era' would mature. More certain was to predict that Roberts Radio would continue to innovate and succeed in its pledge of offering "Sound for Generations".



The next generation – the world's first portable D.A.B. radio, launched in May 2000 for field trials with the BBC and other home and overseas broadcasters

THE ROBERTS RADIO TEAM 2012



Gerry Thorn – Product and IT Director



Roberts Radio Technical Services – SW London



Amanda Woodward – Product Support



Harry Roberts

A LAD OF GOOD ABILITY

Harry Roberts was born on 20 May 1910 in Mile End, London, the youngest of his parents' six children. The family had originally been moderately affluent, but had become casualties of the rough-and-tumble of Edwardian commerce, and though they never knew outright poverty it was a constant struggle to maintain standards. Harry had to go to the local Board School, which was not where middle-class people sent their children from choice, but he always went there respectably dressed, and the family must have derived real satisfaction from the report that the headmaster gave him when he left, at fourteen.

His brother Charles, eldest in the family and twenty years his senior, had found success as a transport manager, and Harry would have liked to follow his example. The first step would have been to buy a second-hand lorry, but he could not raise the necessary £40, nor was he old enough to drive. Instead, he went to work for the Rees Mace Manufacturing Company, on Cannon Street – one of the many small manufacturers catering for the buoyant market in wireless sets that had built up since broadcasting had begun, in November 1922.

Rees mace specialised in “portables”. Such sets were more properly termed *transportable*, being too bulky and heavy to encourage frequent movement, but they had the great advantage of being self-contained, at a time when other types of receiver often had external batteries, usually had separate loudspeakers, and always



Harry Roberts at school, c. 1923

(M26681)

EST If the Memo. is in reply to a communication from the Education Officer, please state here the reference heading and number of communication.

The correspondence of all departments of the School should be enclosed in one envelope, addressed to the Education Officer. Special envelopes are supplied for this purpose. It is particularly requested that, as far as possible, each Memo. may be confined to one subject.

London County Council.

(STAMP HERE NAME OF SCHOOL)

Canal Road Boys'

[SUBJECT.] 23rd July 1924.

Harry Roberts has been a pupil at the above school since infancy and was working in Standard VII. when he left.

He has always attended regularly and punctually, and I have proved him to be an industrious, persevering and thoroughly trustworthy boy.

He is a lad of good ability, and is very good at woodwork. He also holds certificates in swimming and Life-saving.

He is very polite and well behaved and I feel certain he will get on well wherever he may go, and wish him every success.

S.D. Jackson
H. Master
S.D.

had to be connected either to an outdoor aerial or to a separate "frame" aerial, typically three foot square. Few people in central London had space to erect an aerial, but a good proportion of them were wealthy enough to disregard the relatively high price of a portable, which needed additional valves to offset the poor performance of its internal frame-aerial.

Portables were thus a promising line, and when in the spring of 1925 Harry Roberts moved on to this second job it was with another firm in the same field: Pell, Cahill & Company Ltd, of Newman Street W1, who derived from that name their trade mark, "Pelican". Here, "his work included the adjustment of wireless sets and rectification of faults in sets in service", to quote the highly favourable testimonial given to him by the Managing Director, M.R.Cahill, in October 1927 – on notepaper bearing the words "In Liquidation".

Telephone Museum 9236-7

Telegrams Pelcarad Wesdo London

CAHILL & COMPANY LTD.
 Manufacturers of Radio Apparatus
 64 NEWMAN STREET
 LONDON W.1

Directors
 M.R. CAHILL
 H.W.F. HUNTER ARUNDELL
 J.C. McCONNELL
 F.W. McCONNELL

27th October 1927.

IN LIQUIDATION.

TO WHOM IT MAY CONCERN.

This is to certify that Mr. H. Roberts was employed by this Company for a period of 2 years 7 months. His work included the adjustment of wireless sets and rectification of faults in sets in service.

His work and conduct were to our entire satisfaction at all times and we consider that he is a very capable man in the class of work in which he was with this Company employed.

M.R. Cahill.
 Managing Director.

MRC/SJ.

The failure rate among small-scale manufacturers at this time was high; the industry was easy to enter, and some of the people it attracted lacked the necessary abilities. However, the small manufacturer did enjoy some advantages over the major companies such as Marconi, BTH and GEC, who had initiated British broadcasting with a view to profiting from the resulting demand for receivers. He could use circuits culled from the technical press or from valve manufacturers' data as a basis for "kitchen table" assembly with correspondingly low overheads, and could adapt quickly to changing fashions. Output was small enough to be absorbed locally, in part through freelance salesmen, who would demonstrate sets from a variety of manufacturers in the prospect's home.

One such freelance was Richard R. Bennett, who had been Cahill's Service Manager, and it was he who gave Harry Robert his next job: collecting receivers from suppliers and demonstrating them, thus leaving Bennett free to concentrate on contacting prospective customers. Among Bennett's suppliers was a young man who was to play a major role in the founding of Roberts Radio.



Trade cards of the late 1920's

A PARTNERSHIP IN THE MAKING

Leslie Bidmead, five years older than Harry Roberts, had been actively interested in radio since his schooldays. One night in September 1923, using a home-built two-valve receiver ("detector and note-magnifier"), he scanned the broadcast waveband after European transmitters had closed down, and picked up an American station, WGY. Reception was loud enough to be audible 40 feet from the loudspeaker, and clear enough to enable him to send a detailed account of the programmes to the General Electric Company in Schenectady so that they could confirm the feat and confound his doubting friends, which they duly did.

In about 1926 he designed a battery eliminator, interested a radio shop in Praed Street, Paddington in handling it, and took a job with them. A year later, in partnership with one Vincent Vittles, he established a receiver manufacturing company, Lonsdale Radio, in Lonsdale Road, Kilburn. Bidmead produced the sets while Vittles looked after the commercial side, and initially the company prospered, building up to a workforce of around ten. But then two circumstances arose that were together to destroy it. One was a succession of substantial orders from an entrepreneur (later to become rich and famous) who systematically withheld payment, though with such skill that the company never quite found it worth while to cut its losses. The other was an illicit sideline by Vittles, which Bidmead discovered only when it was too late. Valve manufacturers supplied setmakers at prices well below wholesale, and Vittles devoted more effort to supplying unscrupulous retailers with cut-price valves than he did to selling Lonsdale receivers.

Their landlord was a Major Barnett – a tall, military-looking gentleman who lived in The Boltons, Kensington, owned a good deal of property, and ran The Electrical Devices Company, whose mainstay was clips for connecting ignition leads to sparking plugs. On learning of the failure of the Lonsdale venture, he asked Bidmead what he proposed to do next and, more specifically, how he proposed to pay off his arrears of rent. Bidmead said that he knew a man called Harry Roberts who had a flair for selling and would, he thought, come into partnership with him; he was aware that Roberts was disillusioned with Richard R. Bennett, who was leaving him to do most of the work while himself spending much of the day in public houses. Seeing a business opportunity, Barnett offered to write off the rent arrears and provide Bidmead and Roberts with the necessary capital and accommodation, at his premises off Theobald's Road, if they would produce receivers for his own company and sell them on commission under its trade mark "Eldeco". The two young men decided to accept the offer. The commission was not over-generous, but they calculated that if they worked hard it would yield a living wage. And work they did, to such good effect that within a year or two they were earning more than Major Barnett thought proper.

He told Roberts that he proposed to change their remuneration. "Would that be upwards or downwards, Major Barnett?" Roberts asked innocently. "Don't be silly!" was the reply. "In that case, we shall be leaving today", he said, and left the office. An hour later, Barnett was ready to negotiate. "I'm sorry", he began, "I've made a mistake", "Yes you have", Roberts agreed.

Roberts and Bidmead were in fact too prudent to carry out their threat immediately; it was 1932, and no time to drop out of work. Instead they negotiated with Barnett but spent their spare time looking for premises where they could set up on their own, with capital of about £50. At that time rentals were low enough to allow them to stay in central London, and they soon found two rooms in Hills Place, near Oxford Circus, which they set about converting into a very basic factory, some of the money coming from the sale of Bidmead's motor bike. Any doubts that they were doing the right thing by leaving were dispelled by the realisation, as negotiations continued, that Barnett saw them simply as wage-earners. And that was certainly not how they saw themselves.

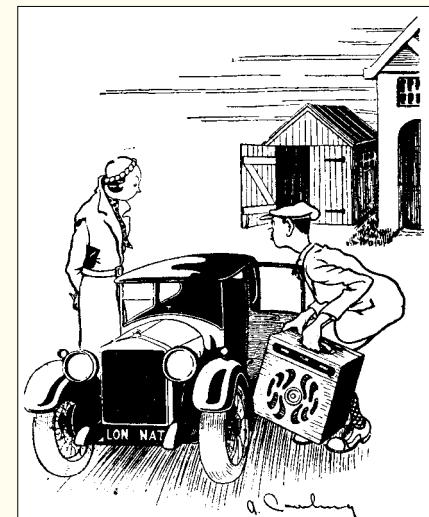


The Company's first machine tool: a Hobbies Triumph treadle fretsaw (c. 1932) used to cut radio chassis from aluminium sheet, and still in working order

ROOM AT THE TOP

Roberts and Bidmead moved into Hills Place on 22 October 1932, and continued to concentrate on portable receivers. From the outset they adopted a business philosophy that Harry had absorbed from his father: make a top-quality product and sell it to top-quality customers. The first of these objectives was primarily Leslie's responsibility, the second entirely Harry's. Lacking any means of direct access to his desired customers, but lacking nothing in self-confidence, he took a sample receiver to Harrods and asked to see the buyer of the Piano department, which at that time handled wireless sets. It says much for Harry's personality that, barely into his twenties, he persuaded the buyer to hear a demonstration, and much for Leslie's design that Harry left with an order for half a dozen sets, thereby beginning a most fruitful association. Orders from other leading department stores followed, and the little company was on its way.

During their first year production averaged under three receivers a week, and turnover was just £1,557. They could not afford to hold stocks of receivers, so orders were executed as they came in, and both partners would often work through the night to meet delivery dates. However, they did not feel obliged to stay tied to Hill Place if a promising opportunity offered elsewhere. On one occasion a hotel-keeper from Rock, in Cornwall, offered them not just a sale but a free weekend's stay if they could demonstrate a portable receiver giving satisfactory reception there. Confident that they could do so, and tempted by the prospect of a few days off, they accepted the challenge and motored down to Rock. The receiver performed admirably, and they were unexpectedly able to make the visit even more profitable



'Which shall we take, the car or the wireless set? We can't take both.'



*'Bit of luck I brought the umbrella !'
Specially drawn for 'the Radio Times' by Bert Thomas*

by purchasing on their host's behalf a new refrigerator and a new set of large accumulators for his lighting plant.


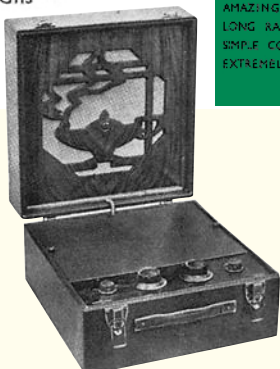
On 18 November 1932 the partners changed their company's name from "Roberts and Bidmead" to the more euphonious "Roberts Radio Company", and subsequently persuaded two younger sisters to change *their* names from "Hayward" to "Roberts" and "Bidmead"; Harry and Doris were married in 1933, Leslie and Elsie in 1935. Nor did the Hayward family's involvement end there. The girl's elder brother Percy acted as the Company's accountant for over thirty years, and the husband of a third sister designed the distinctive "Aladdin's Lamp" loudspeaker-grille used in many of the pre-war models.

Doris worked for a firm that produced stationery and advertising matter for Rolls Royce, and soon "Roberts Radio" too was being die-stamped onto parchment, though the Company was still very small; turnover for 1935 was only about £3,400, which did not afford its owners much scope for high living. After her day's work, Doris would sometimes go into the factory and wind frame aerials – that way she at least saw something of Harry in the evenings. Elsie Bidmead owned a sewing machine, and was given the job of making webbing loops, one of which was supplied with each set to enable the snugly fitting HT battery to be withdrawn from the cabinet.

Production during 1935 averaged about eight receivers per week, which was approaching the maximum attainable at the Hills Place premises. Sales were still confined to the London area, so there was clearly potential for expansion by moving into larger premises and distributing nationwide, and in March 1936 the Company moved a few hundred yards to Rathbone Place, where they occupied



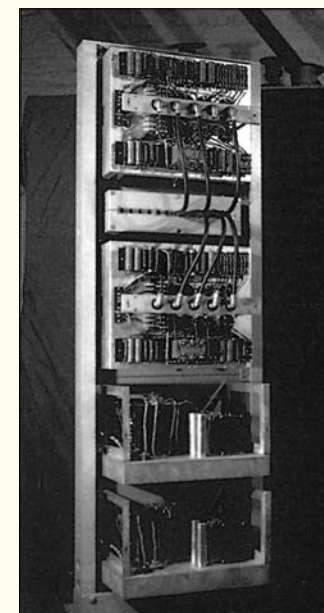
Elsie Hayward, Leslie Bidmead, Doris Roberts and Harry Roberts, c. 1933

<p>SPECIAL FEATURES</p> <p>500 VALVE SUPERHETERODYNE MOVING COIL LOUD SPEAKER SUPERB INTRODUCTION & SINGLE CONTROL TUNING KEEN SELECTIVITY GREAT RANGE ENTIRELY SELF-CONTAINED NO EXTERNAL AERIAL ON EARTH HANDSOME VALUABLE CABINET</p>	<p>ROBERTS RADIO ALL BRITISH THE FINEST MADE</p> <p>C6 CABINET MODEL 20 Gns.</p>	<p>SPECIAL FEATURES</p> <p>FIVE VALVE SUPERHETERODYNE AMAZING SELECTIVITY LONG RANGE SIMPLE CONTROL EXTREMELY COMPACT</p>
	<p>A5 PORTABLE MODEL 15 Gns.</p>  	

From a 1933 brochure. The C6 was self-contained and was one of the Company's only table models until recent times; the A5 was one of its few pre-war superhets

three rooms on each of two floors. The year brought another event of significance when, on 2 July, Doris Roberts gave birth to a son, Richard, destined to succeed his father as Chairman and Managing Director.

The Company still undertook the occasional "one-off" job, as when Roberts and Bidmead were invited by a rich "city" man with the memorable name of E. Beddington Behrens, to visit him and discuss an unspecified commission. When they arrived at his palatial apartment he asked them to sit down, then went to the piano and, to their bewilderment, began to play and sing "You, you're driving me crazy". After several choruses, a radio was turned on very loudly in the next flat; explaining that this often happened without provocation, Behrens announced "Your job, gentlemen, is to beat that!". The challenge was accepted, and Roberts Radio duly supplied him with an instrument incorporating a high-power amplifier and a large loudspeaker. The experience gained no doubt came in useful when the Company subsequently designed and manufactured a rack-mounted amplifier/receiver for the Royal Surrey County Hospital.



Amplifier/receiver, manufactured for the Royal Surrey County Hospital, c. 1936



The
ROBERTS'
MIDGET PORTABLE.

Although under one foot square it houses a complete four-valve screened grid receiver incorporating "Class B" output, driving a high class moving coil loud-speaker. In addition to this, space has been found for a full size H.T. battery of standard type, obtainable anywhere, and a 20 actual ampere hour accumulator.

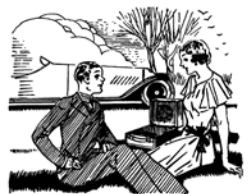
The M. 4. B. leaves nothing to be desired, the re-production being comparable with a full size mains set. All the principal European stations can be received at good strength.

The tuning scale is calibrated in wavelengths, and also station names. By this means rapid and easy tuning is ensured. A printed card is supplied with each receiver giving full working instructions, together with a guarantee covering a period of six Calendar months.

IDEAL FOR



THE HOME



THE CAR



PICNICS



HOLIDAYS



THE HANDSOME CASE IS COVERED IN A
NEW PATTERN HIGH-GRADE BLUE REXINE



NOTE LOCK
TO LID OVER
CONTROLS

SIZE
 $11\frac{3}{8}'' \times 11\frac{3}{8}'' \times 7''$



AS SUPPLIED TO AND USED BY THE B.B.C.

Model M4Q, from a 1937 brochure. Of similar appearance were the M5A mains model (1939) and the M4D (1940-45). An M4D was sold to the Queen in 1939, and limited production continued during the war for the RAF Comforts Fund.

By 1936 the Company was promoting its receivers as "the finest of all portables". They were not yet reviewed in the technical press, so this claim cannot be judged against an independent assessment, but it was probably well founded. Because they refused to cast the portable in the role of poor relation within the radio family, Roberts and Bidmead were prepared to put into their sets the quantity and quality of components necessary to ensure good performance, and because the circuit techniques involved were fairly straightforward this philosophy may well have outweighed the greater technological resources of larger companies.

Early Roberts receivers were mostly in the traditional "suitcase" format, with loudspeaker and frame aerial in the lid. This was well-suited to the moving-iron loudspeakers commonly used in the early 1930s, and when these were superseded by moving-coil speakers of smaller cone-diameter the size of the cabinet was scaled down, in models such as the M4 (1934). However, for the M4Q, launched in

From a 1936 brochure

1937, the Company went over to an “upright” format, which was to be used in numerous models over the next twenty years. As well as taking up less space when in use than a suitcase model of the same nominal size, it was also cheaper to construct, avoided movement of connecting wires, and was easier to provide with a turntable for exploiting the directivity of the frame aerial.

The Company’s faith in its potential for expansion proved to be fully justified. During the first year at Rathbone Place (1936/37) turnover almost doubled, to almost £6400. To achieve this, production had to be more than doubled, since competition and technical progress combined to reduce the average retail price of a Roberts receiver from 11gns to 9gns. Three companies were appointed to distribute outside the south-east, each on a different basis: the Midlands and North of England were covered by J D Morrison of Manchester, acting as Manufacturers’ Agents; the Scottish distributors, Caldwell Young, were contracted to handle no other make of radio; and the West of England was covered by a radio wholesaler, Silcocks Brothers (Bristol) Ltd. These connections endured for some thirty years, being terminated only when a direct sales force was appointed. On 23 April 1937 Roberts Radio became a Private Limited Company, with Roberts and Bidmead as directors and a capital of £3,000, of which £1,000 was paid up. Turnover for 1937/38 was up by about 15%, at £7,400, and 1938/39 saw a spectacular increase to £13,500.

February 17, 1940

THE WIRELESS 7 ELECTRICAL TRADER

Advertisement 137



**Roberts’
Battery Portables supplied to
Y.M.C.A. Overseas
Canteens**

An M.J.Q. Battery Portable being delivered to the first of the fleet of Y.M.C.A. Overseas Canteens.

We are proud that the M.J.Q. was chosen to supply the entertainment in the first of the Y.M.C.A. Overseas Canteens commissioned for service. This fine battery portable represents a definite advance in the design of portable receivers in design, appearance and utility. It will receive all worthwhile stations, even under difficult conditions, whilst volume and quality reproduction are worthy of the best types of mains receivers. Its appearance is outstanding for its quiet dignity. For carrying purposes the controls are covered by a hinged lid and the loudspeaker aperture is reinforced by concealed metal mesh to protect the cone.

Part of an advertisement from the early months of the war

THE WAR YEARS

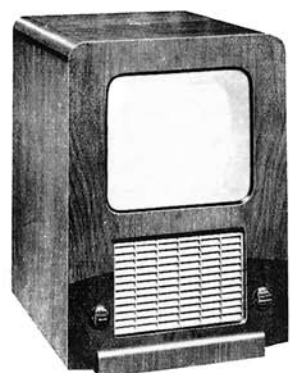
Business continued to boom during the final months of peace, and with the demand for portable radios stimulated rather than depressed by the domestic upheavals of the ensuing “phoney war”, turnover for 1939/40 reached £20,000. Harry Roberts was only 29 when war broke out, and was soon required to register for military service. When he requested a week or two’s deferment to close down his factory, he was asked what it produced, and was then told “We don’t close down radio factories”. Any expectation of “business as usual”, however, was shattered when the British Radio Valve Manufacturers’ Association announced that once existing supplies were exhausted there would be no more valves for domestic radio production. Thus gratification must have been tempered by frustration when, in December 1940, Harry Roberts received a letter from his contact at Harrods informing him that “I personally had the pleasure of selling Her Majesty The Queen, when in our radio department yesterday, one of your Model M4D for her personal use.” This was, in fact, the Queen’s second purchase of a Roberts receiver, for in 1939 she had bought one at the Army and Navy Stores as a present for Princess Elizabeth.

In 1941, perceiving that the West End was a needlessly hazardous location, Harry Roberts began looking for premises in outer London and settled on a large Thames-side boathouse in Creek Road, East Molesey, quite near to his home. Before the end of the year, Rathbone Place was indeed bombed, but by that time everything had been moved to Creek Road except the Company’s stock of cardboard boxes.

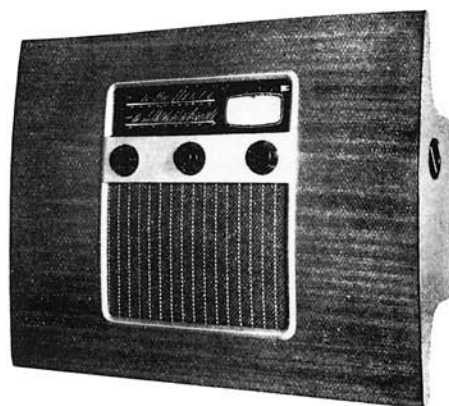


The boathouse at Creek road, to which the Company moved in 1941, showing the heavy traffic congestion that prevailed there latterly

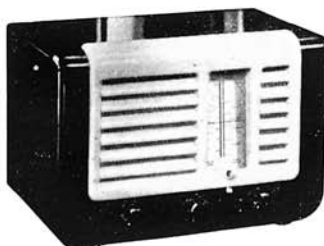
"Britain Can Make It"



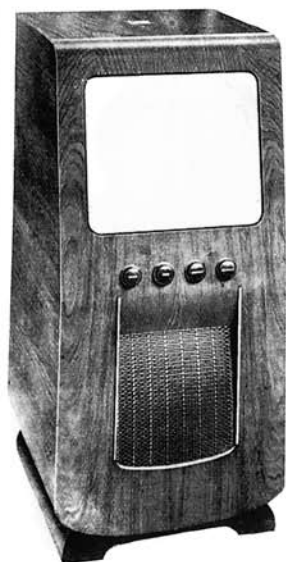
Representative Radar and Television Receivers to be seen at the 'Britain Can Make It' Exhibition held at The Victoria and Albert Museum, Kensington, London, on September 24-October 30.



Top (left). Marconiphone VT.50A Television Receiver incorporating 10-inch tube in walnut cabinet. Release at end of October. Price 49 guineas plus tax.



Top (right). Murphy Radio A.104 mahogany cabinet of novel design in which the front panel acts as a baffle. Full wave coverage. In production. Price £25 plus tax.



Centre. Ekco table model Universal Receiver Type U29. In black plastic (and other colours) with Ivory Escutcheon. In production. Price 13 guineas plus tax.

Left. H.M.V. Television Receiver. Model 1803 with 15-inch Emiscope in walnut cabinet. Release date not given.



Right. Roberts Radio portable receiver. Type P.A.D. in blue, brown or black rexine case. Three wave bands. In production. Price 14 guineas complete plus tax.

Some valves were released to set-manufacturers to allow them to make broadcast receivers for purchase by the RAF Comforts Fund, and Roberts Radio made some 2,500 sets under this arrangement, but most of its war-work was more overtly military. Morse-key and plug assemblies, aerial coupling boxes, and aerial switching units for radar were turned out in quantity for the Ministry of Aircraft Production, this work incidentally furnishing the company with machine tools supplied by the United States under "lease-lend". There were also a number of commissions from RAE Farnborough to produce "one-off" items, sometimes so secret that drawings would be brought into the factory, shown briefly to the relevant worker, then taken away again.

Their last commission, undertaken at the end of the war, was not secret at all. Roberts were to build for public exhibition a simulation of H2S airborne radar, using ultrasonic waves in a tank of water to reproduce on a cathode-ray tube the features of a relief map immersed in the tank; the ultrasonic transducers were mounted on a trolley, which also carried a model aircraft, and as this trundled across the tank the display changed correspondingly. This elaborate device absorbed most of the Company's resources for the best part of a year, so cannot be accounted very cost-effective. But by helping people to understand how radar worked, the project gave depth to their pride in its development, and was certainly more useful than continuing to produce irrelevant war material. Meanwhile, the pent-up demand for new domestic receivers was waiting to be satisfied.



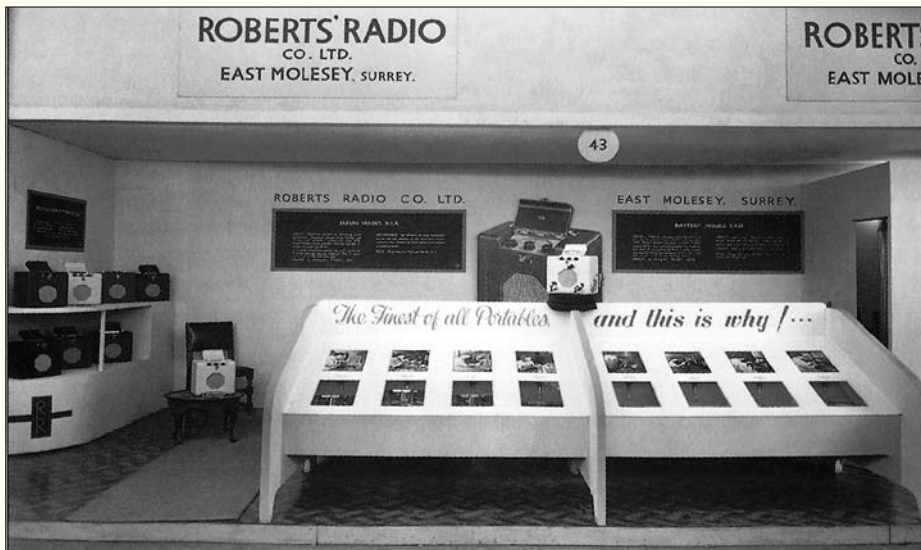
In 1946, Roberts was the least well-known of these marques; to-day, the others are largely forgotten

In post-war Britain, firms were allocated scarce materials only if they achieved a satisfactory export performance

THE BRAND LEADER

Nineteen forty-six saw the Company back in civilian production, consolidating the pre-eminence in its field that it had established before the war. Leslie Bidmead's designers at this time were Pat Murphy, who was later to emigrate to Canada, and the present Chief Development Engineer, John Hance, who had joined the Company in 1938. In May, Harrods congratulated Harry Roberts on the excellence of his new P4D receiver ("It undoubtedly beats anything of the transportable type which has yet been placed on the market") and pleaded for a larger allocation ("We are right up against it for stocks"). A more public commendation came in the autumn, when the P4D was one of the twenty radio receivers selected by the Council of Industrial Design for its prestigious exhibition "Britain Can Make It", at the Victoria & Albert Museum.

Roberts Radio made its Radiolympia debut at the first post-war show, in October 1947, when it showed an all-wave model in both battery and mains versions, weighing in at 19½lb and 17½lb respectively. However, the "Junior" model, introduced in 1948, weighed only 10½lb. Its designers exploited miniature valves, developed during the war, to reduce size without sacrificing performance, and maintained adequate battery life by using a layer-built HT battery, rather more expensive than the normal type but with greater capacity for a given size. Here at last was a quality portable that people could realistically be expected to carry about with them. To encourage them to do so, the set was sold complete with a weatherproof carrying bag, which soon began to be noticed among the hand luggage of affluent travellers.



The Company's stand at Radiolympia in October 1947 showed evidence of post-war austerity



A still from the film "Heir to the Throne". H.R.H. Princess Elizabeth switches on her Roberts portable on 21 April 1944, and hears a news item on how she is spending her eighteenth birthday



From a silver-wedding feature in Illustrated London News, 1948, the caption reads: A distraction which Their Majesties enjoy as greatly as the majority of their subjects: The King turns on the wireless

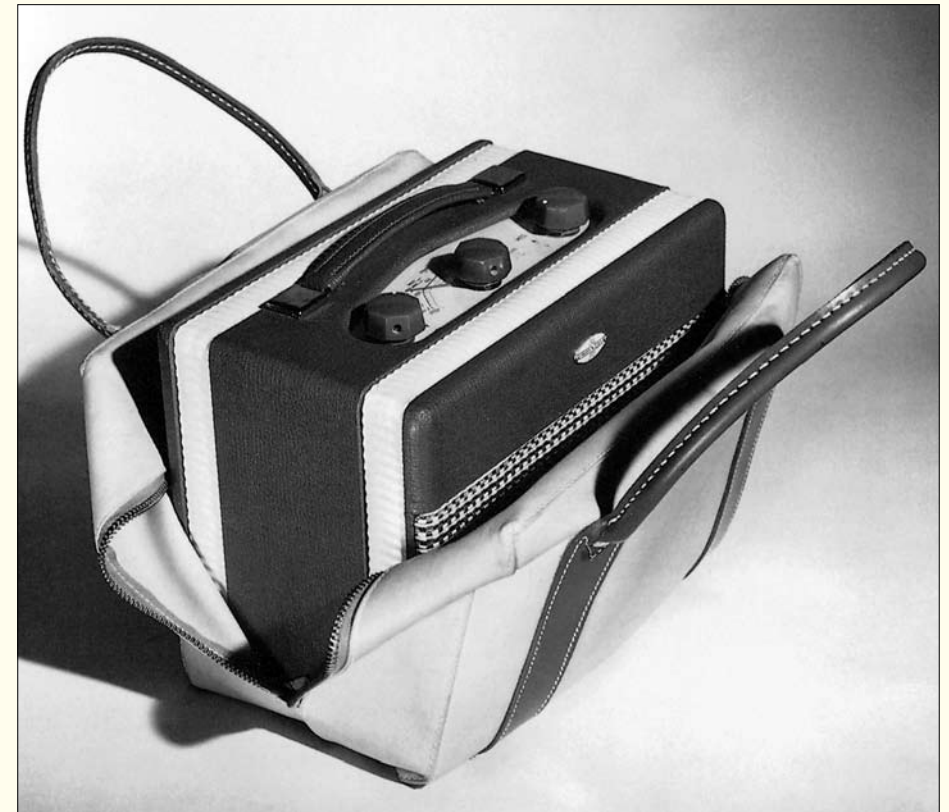


A few RMB and RP4 sets were hand-painted with nursery-rhyme characters

By the autumn of 1947 Harry Roberts knew that at least half a dozen of his sets had been supplied to the Royal Household, and decided to apply for that most prized of endorsements, a Royal Warrant. He duly submitted a letter listing the sets supplied, and pointing out that a Warrant would make a considerable difference to the firm's export business, particularly to the United States and other hard-currency areas. Notwithstanding this potent argument, his application was refused, though it was stated that there was no reason why a renewed request should not be made in the future.

Receivers supplied over the next few years included children's models hand-painted with nursery-rhyme characters by the well-known artist W E Narraway. Since these were gifts they were ineligible for consideration, but no doubt contributed to the Household's awareness of the company's products, and Roberts was able, in a letter dated 31 December 1951, to list no fewer than thirteen sets actually purchased since his previous application. He had intended to send the letter some months previously, but had held it back until there was news of some improvement in the King's health following his serious illness. The delay caused by this courteous gesture was particularly unfortunate, as the letter missed the annual meeting at which applications were considered, and when the King died, in February 1952, all pending applications became void. Roberts had to be content with the assurance that if orders in sufficient quantities continued to be placed during the three years following the accession of the Queen, he would be eligible to apply again.

In February 1955 a third letter was sent, referring to a specially adapted model provided for the Royal Tour of 1953/4 and listing receivers supplied over a period of more than fifteen years. This time the application was successful, and in the London Gazette of 15 July 1955 Messrs Roberts Radio Co. Ltd were listed as "Radio Manufacturers to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II". A pleasant reminder that the Warrant was no mere formality came in January 1957, when young Richard Roberts was requested to take to Buckingham Palace samples of the current range of portables in the various colour options for demonstration to Prince Charles and Princess Anne. It transpired that these were required to mark a special occasion. He was shown into the nursery and subsequently joined by the Prince and Princess, who had apparently interrupted their studies to make their selection.



The 'Junior', in its carrying bag, on the cover of the Design Council's journal in 1948

TRANSITION TO TRANSISTORS

Portable radios made great strides in the 1950s, mainly but not exclusively due to the advent of the transistor. Early in the decade, ferrite-rod aerials had allowed the size of valve receivers to be further reduced without sacrificing electrical performance, so that Roberts Radio's R66 mains/battery model, introduced in 1956, was as small as was deemed compatible with good sound quality. And although the explosive growth in television viewing took away radio's evening audience, greatly reducing the market for full-size receivers, portables were ideally adapted to radio's residual but expanding role as a provider of "background" entertainment.



The RMB of 1951 was the Company's first mains/battery receiver. Battery model RP4 was identical in appearance



Personalities from the world of broadcasting were fêted by Radio show exhibitors. Gilbert Harding at the Roberts Radio stand in 1953, with Leslie Bidmead and Richard Roberts



Jack Train (ITMA's Colonel Chinstrap) drawing the crowds at Earls Court in 1956



The R66, launched in 1956, represented a breakthrough in styling. Even today it would not look out of place in a retailer's display.

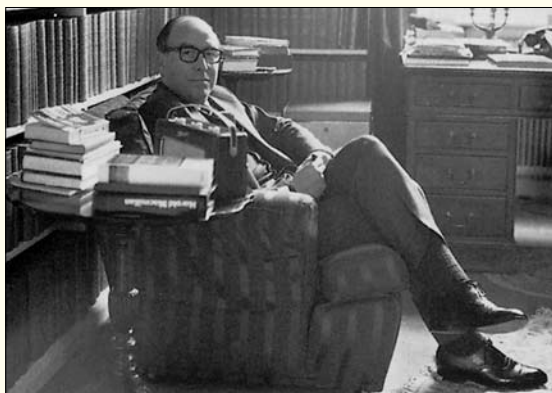
Press photographers frequently showed “top people” with Roberts receivers:



The Earl of Dalkeith and his wife, 1953



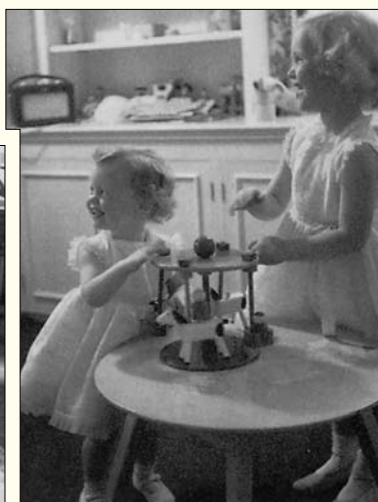
Harold Wilson, with David Frost, 1969



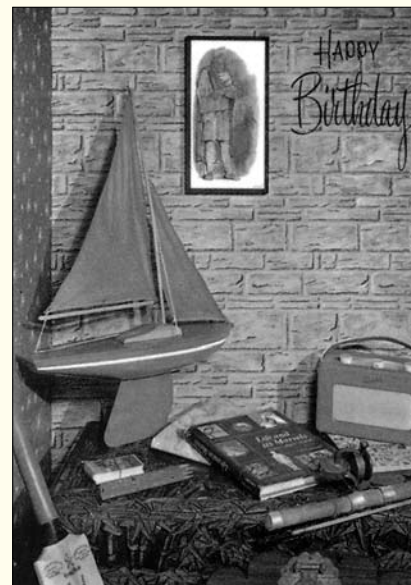
Roy Jenkins, 1968



Peter Sellers, 1966



Daughters of the Hon. Anthony & Mrs Cayzer, 1958



An RT1 is one of the desirable objects featured in this birthday card of 1958



The leather-cased R77 was one of the Company's most stylish models, but as a valve set introduced in 1957 soon became obsolete

The Roberts RT1, released in April 1958, was not Britain's first transistor portable, but its pedigree ensured that it was awaited with interest within the trade, whilst its launch was of crucial importance to the Company, for sales of valve receivers were already declining. Would the RT1 live up to Roberts Radio's reputation? The highly-respected John Gilbert, writing in the *Music Trades Review*, had no doubts:

This set continues the long line of outstanding receivers from this manufacturer, who holds a unique position in the radio industry. One is tempted to consider how such a receiver could be improved, or what will be the design to follow this one.

In first-generation transistor receivers battery economy was a prime selling point, and the Roberts engineers exploited this to the full by fitting the massive Ever Ready PP8. With average use this lasted at least two years, and a number of sets returned as faulty four or five years after purchase were found merely to need replacement of the original battery. Less output power was available from transistors than from valves, so to maintain adequate volume without distortion the RT1 was given a loudspeaker having the unusually high density of 13,000 Gauss.

Strictly speaking, Roberts Radio's first transistor model was not the RT1, but a “personal” receiver accepted by H.M. The Queen in March 1958 as a gift from the Radio Industry Council, who had commissioned the Company to design and make it. The set was carefully designed to achieve the best performance attainable for its size, and Leslie Bidmead spent many hours fashioning for it a casing that would be worthy of the occasion. This remained an isolated



Although this “one-off” model presented to the Queen in 1958 was at the time considered a masterpiece of miniaturization, it was in fact 6½ inches long

venture, however; Harry Roberts judged that because of the inherent limitations of personal radios there would be little demand for high-quality models.

Early in 1960, the Company was re-organised, and its two present Directors joined Harry Roberts and Leslie Bidmead on the Board. Harry's son Richard was to handle marketing and sales, while Geoffrey Dixon-Nuttall, who had joined the Company in 1948, was to take charge of production.

The Company had grown considerably since moving to the Creek Road boathouse in 1941, and although neighbouring premises had been added during and just after the war the resulting complex of five units with a major road running through it was an obstacle to efficient production, let alone further expansion. There was no



A Roberts RTI in Moscow for the 1961 British Trade Fair, photographed outside St Basil's church



A mink-coated RTI, c. 1959; other coverings included pony-skin, leopard-skin, and jewel-encrusted suede. By encasing receivers in exotic materials, the company projected the portable radio as a glamorous accessory



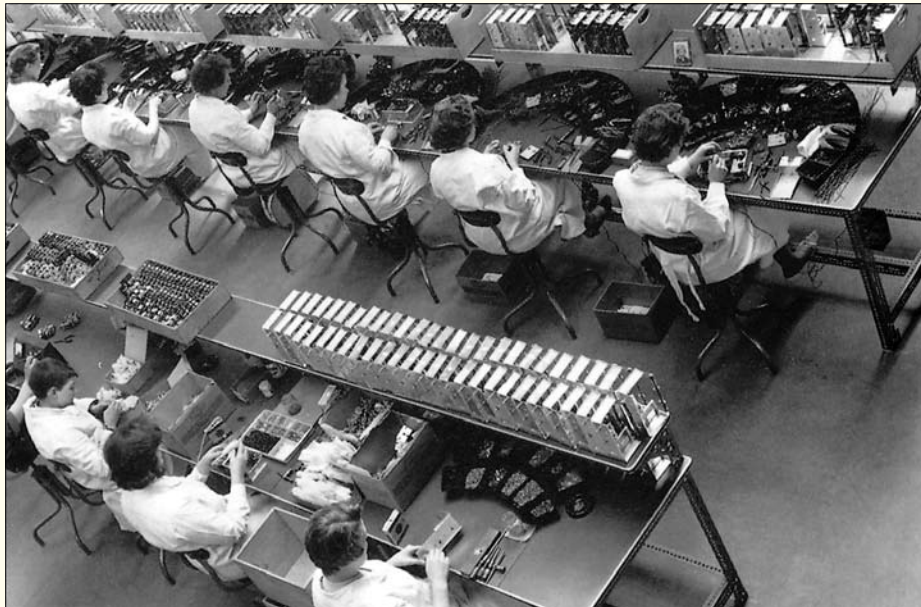
Lord Boothby at the 1961 Radio Show with an R200 in a solid-gold case. This receiver, priced at 2000gns + battery 3/6d, attracted much attention, and received world-wide publicity when it was finally stolen from a department store. At today's prices, the gold sheet would cost £26,000

area large enough for a conveyor-belt assembly line, hand-trucks were constantly having to be taken across the road, and some operations had to be contracted out. Inevitably, the factory's presence in a shopping and residential area marred the environment and aggravated traffic congestion. It was clearly time for another move. The company was already authorised by the Board of Trade to remain in the London area, but the Directors were determined to retain their key personnel and their network of local suppliers, and chose a site on a new industrial estate within two miles of Creek Road. When their application to the local council for planning permission was rejected, they instructed a leading barrister, Mr J Ramsay Willis, QC, to prepare the submission for an appeal.

The Council was spared no detail, from the embarrassing location of the ladies' toilets at Creek Road to the necessity of retaining a 23-year-old service engineer who had been with the Company only a year but had taken two years to find. Providing additional jobs in the area was evidently not encouraged, for though the area of the new factory was to be more than twice that of the old, it was stressed that the work force, currently numbering 57, would only be increased by fifteen. The Company's forceful presentation of its case carried the day, and the building of the new factory in Molesey Avenue, West Molesey, went ahead. The move was made in April 1962, ownership of Creek Road being retained. After thirty years, Harry Roberts at last had a custom-built factory, and one of which he could justifiably be proud.



The newly-completed Molesey Avenue factory, 1962



Chassis being hand wired in the factory, 1962. Conveyor-belt assembly was later used for printed circuits



The RIC1, of 1968, was the first British integrated-circuit receiver. Its semiconductor complement was the Mullard TAD100, a diode, and a pair of output transistors

In 1967 Roberts Radio collaborated with Mullard Limited to pioneer a radical advance. Mullards had developed a linear integrated-circuit, the TAD100, which incorporated eleven transistors and was designed to perform all the active functions of an a.m. receiver except that of power output stage. Anxious to see it exploited commercially, they approached Roberts Radio. The Company had not lost its appetite for the challenging assignment, and set to work building a suitable receiver, which was launched in 1968 and designated RIC1. It looked no different from contemporary models using discrete components, but its novelty was effectively publicised by providing dealers with cards bearing reject specimens of the TAD100's microchip. The RIC1 was a good performer competitively priced, and the Company's readiness to experiment was rewarded with a production run of 77,967.

Sadly, this was to be Harry Roberts's last venture. For some years he had suffered heart trouble, and on 14 June 1969 he died, aged 59. His personal standing within the industry was out of all proportion to the size of his company, and the family was deluged with letters that were studded with phrases betokening genuine regard: "one of the gentlemen of the Radio trade..."; "...genial manner, fair dealing and a man of his word"...; "...tolerant and understanding..."; "You bear a proud name." But perhaps the most telling sentiment was that expressed in one of the letters from family friends: "Harry had that lovely gift of making one feel nicer than one really was, just for being with him!"



The premises at Creek road, almost back to being a boathouse during the floods of September 1968. In the road, the water was 18" deep



West Molesey factory was flooded to depths between 9" and 18" during the 1968 floods. The water receded after 2-3 days, but it was a month before the factory was back to normal

FORWARD WITH VISION

Richard Roberts succeeded his father as Chairman and Managing Director, and under his leadership the Company has judiciously broadened its range of products. Around 1973 it became evident to him that Britain's television manufacturers, still fully occupied with satisfying the mass demand for colour receivers created by the transition to a full colour service in November 1969, were not fully exploiting the upper end of the market. Though by this time many receivers were giving excellent pictures, under the pressure of competition they tended to be fitted with cheap loudspeakers and housed in run-of-the-mill cabinets. Imported luxury models were available, but their cabinets were not always to the taste of British buyers, nor were their circuits always satisfactorily modified to British transmission characteristics. Here, then, was an opportunity for the Company to apply to a new field the marketing philosophy that had served it so well for radio.

Planning throughout 1974 led to the formation in May 1975 of a new company, Roberts Video Ltd, also led by Richard Roberts. Two receivers were launched in September, using the Philips G8 and G9 chassis with a number of extra features: remote control, twin loudspeakers and tone controls; the cabinets were veneered in real teak and fitted with sliding tambour doors.

Dealerships were offered to all Roberts Radio franchised dealers, initially on the same terms as applied to portable radios: a discount of 30% on the recommended retail price (RRP), with no additional discount for quantity. The following year, however, with the Price Commission investigating the cost of small electrical goods, the Radio Electrical and Television Retailers Association (RETRA)



A table-model can be as compact as a portable, and is more attractive in a room setting. The RM40 was marketed from 1972-76



H.R.H. Princess Margaret and Viscount Linley visiting roberts Radio, 17 April 1975

withdrew its approval of RRP. Roberts Video was the first manufacturer to respond, dropping RRP and offering modest quantity-discounts. This was an astute move, for it won the Company honourable mentions in *The Times* and in the trade press.

Roberts Video showed steady growth from its first year of trading, when 2,500 receivers were sold, and it was against this background of successful diversification that Roberts Radio acquired Dynatron Radio Ltd from Philips in January 1981. Established by the Hacker brothers, Ron and Arthur, in 1927, Dynatron had arrived in the Philips fold via the takeover chain Dynatron-Ekco-Pye-Philips. Its name had long been associated with high-quality television and audio, making it an ideal complement to the Roberts Radio marque, and the Roberts Video brand was subsequently replaced by Dynatron. Using the same marketing and sales organisation as Roberts, Dynatron continues to sell full-specification television receivers in a variety of reproduction and modern styles through approximately 700 retail outlets in the UK.

Roberts Radio has also acquired the firm of A E Kevern Ltd which has made its cabinets ever since 1932. Originally in London's Goswell Road, Kevern's moved to Haverhill, Suffolk in the 1960s under a government re-location scheme. There had long been an understanding between the two companies that, should Kevern's ever wish to sell out, Roberts Radio would have first refusal, and in 1977 this offer was made and accepted. Administered from East Molesey, Kevern's nevertheless retains considerable autonomy, and devotes around 25% of its effort to contracts for other firms. Shortly after this acquisition the group's total workforce rose to over 300.

Of recent years, Royal Warrants have again figured prominently in the Company's affairs. In 1978/9 Richard Roberts had the distinction of serving as President of the Royal Warrant Holders Association, while the Roberts Radio Company has been granted two further Warrants, in 1982 and 1985 respectively, as manufacturers and suppliers of radio receivers to H M Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother and to HRH The Prince of Wales. In 1981, the Warrant granted to Dynatron Radio Ltd in 1963 as suppliers of televisions and radio-gramophones to H M The Queen was transferred to that company's new owners.



By Appointment to Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth II
Manufacturers of
Televisions and Radiogramophones
Dynatron Radio Ltd

One Roberts' dealer invokes a quite different link with the monarchy to promote a battery-only mw/lw model: "A very high quality receiver. Ideal for HMP". It is indeed. In Her Majesty's Prisons, only radios without vhf, telescopic aerials or mains lead are allowed, while the dearth of other entertainment puts a premium on good performance. However, any suspicion that the set was aimed at this market is dispelled by its name: Rambler 2.

Selling only through accredited dealers has become something of a rarity in the age of the discount warehouse, but works well for Roberts Radio, whose prospective customer is likely to be less concerned with shopping around for the lowest price than with knowing that should the set ever go wrong he will have no difficulty in having it put right. The dealer is assured of his fair profit and knows that his accreditation enhances the shop's prestige, while the Company secures prominent display of its products at the point of sale.

Roberts Radio's uncompromising insistence on quality has endured, though it has had to be adapted to current conditions. Thus plastic-cased receivers and personal cassette players are imported from the far east, but are built to specifications meeting the Company's standards of performance, styling and finish. However, wooden-cased receivers still predominate, and these continue to be made at East Molesey. The latest of them is a synthesizer model with channel storage, giving perfect tuning at a touch. It exemplifies the judicious blending of tradition and innovation that has always characterized Roberts Radio, and that augurs well for its future.

© Roberts Radio Company Limited 1987



*Richard Roberts (died 1991) the Company's
Chairman and Managing Director from 1969 - 1991*



*Co-founder Leslie Bidmead (retired 1985) and
Director Geoffrey Dixon-Nuttall (retired 1987)*