

The Highbridge receiving station, near Burnham-on-Sea, Somerset, built in 1924 to cope with increased demand



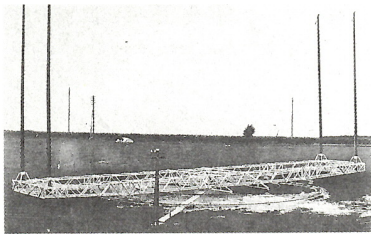
By 1926, experiments on short wavelengths had established that world-wide communication could take place. The GPO installed the first maritime short-wave transmitter at Devizes, keyed by

operators with receiving equipment at Highbridge that same year. Initial tests proved outstandingly successful, and it became necessary to construct a brand new transmitting station. This station was to be located at Portishead, near Bristol, and thus in 1927 Portishead Radio was born. Three long-wave

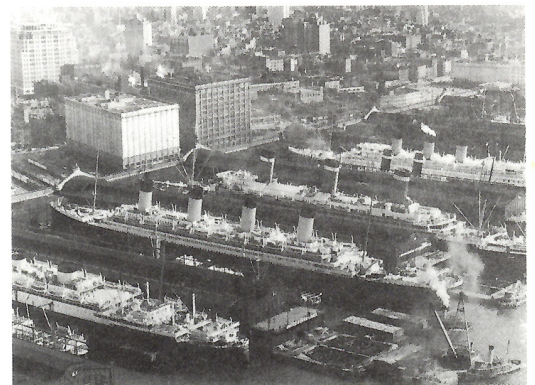
transmitters were installed, followed in 1929 by a new short-wave transmitter, ultimately resulting in the closure of the Devizes station.

Throughout the 1930s this long-range service expanded greatly, with a gradual decline in the use of the long-wave (short-range) service. However, new markets were being discovered, including the use of Portishead by the morse code operators on

transmitters, was handling over 3 million words of radio traffic with a staff of 60 radio officers.



Portishead Radio Station rotating beam (1930)

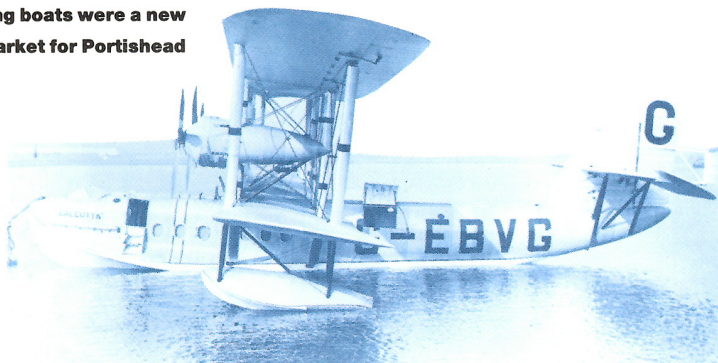


The war years between 1939 and 1945 saw great changes in the role of Portishead Radio, two-way communication with ships changed to a broadcast of traffic without any acknowledgement of receipt. For obvious reasons, transmissions from ships were kept to a minimum so as not to release their positions and destinations. However, distress calls, enemy sighting reports, news of the North Africa landings and clandestine signals from Europe ensured the station was kept busy.

Early in 1943, the workload had increased to such levels that Portishead's civilian staff were augmented by naval operators from HMS *Flowerdown*. Many of the civilian staff were seconded to Government services at home and abroad, not only to man radio stations but to train the many new radio officers needed for convoy work. A special aircraft section was constructed to maintain communications with patrol aircraft in the North Atlantic.

During the war years, communication with ships became one-way only for security reasons

Flying boats were a new market for Portishead



the flying boats, passing traffic from as far away as South America and India. The great liners were also making heavy use of this new service, and by 1936 Portishead Radio, now with 4 short-wave

