

1923-1973



50th Anniversary

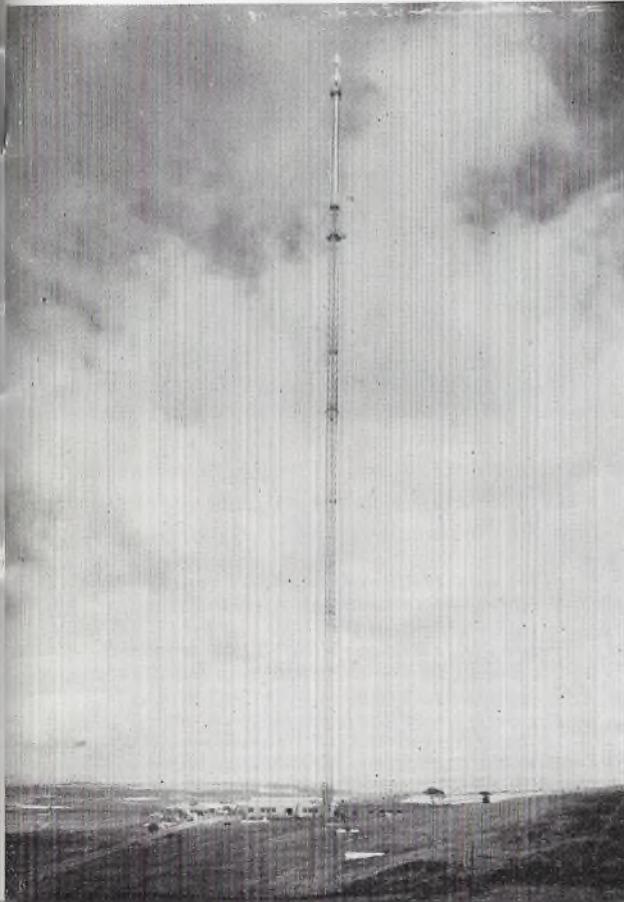
Early Days of Broadcasting in Scotland

BROADCASTING HOUSE, GLASGOW

Was built originally as a country mansion and later became a college of higher education for women students. Since the B.B.C. took over in 1938 three extensions have been made to meet expansion of radio and television broadcasting.



Early Days of Broadcasting in Scotland



You go home, you switch on your television or your radio. Most parts of the country have a choice of two B.B.C. vision channels, as well as four separate radio networks. You'll feel justifiably aggrieved if you can't find something just to your taste.

Why should you care that the B.B.C. in Scotland maintains a staff of 1028 to serve you? Do you want to know there are six B.B.C. television studios in Scotland? Or care about 16 sound radio studios (10 with their own recording and editing facilities) not to mention six specialist recording and editing rooms; 39 transmitters for BBC 1 and BBC 2 television, 53 for radio, scattered from Shetland in the north, even invading English ground in the south in order to project Scottish programmes back to Scottish listeners.

In March, 1923, the B.B.C. (the "C" standing for 'Company') had in all Scotland but one studio and one transmitter, with the call-sign (required by law) 5SC.

And when you "tuned-in" fifty years ago you had no mind to be choosy—even if it had been possible—about what programme you heard. To hear even a noise was an achievement. The scratching of your "cat's whisker" on the crystal was music itself.

Left: The B.B.C.1 transmitter at Kirk o' Shotts, first in Scotland. Opened on 14th March, 1952.





The name of Kathleen Garscadden is inseparable from children's broadcasting. A fairy with children of the Radio Circle in the 1920's and with a group at Newton Stewart in 1966 the years between were filled with devoted broadcasting to the young. With her in the Children's Hour group at Broadcasting House, Edinburgh, are Dudley Stuart Whyte, Cecile Walton, Andrew Bryson, Martyn C. Webster, and Gordon Gildard.

Can Miss Weeny-Bopper of 1973 re-create the magic world of Master 1923? This boy journeyed specially from Glasgow to Hamilton (tram-car all the way) to listen to his cousin's wireless set. Master 1923 was bowled over by the first broadcast to be heard—the voice of Auntie Cyclone; and although one day he went to work for the B.B.C. and became a colleague of hers, eventually to join her in retirement; as Mister 1973 this elderly chap when he meets Kathleen Garscadden, still sees glamour. For Kathleen was broadcasting in Glasgow before there was a B.B.C. But years earlier, while she was still a teenager, Edinburgh had formed its own Radio Society. A young officer from Orkney, new home from the war, helped to found it in 1919 and became its first chairman. Today Stanley Cursiter, R.S.A., is Her Majesty's Limner. But in those days, he set all the clocks in his Edinburgh household by the time-signal he picked up from the Eiffel Tower in Paris.

Across in Glasgow the experimenters were led by two friends near Charing Cross. In 1922 Frank M. Milligan, already trading in wireless receivers, and George Garscadden, who distributed household appliances from Rex House, 202 Bath Street, took out a licence to operate Station 5MG. At first, Mr. Garscadden's daughter Kathleen was sent 200 yards from her home

in Sauchiehall Street to the microphone operated by J. M. A. Cameron in 141 Bath Street to read, play the piano or sing. (She had just completed her studies in London as a pupil of Sir Henry J. Wood, who founded the Queen's Hall Promenade Concerts.)

Great was Mrs. Garscadden's excitement to sit at home and listen to her daughter all that way off; but the mind boggled with the news that someone in distant Dundee had also "picked up" her voice.





Because Kathleen was the leading soprano in Park Parish Church, close to the manse of the Rev. Dr. George Reith, she enlisted the help of the organist and choirmaster, Herbert A. Carruthers, and singers like Amy Samuel, and Robert Watson in order to present more elaborate transmissions from 5MG.

In London, meantime, Dr. Reith's youngest son, John, had become general manager of the British Broadcasting Company. Starting up their London and Birmingham stations in November, 1922, he was expanding north to complete the chain of eight "Main Stations" allowed by the Government.

2LO had been established just in time for the London Motor Show, so the sales gimmick of Daimler Cars had been to instal wireless receivers in their luxury limousines. But when they came to Glasgow in January for the Scottish show in the Kelvin Hall, the car radios weren't powerful enough to pull in 2LO; and Glasgow's own 5MG was not on the air during the day.

So Daimler hired Marconi to set up a temporary transmitter for them in a Kelvinside garage for the week of the show. The Kelvin Hall, of course, could not open on Sunday. But Station 2BP invited the minister of Wellington Church to their studio; and so the Rev.

Pictured at the entrance door, 5SC, Blythswood Square, left to right: E. W. M. Heddle, G. L. Marshall, J. C. S. MacGregor, John Reith, D. H. Clark, David Cleghorn Thomson and Neil MacLean.

Dr. G. H. Morrison conducted the first religious service broadcast in Scotland. And then 2BP went off the air. But John Reith arrived back in the city where he had gone to school, prospecting for the sixth of his eight "Main Stations". He found 5MG there, a going concern. The take-over bid went in.

The B.B.C. emerged not only with 5MG's studio equipment, but with J. M. A. Cameron as the engineer to operate it. From George Garscadden they leased the top floor and attics of Rex House for studio and offices. John Reith appointed Herbert A. Carruthers as station manager and conductor of the station orchestra. Kathleen Garscadden was to be in charge of Women's Programmes, and could also look after the Children's Corner. Mungo M. Dewar and Alec H. S. Paterson would be announcers and do anything else that had to be done.

Opening night was March 6th, 1923. Sir Landon Ronald was brought from London to conduct the Station Orchestra; they squeezed in a pipe band, a choir, solo singers, speechmakers and actors.

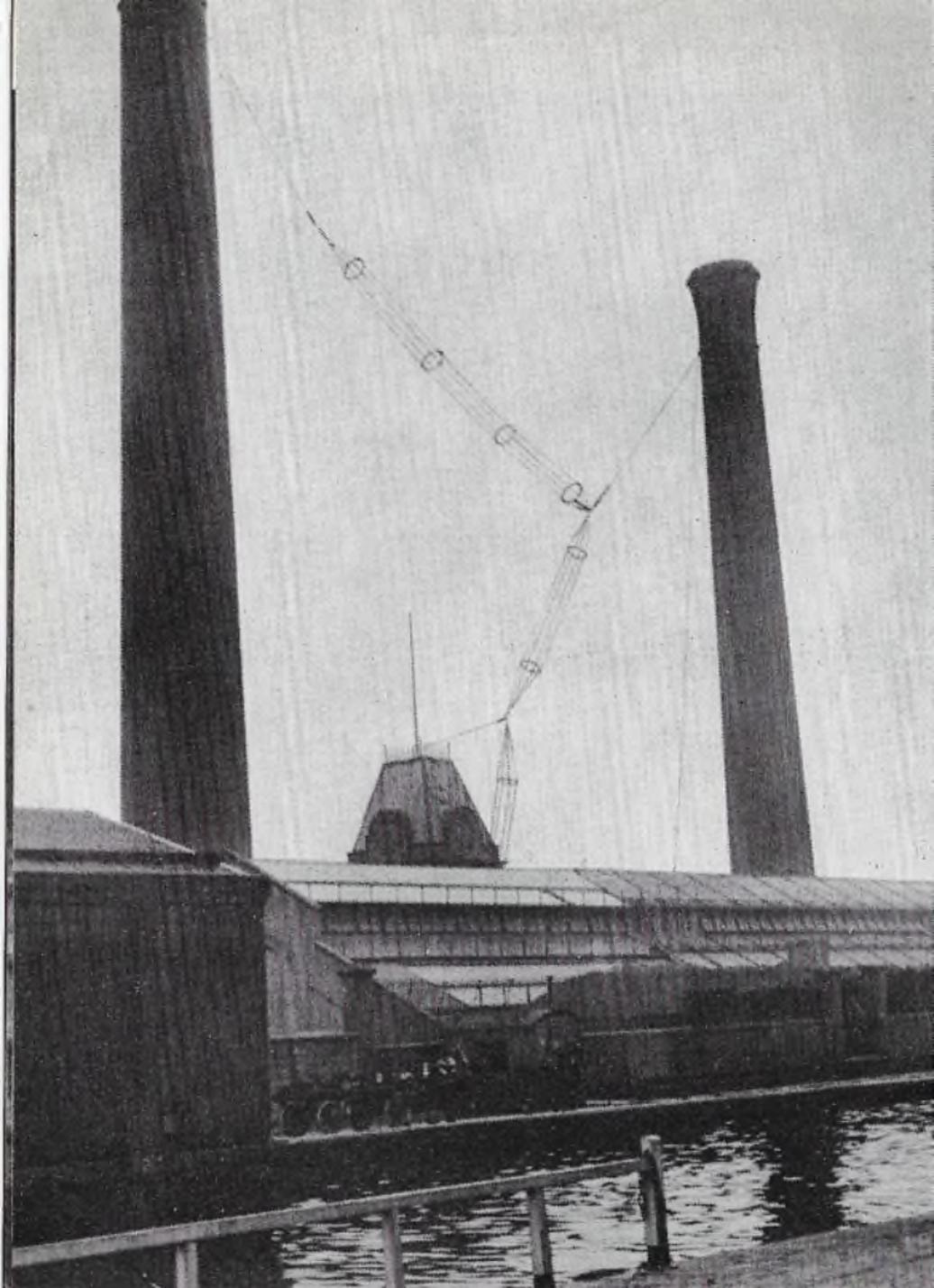
The "Glasgow Herald" installed wireless receivers in the Berkeley Hall, and the capacity audience stormed into applause for each item. The "Herald" reporter in the studio described every move next day: "A stirring

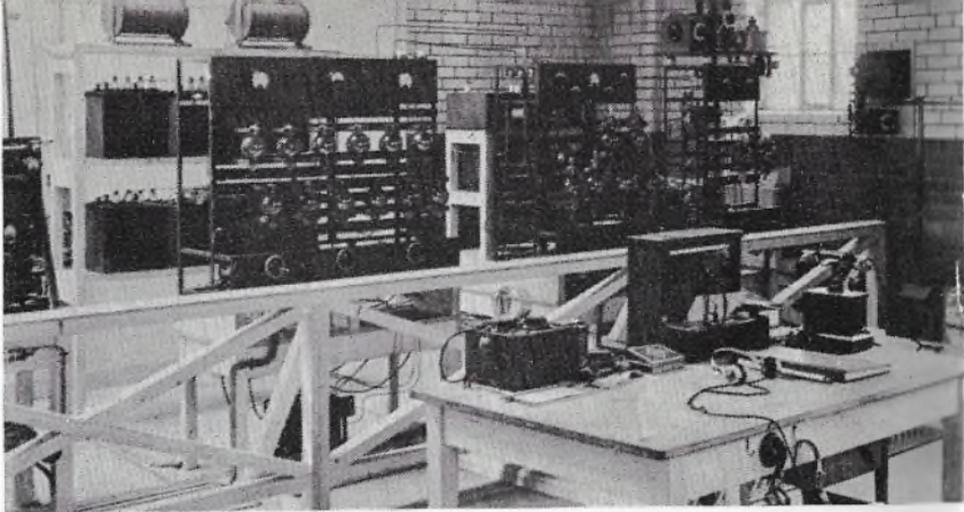
The original 5SC staff, left to right: Herbert A. Carruthers, Alec H. Swinton Paterson, Mungo M. Dewar and Kathleen Garscadden.

and moving moment . . . harnessing the powers of Nature to the services of humanity . . . Swifter than Mercury from high Olympus, the strains of the pipes bore their message from John o' Groats to Maidenkirk." The "Scotsman", published in Edinburgh, did not report the event.

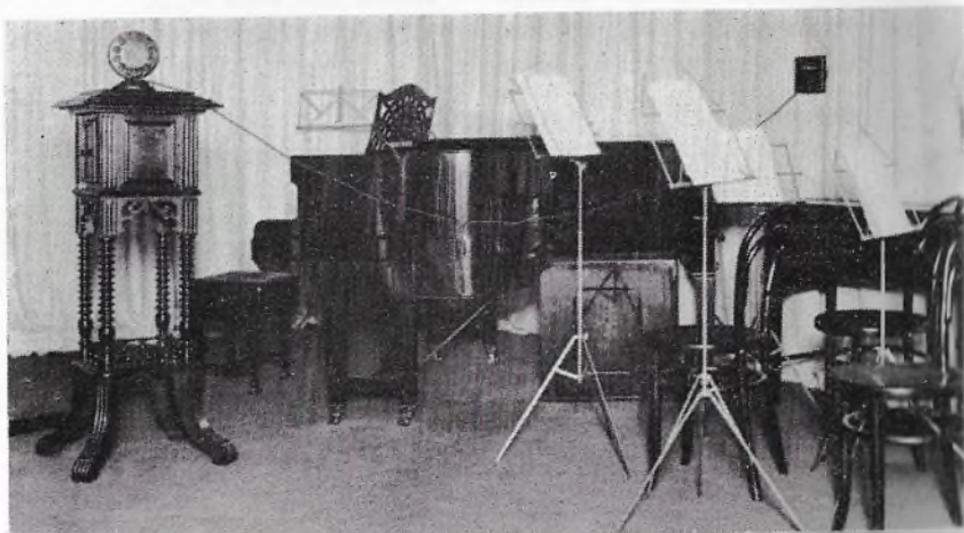
At that time the 5SC announcers had to take the news bulletin down in longhand from Savoy Hill on the telephone and read it at their own microphone. In







The 5SC transmitter aerial (left) was slung from chimneys at Pinkston Power Station which generated power for Glasgow trams. The technical equipment (above) powered programmes from the Bath Street studio (below).



August the press described it as "a great step forward" when 5SC relayed the London news direct by Simultaneous Broadcast.



R. E. JEFFREY

Everybody worked office hours at the desk morning and afternoon. Come 5.30, they piled into the hessian-hung, flea-ridden cell of a studio to lark about, playing

at "Uncles" and "Aunties" like mad, before the "serious" programmes of the evening began.

Everything happened quickly at the B.B.C. If you could open up on March 6th from the studio with one microphone, possession of a second mike a fortnight later obviously means you can now do an Outside Broadcast—of what? Simple. The British National Opera Company are appearing at the Coliseum Theatre in Glasgow.

Opera has never been broadcast before. 5SC will do the first act of "Die Walkure". How? Straightforward. Your studio microphone feeds into control room, and is linked by line to your transmitter and aerial at Glasgow Corporation Tramways Pinkston Power station at Port Dundas. Book two telephone lines to the Coliseum. Put your second mike in the footlights, rig a double-throw switch in control room. The announcer speaks in the studio; you throw the switch, and opera comes out of Port Dundas.

No "balance" between orchestra and soloists, no rehearsal. Result? Sackfuls of mail from delighted listeners.

Everybody seemed to be listening, and not merely to 5SC. Do-it-yourself was the rage of the day, and set

Two of the distinguished actors who helped pioneer radio broadcasting in Scotland are still making programmes. Andrew Cruickshank made his debut on 2BD Aberdeen and Alastair Sim read poetry on 2EH Edinburgh.



Members of the original 5SC staff. Mungo Dewar became Head of Television Administration and A. H. Swinton Paterson, led development in the North as Aberdeen Representative.



constructors boasted of their new circuits which could tune in not merely to London but even to Pittsburg and Tokio. Everybody had a "set" but only a couple of thousand Scots paid for licences.

However, the B.B.C. was expanding. R. E. Jeffrey, an elocution teacher, was added to the staff. In a few weeks he mounted an adaption of "Rob Roy"—orchestra, singers, pipe band, actors, all crowded round the one microphone. The press were dazzled by "this Striking new technique". A narrator told the story, "reading Sir Walter's own words", but it was a play, too, for actors "brought the novel to life" in dramatised scenes.

So great was the stir that five weeks later they were all back in the Rex House studio to give another performance for every station in the B.B.C. That was how 5SC became the first station outside London to have a play Simultaneously Broadcast.

When you read the earliest issues of the "Radio Times" the striking fact is that almost at once the pioneers evolved the very types of broadcast which (sometimes with a new format) are still the basic make-up of programme schedules fifty years later.

There is one noteworthy difference. In the early years not a night seemed to pass without some poetry being read aloud. Every category got an airing: the ballads,

Peter Craigmyle, well known referee who broadcast from the Aberdeen studios, demonstrates to commissioner James Petrie.

classical and modern English verse, Burns, Dunbar, makars ancient and contemporary, dramatic selections in blank verse, and couthie "doric" lyrics of the homeliest style. Names that still figure in the "Radio Times" showed early in such contexts:

James Gibson, Jean Taylor Smith, Grace McChlery and (when other stations opened up) Eric Linklater and





John Reith (front row, second left) with members of the Northern Area Religious Advisory Council at the entrance to Blythswood Square in 1926.



The original staff at 2EH Edinburgh when the headquarters were at 79 George Street.

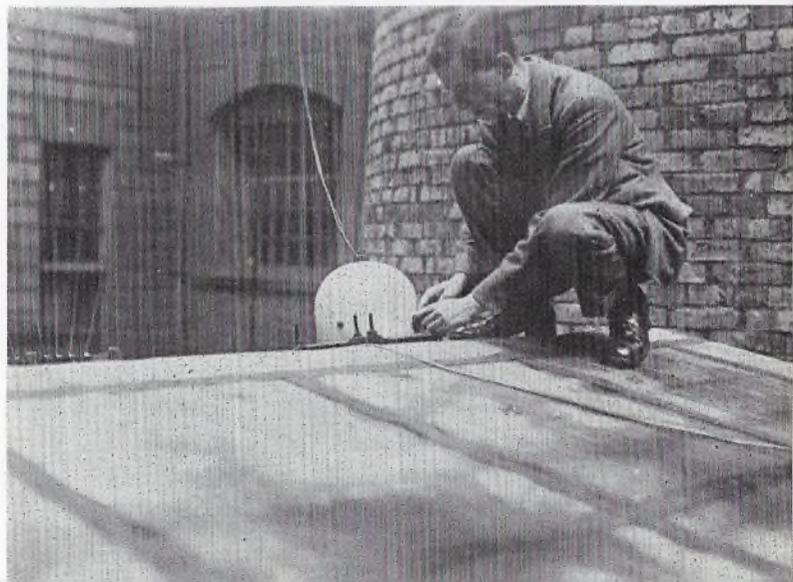
Scotland's second station, seven months after 5SC, was Aberdeen, and R. E. Jeffrey moved from Glasgow to be Station Director of 2BD. Promoted to Savoy Hill in charge of drama only eight months later, Jeffrey still had an enormous impact on the north-east. Because he always advocated high aerials for good reception, Aberdeenshire houses for a decade afterwards had the highest masts in Britain.

Closing down one night, he grumbled that rain was pouring down. The morning had been so fine, he'd

Andrew Cruickshank in Aberdeen and Alastair (as he spelt it then) Sim in Edinburgh.

A circular from The Scottish Association for the Speaking of Verse to members recruited for a series of broadcast recitals states that the British Broadcasting Company would pay three guineas for half-an-hour—one and a half guineas for each speaker. "I may say that the Sub-Committee are in negotiation with the B.B.C. to endeavour to get them to raise the fee, but this may not be possible."

Jacky Beveridge, engineer-in-charge, 2EH Edinburgh, wiring up the aerial which was slung from chimneys at Edinburgh University.





come out with neither coat nor umbrella. If any kind listener with a car happened to be passing his way . . . Ten minutes later Belmont Street was solid with cars, and traffic in Union Street was at a standstill.

In its day, the influence of "the wireless" was sharper, more widespread and more personal than even television was to be. Let an announcer sound husky, pastilles, bedsocks, hot-water bottles poured in. Complaints flowed even more readily.

No gramophone records of sound effects were in existence. Waves breaking on a beach were troublesome, but Jacky Beveridge, Engineer-in-Charge at Edinburgh, had an inspiration. The B.B.C. rented a permanent line to a dance-hall on the front at Portobello, so let them run out an extension to a lamp-post just above the water, and hang a microphone on it. When a play needed sad sea waves, turn a knob in control room, there they'd be.

But the first time they tried, they got a mailbag full of scorn and mockery about that feeble attempt to imitate breakers on the beach at Eriskay! And why should Bonnie Prince Charlie be met by a tram-car, bell and all?

A gathering of educational advisers who met David Cleghorn Thomson and John Reith: "We have no set purpose in 'educating', but we know that for many the purely entertainment side of broadcasting is apt to wear thin."

However, luck was sometimes on the B.B.C.'s side. On a hot night in Glasgow, they left the studio window open. The drama script called for a barking dog, but the actor took a choking fit. Outside, right on cue, a real dog went "bow-wow-wow."

Accidents aside, how much of the early activity in Scotland bore out two of the favourite proverbs of that time: "Coming events cast their shadow before" and "Great oaks from little acorns grow".

Less than a year after it opened, 5SC conducted the world's first experiment in broadcasting lessons to pupils of Garnetbank School, Glasgow. An Educational Advisory Committee had been set up following a hint during a visit by the Managing Director, John Reith: "We have no set purpose of 'educating', but we know that for many the purely entertainment side of broadcasting is apt to wear thin."

A Religious Advisory Committee for 5SC also set a pattern for the B.B.C. elsewhere. It was 2BD which inaugurated sports broadcasting with a weekly talk on football by Peter Craigmyle, then the most famous referee in the world.

Surprisingly, some of the accepted traditions of B.B.C. Scotland were slower to develop. In the first

*George
Rowntree
Harvey*



Arthur Black and A. M. Shinnie.



November of their existence, neither Glasgow nor Aberdeen stations made mention of St. Andrew's Day. Yet, on November 30th, London, Cardiff, Manchester and Newcastle all mounted special programmes. But, of course, they were situated closer to the office of Mr. Reith.

The radio series "Annals of Scotland" in the fifties dramatised many Scottish novels, including "Magnus Merriman" by Eric Linklater. This presentation from Edinburgh in 1956 included the author and his daughter Kristin with his fellow-writers Sir Compton MacKenzie and Moray McLaren (first Programme Director for B.B.C. Scotland) with Alastair MacIntyre, Senior Scottish Announcer.



And it has to be recorded that the first broadcast celebration of the Immortal Memory of Robert Burns came out of 2LO, the London Station. G. K. Chesterton proposed the toast. But this was six weeks before Scotland had a B.B.C. studio.

The gestation period for the B.B.C.'s first Gaelic transmission was exactly nine months. It came from Aberdeen, when that station had been operating for seven weeks. R. E. Jeffrey's successor, however, was the kilted Neil McLean, gold medallist of the Mod; and the cause of broadcasts in Gaelic has never since looked back.

The pioneers, as well as quickly discovering what was the essential material to fill out the form of this new means of communication, were even swifter to discern the people who could supply it. For example, soon after his arrival in Aberdeen, R. E. Jeffrey found a university student, one E. R. R. Linklater, and gave him a part in a radio play. Round Eric he collected a group of writers, composers, singers and actors fit to rival in ability and versatility the London station which had had a year's start on them.

For years, names like George Rowntree Harvey, David Rorie, Douglas Raitt, A. F. Hyslop, Addie Ross, Christine Crowe ("Grannie Mutch"), Arthur Black,



Members of the Scottish National Players in a drama production in the early thirties. Left to right: Harold Wightman, Jean Taylor Smith, Grace McClery and Jean Faulds.

Dorothy Robertson and R. Gordon MacCallum were pouring out broadcasting of the highest artistic and technical quality, all of it reflecting their own region, and much of it able to delight listeners throughout the United Kingdom.

In the very first volume of the "Radio Times", on the second last programme page, you may see that inside one week 2BD put on John Drinkwater's new play "Mary Stuart" (Linklater as Riccio); then finally a

burlesque drama "The Duchess in Doubt" by E. R. R. Linklater; and Goldsmith's "She Stoops to Conquer" (Linklater popping up again as Sir Charles Marlow).



Sir Harry Lauder



The parallel activity showed at 5SC with greater simplicity. A telephone call could muster the Scottish National Players or the famous Ayrshire team from Ardrossan and Saltcoats, who'd show up at the studio with their current production and, without further rehearsal, simply put it on the air.

Because of the novelty, big names of the theatre were also delighted to step before the microphone and put on part of their show, for free—Scots comics like Tommy Lorne, Dave Willis, and stars of the West End such as Lillian Braithwaite.

The broadcast from the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland in the latter stages of proceedings for the Union of the two Churches in Scotland was considered one of the most important outside broadcasts of the type. The microphones are at the speaker's right, the engineers in the gallery.

Sir Harry Lauder came to the Glasgow studio in 1924—just to make an appeal on behalf of Scottish Boy Scouts. He kept his songs for the music halls for a further seven years, by which time the National network was able to tempt him into a London studio.

The universities were not slow to weigh in. Inside a single month Glasgow professors began the syllabus of broadcasts to schools, roped in an Aberdeen colleague for the first radio performance of one of the classical Greek tragedies, a translation of "Antigone" with specially composed incidental music, to be followed

only one night later by Aberdeen's "Macbeth". Not to remain always on an exalted plane, ten days later the Aberdeen students presented a three-act musical comedy as their charities show—book, lyrics and music by Eric Linklater and A. F. Hyslop.

Edinburgh University, not to be outdone, let the B.B.C. put up a hut in the campus to house the capital's transmitter, and sling the aerial from a chimney. 2EH, of course, was designated a Relay Station, with G. L. Marshall in charge. But true to every other city in the relay chain, Edinburgh flatly refused to relay the programmes of the nearest Main Station (Glasgow). Local pride demanded: London or nothing—and got it:



not without caustic words from Mr. Reith.

Relay stations originated fewer programmes than their big brothers, but of course each had its own Children's Corner; Uncle Leslie (G. L. Marshall) presided in Edinburgh and Dundee had Auntie Gwen. She travelled twice a week to Glasgow to play a toy trumpet for 5SC with Kathleen, Alex and Mungo; but when Gwen left the B.B.C., she attained still greater renown, choosing to be known as Wendy—Miss Wendy Wood.

Originating as sparetime activity for the staff and an amateur romp, Children's Hour grew to be one of the most influential and favourite elements in B.B.C. output.

Like other departments, Children's programmes was already striving to take the microphone outside the studio. Scottish stations got a national scoop for the B.B.C. in 1924 by going to Gleneagles Hotel and relaying Henry Hall and his dance band. Three weeks after opening their studio, Edinburgh engineers relayed the proceedings of the General Assembly of the Church of Scotland, sitting unobtrusively at the end of the strangers' gallery near the Lord High Commissioner.

Because of opposition by newspapers supported in Parliament direct relays of sporting events were not permitted. But when the ban was lifted for Scottish

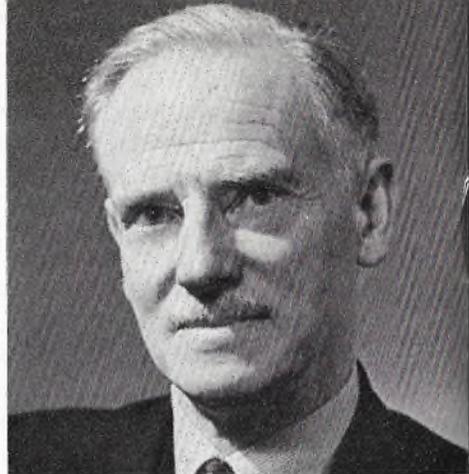
"Children's Hour" from Blythswood Square, with Robin Russell ('Charlie'), Kathleen Garscadden ('Auntie Cyclone'), and Andrew Stewart ('Longfellow').



D MILLER CRAIG



DAVID CLEGHORN THOMSON

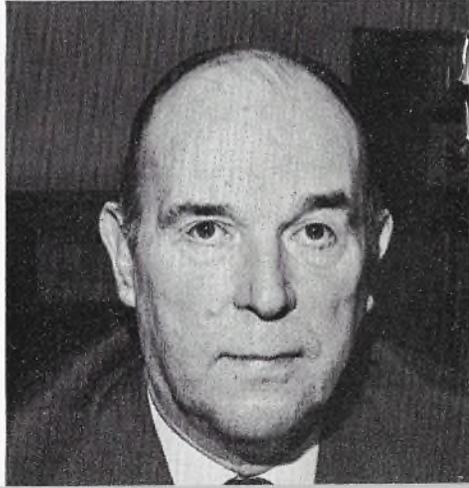


MELVILLE DINWIDDIE

ANDREW STEWART

ALASDAIR MILNE

ROBERT COULTER



League football in 1928, a single commentator spoke for 105 minutes to describe play at Tynecastle between Hearts and Rangers.

After the initial period of independence for each station in its own area, the idea of network and unified control began to grow. As well as its local Station Director, Glasgow now housed the Assistant Controller. Under the Controller at Savoy Hill, Admiral Carpendale, D. Miller Craig became responsible for "the Northern Area"—not simply Scottish stations but Newcastle and Belfast as well, and soon had the title "Northern Area Director".

So was created the hierarchy of top management in Scotland. From 1926, under titles which changed through Scottish Regional Director to Scottish Director and Controller Scotland, the succession ran: David Cleghorn Thomson, Melville Dinwiddie 1933; Andrew Stewart, 1957; Alasdair Milne, 1967; Robert Coulter, 1973.

The organisation of the B.B.C. into Regions in 1928 was a preparation for the high-power transmitters to be constructed at Westerglen and Burghead, carrying both the Scottish Regional and Scottish National Programmes, and aimed at covering the whole country.



The transmitter hall at Westerglen

The control room at Broadcasting House, Glasgow





"The McFlannels" in rehearsal in 1951. Left to right: John Morton, Meg Buchanan, Archie P. Lee, producer, Arthur Shaw, Eric Wightman, Anna Donald, Marjorie Dalziel, Archie Henry.

Scapa Flow which destroyed the world's mightiest warship, the "Bismarck".

On the home front, it was the Scottish Controller, Melville Dinwiddie, who persuaded London to accept a daily syllabus of physical exercises set to music in Glasgow, and a five-minute devotional programme, "Lift up your hearts: a thought for today". Now using the second part of the title, it continues to appear each week-day on the national network.

Many of the Scottish staff had gone to the forces, but others—serving as war correspondents at home and

overseas—developed the skills which resulted in new programmes as soon as the war ended. Regional broadcasting resumed and B.B.C. Scotland initiated a weekly sports coverage which continues to this day in sound and television—a world record—still guided by the man who set it up, Peter Thomson. With new plays, documentaries, a great expansion in Scottish Dance Music, the institution of the family serial "The McFlannels" which topped the ratings, and an independent Scottish News service, the Scottish Home Service moved smoothly into its Golden Age, and found itself merging into the Television Era.

"Down at the Mains" in 1950. Left to right: Elsie Payne, W. H. D. Joss, Grace McChlery, Isobel Robertson, Bill Jess, R. Gordon McCallum (author), Eddie Fraser and Robin Grieve (pianist).





JIMMY LOGAN



STANLEY BAXTER

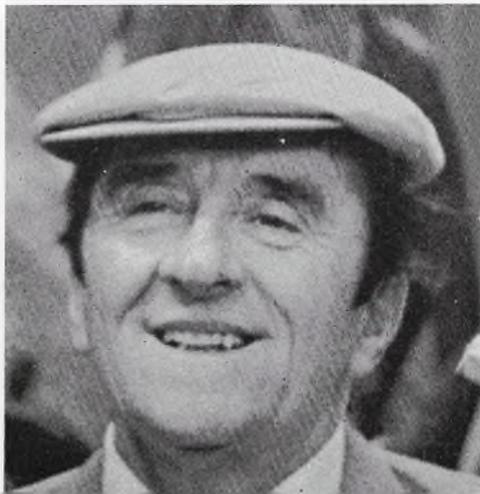


Pipe-Major WILLIE ROSS

ANDY STEWART

LEX McLEAN

IAN WHYTE





TOM FLEMING

MOIRA ANDERSON



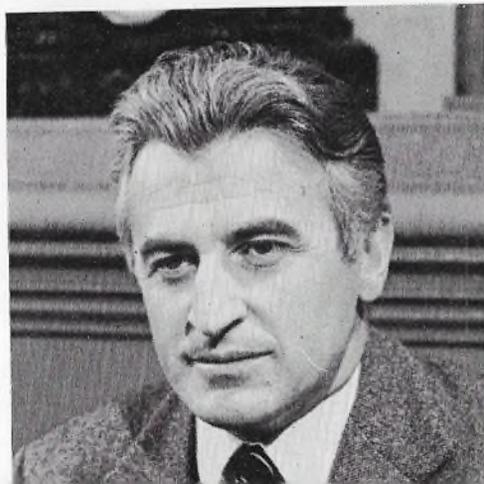
LENA MARTELL

BILL SIMPSON



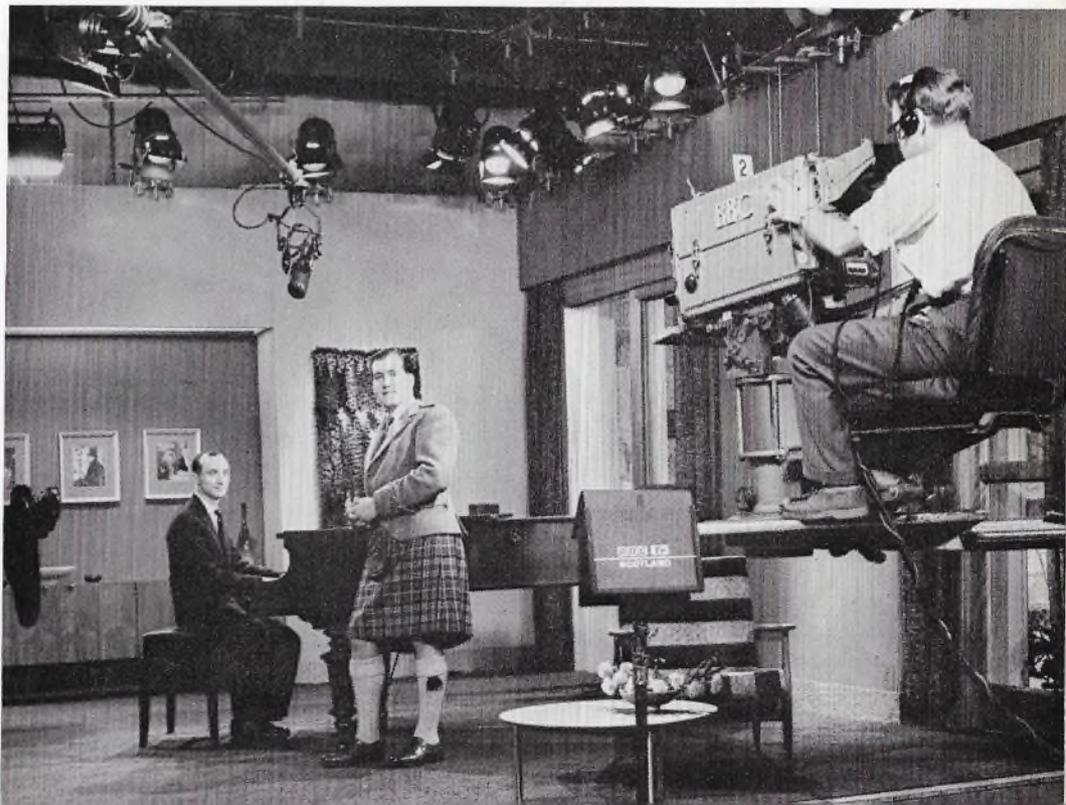
MAGNUS MAGNUSSON

MARY MARQUIS



AN EARLY TELEVISION SET

Kenneth McKellar in "A Song for Everyone". The series was produced by Eddie Fraser in Glasgow's Springfield Road studios, originally the Black Cat Cinema.





BBC SCOTLAND

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