



BT Radio Station  
 Worston Lane  
 Burnham-on-Sea  
 Highbridge  
 Somerset TA9 3JY

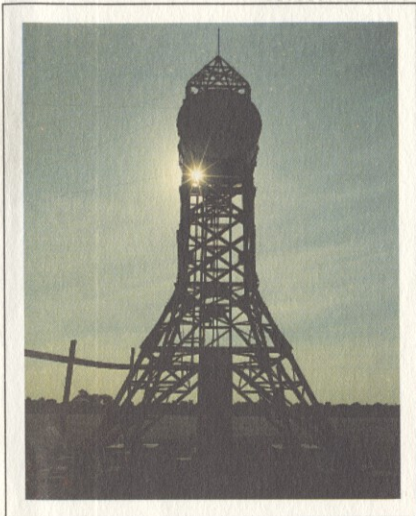
B1



Seventy five years  
 1920-1995  
 BT PO HIGHBRIDGE 5/9/95



Seventy five years  
 1920-1995  
 BT PO HIGHBRIDGE 5/9/95



# *BT Portishead Radio – 75 years of history*





1995 sees the 75th anniversary of the UK's long-range maritime radio service, which commenced in 1920 from converted army huts at Devizes, Wiltshire. From these humble beginnings, an increasingly popular service evolved, moving to a purpose-built receiving station at Highbridge, Somerset, in 1925, with transmitters located at Portishead, near Bristol. This move brought about the now internationally-famous name of Portishead Radio, which remains in use to this day.

The long-range service increased in popularity throughout the 1930s, and during the war years Portishead Radio became a valuable communications link with the North Atlantic convoys and worldwide merchant shipping. Whilst two-way communication with ships was forbidden (a ship using its radio equipment would give its position away to enemy direction-finding installations), traffic was broadcast 'blind' to ships using secret callsigns.

With the coming of peace in 1945, Portishead Radio reverted to normal commercial working and an expansion of the Highbridge receiving site took place in 1948 with the addition of extra operational buildings.



Traffic figures continued to increase during the 1950s, peaking during the Suez crisis in 1956. The 1960s saw numerous technological advances such as the introduction of the radiotelex service in 1965 and the inauguration of a 'press' radiotelex service to the *QE2* in 1968. With the transfer of radiotelephone services from Baldock Radio to Portishead in 1970, the Highbridge receiving site now controlled all maritime communication services.

The Royal Navy presence at the station came to an end in 1971, but the new business created by the North Sea oil industry and the associated increase in the world tanker fleet ensured that Portishead Radio was still very much in demand. However, the 'end of an era' occurred when the Portishead transmitting site was closed in 1978, with other sites at Rugby, Leafield and Ongar being used for the maritime service.

It was around this time that the worldwide yacht races became popular, and Portishead became



involved in all the major races, providing position reports, fleet broadcasts and, of course, morale-boosting calls home. Today, Portishead Radio works alongside BT's Inmarsat group, providing a complete communications package for these high-profile races.

The introduction of the satellite service in 1982 had little effect on traffic figures, and in 1983 a new, purpose-built, receiving station was opened next to the old building at Highbridge, and 1985

saw the introduction of the Aeronautical and 'Gateway' services, providing communication facilities from aircraft and land-based installations located in remote or war-torn countries worldwide.

Today, 75 years on, Portishead Radio still provides a much-needed communications facility to seafarers, pilots and land-based organisations the world over, and remains a byword for quality and professionalism.

# *BT Portishead Radio*

## **HF Radiotelephony Service**

Portishead Radio monitors the following main assigned channels:

Callsign	ITU channel	Ship receive	Ship transmit
GKT20	410	4384	4092
GKU46	816	8764	8240
GKV54	1224	13146	12299
GKT62	1602	17245	16363
GKT18	1801	19755	18780
GKT76	2206	22711	22015

Please make your initial call to Portishead Radio on one of these channels.

Traffic lists are broadcast on these channels every hour on the hour.

Portishead Radio also operates a number of secondary channels.

These will be announced on the main channel when they are available.

Portishead Radio also operates the following services:

- Radiotelegraphy
- Radiotelex
- Aeronautical radiotelephony
- 'Gateway' land-based communication
- Bureau messaging

Further information is available from Portishead Radio's customer services office on telephone 01278 772253 or fax 01278 772222.

*The 'key' to your  
communications needs*



*Offices in Europe, North America,  
Japan and Asia Pacific.*

The telecommunications services described in this publication are subject to availability and may be modified from time to time. Services and equipment are provided subject to British Telecommunications plc's respective standard conditions of contract. Nothing in this publication forms any part of any contract.

© British Telecommunications plc 1995.  
Registered office: 81 Newgate Street, London EC1A 7AJ.  
Registered in England No: 1800000.  
Printed in England.