

WHEN TELEVISION CAME TO MOORDOWN

Though it is widely known that Guglielmo Marconi, the wireless pioneer, carried out some of his first transmissions at Sandbanks in the 1890s, what is less widely known is that John Logie Baird – prime mover in the invention of television – visited Bournemouth several times in the 1920s, obtaining advice and financial backing from Sydney Moseley, his friend and future biographer, who lived at 36 Christchurch Road. ‘He never did any of his actual experimenting here,’ recalled Moseley in later life, ‘but he got many of his ideas in Bournemouth’;¹ and as if to somehow prove it, a faded photograph of the two men, strolling along Undercliffe Drive, appeared in *The Bournemouth Times* of 16 November 1957. It may also be worth noting that demonstrations of Baird’s ‘televisor’ were given at the Holdenhurst Road Drill Hall in 1930, setting for that year’s Ideal Home Exhibition. Sir Dan Godfrey, conductor of the Bournemouth Symphony Orchestra, agreed to be televised live for the occasion. ‘At the moment,’ remarked *The Bournemouth Daily Echo*, ‘television ... is in its infancy, but ... the time is not far distant when it will be as popular and general a form of family entertainment as the wireless.’²

Wireless, of course, was pretty much established in Moordown at that stage, and Eileen Barker, growing up at 62 Nursery Road in the 1930s, has happy memories of listening to ‘Uncle Mac’ on her mother’s Bush wireless set, purchased in 1933; ‘she was very proud of that set,’ says Eileen today, ‘because unlike the neighbours’ sets, it had four or five knobs on the front. None of our neighbours had even heard of television then.’³ The BBC began making regular television broadcasts in 1936, but for most licence-holders, reception was limited to within twenty miles of Alexandra Palace, the BBC’s chief transmission centre. Bournemouth residents, however, were able to pick up a signal owing to ‘the skip distance’, where the BBC’s signal rebounded off the ionosphere and refracted over a number of outlying areas. It was thanks to this phenomenon that Ted Kirtley was able to make a living in the 1930s installing sets around the borough.

Kirtley (1887-1948) was a remarkable man: a self-taught radio engineer, who had worked as a colliery winder in Sunderland before moving south to Bournemouth around 1927. Initially he got a job with Adams Bros. & Co., electricians, at 8 Grand Parade, Westbourne, renting a flat above the premises. In 1936, however, he moved to Moordown – specifically, to 115 The Grove – when the firm opened a further shop in that area. (This second outlet was probably 941 Wimborne Road, part of Mayfield Park Buildings, where Stanley Adams ran an electrics business after the Second World War.) Ted’s elder son, Stanley Kirtley, remembered accompanying his father on home installations around the town, before he (Stanley) fled the nest and moved to Southampton in 1938.⁴

The irony is that Ted himself never acquired a set; as his younger son, Al Kirtley, recalls, it was not until 1955 that his widow began renting a 9-inch set at her new address, 11 Cowper Road. The reason, says Al, was almost certainly cost, given his father’s keen interest in technology: he visited the Wireless Exhibition in London each year, ‘and when I was very small he built me an electric train set, using parts he’d had to make himself, including the tiny electric motor.’⁵ Ted’s career with Adams Bros. was cut short in 1939, when the BBC suspended television broadcasts: the fear was that enemy aircraft would use the BBC’s signal as a means of finding

London during the blackouts. Consequently, Ted changed career and spent his last years lecturing in TV and radio engineering at Bournemouth's municipal college.

The post-war period

Normal service resumed in 1946, and it seems the Kirtleys' near-neighbours – Vernon and Annie Matthews, at 124 The Grove – were among the first Moordown residents to pick up a set after the war; Al remembers watching a flickering Muffin the Mule in their front room around 1949-50 ('It seemed a bit disappointing compared to the quality of the films we could watch at The Moderne Cinema!').⁶ These images were, again, the result of the skip distance, possibly from Alexandra Palace or possibly from the BBC's new transmitter at Sutton Coldfield, which began operating on 17 December 1949. Further transmitters were planned for Holme Moss (West Yorkshire), Kirk o'Shotts (North Lanarkshire), and Wenvoe (South Glamorgan), it being hoped that the latter would extend reception to the west and south-west of England. In the meantime, only 'enthusiasts and the quite wealthy'⁷ were interested in the medium – the words of Edward John Ransome Tremlett, who began trading as a TV salesman at 941 Wimborne Road in July 1951.

An ex-commando sergeant, Tremlett was twenty-nine when he married his second wife, Constance Margery Hirtes, in the Wokingham district in 1948. Initially he worked on her father's farm, at Three Mile Cross, near Reading; but after Albert Hirtes' death on 20 June 1948 the farm was sold, netting around £1,250, which Tremlett used to buy out Stanley Adams' electrics business at 941 Wimborne Road. At that point, recalled Tremlett, 'I was trying to establish myself for the coming of the station at Wenvoe';⁸ but as reception was so poor in the meantime – and only reliable for three or four days each week – the initial take-up was very low. This was a problem, as Tremlett's investment had left him with just £80 in the bank, while his overheads included shop rent of £150 a year, plus wages of £8 a week, paid to a contractor who did the servicing.

Turnover increased to £50 a week towards the end of 1951, leaving Tremlett with £10 a week gross profit. One of his customers around this time was the Moordown butcher, Alexander Mott, who had taken the lease to 755 Wimborne Road in 1950 and lived in the flat above. The set he bought from Tremlett was a Corsor, though 'the reception was not very good, with a snowy picture',⁹ and Tremlett eventually agreed to exchange it for an Alba, which was a slight improvement. Such difficulties may have been the reason Tremlett's takings plummeted again in January 1952, at which point he assigned the lease of the shop to his aunt – also borrowing £600 from her to keep going. By March 1952 he was unable to pay his debts as they fell due, and, in the ensuing six months, he made a net loss of £669, eventually filing for bankruptcy on 3 October with net assets of £863 and unsecured debts of £2,304. At his bankruptcy examination, he agreed with the official receiver that his problems arose from starting out with insufficient capital and excess stock; 'I thought when Wenvoe started up I should make sufficient sales from stock to pay off my debts,' he said, 'but things got considerably worse.'¹⁰ This suggests there was little demand for new sets in Moordown even when Wenvoe did become operational, i.e. on 15 August 1952 – though the *Echo* stated the number of TV licences in Bournemouth rose by 600, to more than 3,000, in the six months after Wenvoe began transmitting.¹¹

Wenvoe and the Coronation

It was around this time that *The Bournemouth Times* sent a reporter around the borough, asking existing set-owners – identifiable by the spindly aerials fixed to their houses – what they thought of the new reception. Dorothy Whitelegg had just moved to 2 Saxonhurst Road with her husband Phillip, the future Mayor of Bournemouth. They were delighted with the new signal; as Mrs. Whitelegg put it, ‘The contrasts between blacks and whites are first-class.’¹² Saxonhurst Road, of course, had the advantage of standing on high ground, with no obstructions for several miles to the north. Residents in built-up areas were less enraptured. Kathleen Love, of 33 Cardigan Road, said her picture often grew ‘very misty’¹³ due to passing vehicles, while Rose Young, of 43 Highfield Road, got ‘a thoroughly enjoyable evening’s entertainment’¹⁴ from her set, but added: ‘I only wish the interference from the traffic was not so bad.’¹⁵

What is striking is that very few Moordown residents seem to have bought a set for the Coronation. Howard Dalton, who was five at the time and living at 35 Hillcrest Road, remembers his parents travelling to his uncle’s bungalow at Bear Cross to watch the ceremony on a 12- or 14-inch set (although that, admittedly, had been purchased for the occasion).¹⁶ Similarly, Roger Shore was ferried that day from 2 Edifred Road, in a basket attached to the back of his father’s bike, to watch the ceremony with his Auntie Mim at Northbourne; she was the only member of the family to have a set, although Roger’s parents were ‘not very pro-TV’,¹⁷ and only got round to renting a set in 1967. The one Moordown resident who does seem to have splashed out was Peggy Lockyer, who lived in Homeside Road and was married to an electrical engineer – who presumably knew where to track down a bargain. Michael Stead’s father went round to the Lockyers’ to watch the Coronation on TV: ‘They said it was the only time anyone went round to Peggy Lockyer’s house. Usually she was round yours.’¹⁸ The house was so packed with guests that Mr. Stead had to lie on a bed to watch the ceremony, and was reproved by Mrs. Lockyer for failing to stand for the national anthem.

Rowridge and Radius

At that point, Bournemouth was only on the fringe of Wenvoe’s reception area; it was not until 12 November 1954 that the borough began to enjoy first-class reception, when the BBC began transmitting from its new mast at Rowridge, Isle of Wight, after two weeks of sending out test signals. External aerials were still recommended, but Charles Brooks, trading as ‘Winton Wireless’ at 415 and 743-5 Wimborne Road, found he was getting excellent reception even with indoor aerials. Brooks had been one of the first radio salesmen in Bournemouth, setting up at 741 Wimborne Road in 1925, and was suddenly enjoying a ‘second wind’ in the wake of Rowridge: as he told *The Bournemouth Times* in 1954, ‘We are snowed under with orders to install new sets.’¹⁹ The same newspaper spoke to James Lees, who, trading as ‘Radius’, had taken over from Tremlett at 941 Wimborne Road. ‘Reception of the test panel is very good,’ said Lees. ‘We tried an indoor aerial with excellent results; in fact, we got three other stations during the same evening, but this was exceptional.’ Lees added, in words that may have come back to haunt him: ‘Sales are booming. I am immediately selling every set as it arrives.’²⁰

Radius was a three-shop business, with further outlets at 190 Charminster Road and 39 Palmerston Road, Boscombe (though the latter appears to have been used as a service depot only); it was registered as a limited company, Radius (Bournemouth) Ltd., on 21 March 1956. The business suffered from two problems, however, the first being Lees' highly erratic driving history. In November 1955 he was fined £15 for speeding down Wimborne Road and in March 1956 he was fined again, having been spotted careering down Castle Lane West at 70 mph – more than double the limit for built-up areas. He reduced his speed to 65 mph when approaching the Charminster Road junction, only to accelerate again, eventually being flagged down by police in Lawford Road; pleading 'Not guilty' when the case came to court, he told magistrates he had been in 'rather a hurry to get home'.²¹ The bench fined him £25, and disqualified him from driving anything but goods vehicles for the next twelve months. On 15 October 1956, Lees appealed against the disqualification, saying it prevented him from driving his company's service vans; but the chief constable of Hampshire opposed the appeal, and the magistrates stood firm.

The other problem besetting Radius was the quality of its stock: it specialised in used or 'reconditioned' sets, which were undeniably cheap – £25 for a 12-inch Murphy's table-top TV, when a new one would have set you back 50 guineas – but which tended to come devoid of any guarantee. If you were short of cash, it was safer to buy a set on HP or simply to rent one, as most rental agreements came with free maintenance, and the rent tended to reduce the longer the agreement went on. By April 1957 Radius was selling 9- and 10-inch sets for £10 (and 'shopsoiled radios' for £5),²² but the business was clearly winding down; Lees had already set up a new shop at Yeovil, and had disappeared from the electoral register. On 20 September, the company's remaining stock was auctioned off. *The Bournemouth Times* described the *mêlée* that ensued:

A man whispered to another man and the report went round the Square on Friday afternoon: 'They're selling television sets at a quid in there.'

A thumb was jerked in the direction of St. Andrew's Hall.

It was true.

But the sets were mostly 9-inch and 12-inch models – some of them the earliest made – not working and not able to receive IOW transmissions.

'Some were pre-war,' a spokesman of Rebbeck Bros., the auctioneers ... told Bournemouth Times. 'There were about 80 sets, but only six working. We tested them just before the sale.'

'Prices were from 20s. to nearly £40 a set.'

There were about 400 lots. Radio men picked up some cheap 'lucky dips' in spares. Wireless battery sets selling for about £15 in the shops went for £8 to £12, mains second-hand sets were knocked down at £3 10s., new ones at £8. Electric razors new and second had £5 to £7 10s. bids and electric hairdryers brought just about the same prices asked in the shops.²³

The sale was conducted 'under instructions from the Sherriff of Hampshire',²⁴ which could only have come about after the serving of a 'writ of execution' by a judgment creditor; and sure enough, Radius (Bournemouth) Ltd. was put into liquidation on 7 October 1957. There is a footnote to Lees' story. Under the Companies Act 1948, the liquidator was obliged to investigate any misconduct perpetrated in the running of the company. It was no doubt as a result that Lees again found himself in hot water, brought before Bournemouth's Quarter Sessions on 15 May 1958.

Lees was charged with three breaches of hire-purchase regulations – specifically, the Hire Purchase and Credit Sale Agreement (Control) Order 1956, a contentious piece of legislation which made it an offence to buy electrical goods on HP, unless at least 50% of the total cash price had been paid as a deposit. The purpose of the Act was to drive down credit borrowing and thus, it was hoped, reduce inflation – but it was an extraordinarily Keynesian measure for a Conservative government to introduce. Lees' response to the legislation had been simple: if, say, a hard-up customer wanted a £68 TV set on HP, Lees would ask them for a £10 down payment (instead of £34 or more) and enter a fictitious figure on the loan agreement. 'The same method,' said the prosecuting counsel, 'was employed with slight variations of detail in each case.'²⁵

Obviously these antics gave Lees an unfair advantage over other local dealers. What made his actions particularly reprehensible, however, was that they ensnared two additional parties – Robert Cozens, described as the company's 'general factotum',²⁶ who had witnessed a number of the agreements (and who appeared as a co-defendant); and Kingsland Finance, the HP company used by Radius, who seem to have been genuinely appalled when they found out what Lees was up to. Through a quirk of the legislation, the HP company appeared in court as the main offender. Lees did at least plead 'Guilty' to each of the three charges, while his counsel, John Edwards, put up a stirring mitigation, giving us a glimpse of what trading was really like in the cut-throat 1950s:

Mr. Edwards said Lees' life was now in ruins. After wartime service as a radio officer he started a small radio and television business in Bournemouth, and five years later, through hard work had three shops in the town and was developing another at Yeovil. He was employing 14 men ...

It was a story of over-keen business activity. He was not aware of the regulations in detail. Everyone was crying for maximum sales in a difficult market. Mr. Edwards explained there were many other transactions that were perfectly normal ...²⁷

Lees, who was now working as a radio technician in Sherborne, was fined £30 and ordered to pay £21 costs. What became of him is unclear; if alive today, he would be 101. As for 941 Wimborne Road, this was occupied by several subsequent TV dealers but the premises seemed to be jinxed: around 1974 the shop caught fire, and Steve Mott remembers peering through the letterbox at the burnt-out TVs – 'probably the first time I had seen (and smelt) a fire damaged building.'²⁸ The occupants at that point were Maggs Television Ltd., who went into voluntary liquidation on 30 January 1975. The present occupant, a flooring supplier, has traded there since the 1990s.

Grace Brothers, walnut veneers and afterwards

One duo who did benefit from the advent of television was Winton's very own Grace Brothers – Eric and Ernie, no less – who traded from Post Office Buildings in Cardigan Road; their sales were said to have trebled in the week that Rowridge began operating.²⁹ Born in Bermondsey, the brothers came to Bournemouth at an early age and were residing at 55 Portchester Road on the night of the 1911 census. Around 1935, they took over a former confectioner's shop at 6 Post Office Buildings, selling all manner of electrical goods and eventually knocking through and taking over numbers 5 and 7. They remained there for nearly fifty years, finally calling it a day in 1984, by which time Eric was seventy-five and Ernie, eighty-one.

A shot of the Grace Brothers premises appeared in *The Bournemouth Times* of 5 November 1954, with a fleet of six mini-vans parked outside. Home demonstrations were said to be possible within one hour, or, if you popped into the shop for an evening demonstration, you would find up to thirty TV sets blaring away at any one time. The Dalton family, at 35 Hillcrest Road, almost certainly purchased their first set here, as Howard Dalton recalls:

We did not have a TV until 1958 and it was a rented RGD television which I am pretty sure came from Grace Brothers in Winton. Rental was the popular way in the 1950's and we did this for a number of years. Father probably paid for the set three times over!

*Incidentally, our old RGD set was still in service in 1963 on the evening when I was doing my homework and the programme was curtailed with the news of President Kennedy's assassination. To have lived before the introduction of TV to our home I have fond memories of coming home from school to the sounds of Sandy Macpherson on the organ and of Godfrey Winn to accompany breakfast. With radio you were able to do other useful chores whilst listening. I suddenly feel quite old!*³⁰

Though not above renting out sets, the brothers did enjoy promoting top-of-the-range products: in 1957, for instance, they were showcasing a Dynatron 17-inch TV and VHF wireless set combined, complete with an 'anti-flutter circuit'³¹ to minimise interference from passing aircraft. Trouble was, it cost a king's ransom at 97 guineas. Similarly, though the brothers rhapsodised over their 17-inch Murphy TV, with its 'cabinet veneered in West African walnut',³² this would have set you back £72 19s. 6d. – and who cared whether it came with a '1/4in. armour plate glass front'?³³ Moordown's bargain-hunters tended to look elsewhere. Eileen Barker moved to 61 Evelyn Road in 1955, 'and even then,' she says, 'we didn't have a set until 1959; our son would have been five and had just started school, and a neighbour used to let him watch their set once a week. So eventually we decided to get our own, and I bought it from a little shop about three doors down from Winton Library.' This would have been Windser's, a furniture shop on the corner of Smithfield Place. The set – '12 to 15 inches, and covered with blue-black leather' – cost a mere £8. There was nothing wrong with it – 'I don't remember getting a misty picture or anything'; the main problem was a faulty utility pipe in Evelyn Road, 'so that for the first few years, every time the cooker went, the TV would switch off.'³⁴

By that point – 1959 – the number of TV licences in Bournemouth had risen from 3,000, seven years previously, to more than 50,000, the result of increasing competition, the abolition of credit controls in 1958, and the introduction of ‘Southern TV’, the local Independent Television franchise, which first went on air – with a screening of *Highway Patrol*, amongst other delights – on Saturday, 30 August 1958. Several national retailers had also deemed it worthwhile, by this point, to open outlets in the district – starting with Currys, whose first stores in the area were at 382 and 410 Wimborne Road. Let us conclude, then, with an A-Z of TV retailers in Winton and Moordown.

I should add that I would be only too pleased to hear from residents with their own TV-related reminiscences. You can e-mail me at thebankruptcyman@gmail.com

Bourne Radio & Television Ltd. – a curiously short-lived outfit, with head office at 9 Albert Road from 1961 and eight further outlets across Bournemouth and Poole, including one at Winton (336 Wimborne Road). The company had disappeared from local directories by 1967, however, and the Winton shop was taken over by Rumbelows (*q.v.*) after a short hiatus.

Currys had set up an outlet at 382 Wimborne Road by October 1957 (with four other branches in Bournemouth, Poole and Wimborne), opening a further branch at 410 Wimborne Road by 1959. The company had very strong links to Bournemouth. It was set up in 1884 by Henry Curry, who started out by selling bicycles in his back garden shed in Leicester; thirteen years later, in 1897, his sons joined the business (H. Curry & Sons), then in 1927 the company was floated on the stock market. By that point it had branched out into radios, gramophones and other electrical goods. Each of the founder’s four sons – Edwin, Albert, James, and Henry junior – came to live in the Bournemouth area. Henry Curry junior was the first to make the move, taking up residence at Homelands House, at the end of Kings Avenue, Christchurch, around 1927. In 1939 this property was requisitioned by the Ministry of Defence, at which point Curry moved to 17 Tuckton Road, dying there in 1953 and leaving a gross estate of £43,241. One of his last acts was to provide funds for a Swedenborg church at the corner of Tuckton Road and Carbery Avenue: this is now The New Church, which opened in 1950. (The original building is now the church hall; a larger church opened adjacent to it in 1958.) As for the family business, this was taken over by Dixons in 1984 but retained its brand identity, and in 2006 Dixons announced that its own stores would be rebranded as branches of Currys, bringing the total number of Currys stores in the UK to about 550.

D.E.R. stood for ‘Domestic Electric Rentals’ (though some claimed it stood for ‘Don’t Ever Rent’). It was set up by Thorn Electrical Industries in 1938 as a means of infiltrating the TV market, though for the first ten years of its life it operated from a single store in Twickenham. By 1954 it had ten shops around the south and by 1957 it had penetrated Hampshire, with a regional HQ at 58 St. Mary’s Street, Southampton, and outposts at Fareham, Portsmouth and 69 Commercial Road, Bournemouth. A further branch at Winton – 414 Wimborne Road – had been set up by 1960. The national HQ, by this time, was Apex House, a horrible black tower block looming over the Twickenham Road. The company’s unique selling point, in

the 1950s at least, was the offer of seven days' free viewing, after which one could rent the set – 7s. 6d. a week for a 12-inch model – or return it to the company, 'no obligation'.³⁵ In 1968 Thorn bought out rival company Radio Rentals and merged it with D.E.R. to form Thorn Television Rentals, though the two businesses continued to operate as separate chains, each with its own shops, staff, vehicles, etc. This continued until the 1980s when, with the rental market in serious decline, Radio Rentals became the sole trading outlet for Thorn's TV and radio products. D.E.R. last appeared in local directories in December 1985, when it was still trading from 414 Wimborne Road, with other outlets at Poole (44 Arndale Centre), Boscombe (642 Christchurch Road) and Christchurch (64 High Street). From then on it became a dormant company – resurfacing briefly as 'D.E.R. Direct' in the late 1980s, selling East European TVs for less than a tenner. It was finally dissolved by voluntary strike-off in February 2007.

E. W. Forster & Co. turned up as an 'electrical contractor & radio engineer'³⁶ at 77 Withermoor Road, Winton, in 1947 – site of 'Hair It Is', on the corner of Stanfield Road. Three years later they had acquired a storage unit at 35 Cardigan Road, formerly the garage used by Alma Laundries. Around 1959 the business moved to 686 Wimborne Road, but kept hold of the Cardigan Road storage premises. They also traded as general electrical contractors, offering 'day & emergency night service'³⁷ and installing immersion heaters for £12 - £15 (as of 1961). The business was incorporated (as E. W. Forster & Co. Ltd.) on 20 May 1963, with a registered office at 7 Crimea Road, but appears to have gone the way of all flesh in the late 1970s. In 1979, a Mr. A. Rahman applied for (and was granted) permission for the off-sale of hot food from 686 Wimborne Road, paving the way towards the shop's current incarnation as the Winton Tandoori. E. W. Forster & Co. Ltd. was put into compulsory liquidation on 8 March 1983, and was dissolved in 1984.

Grace Bros., discussed in detail above, enjoyed such success in the mid-1950s that it briefly opened a second branch at 19 Castle Lane West – now, seemingly, an outpost of Palmer Snell estate agents – but this closed some time before 1959. The company continued to trade at 5-7 Post Office Buildings until 1984, when Eric and Ernie decided to retire after nearly fifty years of trading. The premises were then taken over by B & R Textiles, its current occupiers, who applied for planning permission for a new shopfront on 3 December 1984. Ernest Grace died in Bournemouth in November 1986, aged eighty-three. His brother died in the Southampton district in 1992, having reached the same age.

Hi-Lite Television Co. Ltd. was a company that over-reached itself during the TV boom of the mid-1950s, though it retrenched rapidly. Originally based at 689 Christchurch Road, Boscombe, the company opened a second branch in September 1954 at 89-91 Southbourne Grove, with Peter M. Ross as shop manager. It then opened a third showroom at 658 Wimborne Road, at 10 a.m. on Saturday, 6 November 1954. Bargains included the new Murphy 'table TV', reduced from £72 15s. to £52 15s., and the console version, slashed from £66 to £46.³⁸ By February 1955 the company were offering sets for as little as 9s. 6d. weekly, 'including aerial';³⁹ later that year they opened a fourth shop at 9 East Howe Lane, no doubt with the Leybourne council estate in mind – Bournemouth Borough Council having relaxed its snooty attitude towards aerials being attached to council properties.⁴⁰ Both

the Winton and East Howe shops had closed by 1957, however (no doubt as a result of the new credit controls), and for the next twelve months the company traded at Boscombe and Southbourne only, with Mrs. J. O. Read as managing director, Mr. A. J. Kay as sales manager, and Mr. R. Cotterill as chief engineer. As the credit squeeze was relaxed, a new outlet opened at 191 High Street, Poole, on 25 July 1958 with a mid-afternoon cocktail party for potential punters. Two years later, the company changed its name to Hi-Lite Electrical Company Ltd. and traded as suppliers of all electrical products. 658 Wimborne Road is now Taylor-Made Lettings, on the corner of Jameson Road.

Hill's Television turns up at 887 Wimborne Road in 1975 – probably an offshoot of Hill's of Ringwood Ltd., who, as of 1967, had been trading at 41 Christchurch Road, Ringwood and also at Station Road, West Moors. The shop now accommodates **S.T.B. Electrical Suppliers** (“S.T.B.” = “simply the best”). STB Electrical Wholesale Ltd.: incorporated 27 September 2009, with 98 Castle Lane West as its registered office. Philip Meek is the current sole director.

(The) Northbourne Electrical Company was a pre-war business, which benefited from the TV boom and was registered as a limited company (Northbourne Electrical Co. Ltd.) on 8 January 1955, with £15,000 share capital. Initial directors were Frank King, of Queen's Park Avenue; Dennis Jacobs, of Cranborne Crescent, Parkstone; and Cyril Davies of 113 Pine Road, Winton, who was also company secretary. Registered office was 902 Wimborne Road. Few traders could have bettered this company's advertisements in the 1950s. **'STOP SMOKING? You can DO IT!'** proclaimed a promotional piece from 1957. 'Save that cigarette money for one week and buy a Black and Decker electric home workshop for 30/- deposit. This versatile hand tool can polish, buff, saw, sand, drill and cut, etc ... And remember, the floor polisher attachment would make your wife very happy.'⁴¹ A few months earlier the company had run a contest in *The Bournemouth Times*, inviting readers to put various electric appliances – a television, a spin drier, an immersion heater – into order of importance to the modern home. Prizes included a 17-in. TV and aerial for 12 months; a Hoover washing machine for two months; 100 units of electricity; an egg a day for two months ('OR THE HEN HERSELF!'); '6 rolls wallpaper, 1/2-gall. paint and 10 hours' hard labour'; three kippers; and 'special tips for the flat racing season'.⁴² Latterly dormant, the company was dissolved by a Section 353 strike-off (Companies Act 1948) on 9 February 1982.

Radio & Electrical Services, 861 Wimborne Road: run by Albert Coley (born in the Kidderminster district in 1926), who lived upstairs with his wife Jean (whom he married in 1959). Coley seems to have traded here until 1996, when the business disappeared from local directories. Now occupied by 'The Stone', unisex hairdressers.

Radio Rentals was founded at Brighton in 1930 (with a turnover of £780 in its first year), later overtaking D.E.R. as the best-known TV rental company in the UK. Its first local branches, in 1956, were at 20 Poole Hill and 66a High Street, Poole, though in February 1957 the Poole branch moved to a new showroom at 3 Kingsland Crescent – at which point the company was already touting itself as 'the world's

largest radio and TV service organisation'.⁴³ The terms, in those days, were 8s. a week for a TV rental and/or 2s. 1d. a week for a radio rental, with free installation and continuous free service (or two years' free service if buying on HP). The rent reduced every six months. The company penetrated Winton – at 357 Wimborne Road – around 1969, and continued to trade there until 1981, when we find Annette's Patisserie applying for planning consent to install a snack bar on the premises. Two years later, the company set up shop for the final time in Winton at 348 Wimborne Road, which closed sometime between 1997 and 1999. By that point the company had gone through several large restructures due as the rental market declined, and in 2000 it merged with Granada Rentals to become Boxclever, which gradually retreated from high streets to become an on-line shopping business only. Boxclever proved moribund, and went into administrative receivership in 2012.

Roberts Bros., 918 Wimborne Road: proprietors were Leslie H. and Guy P. Roberts, operating – on the corner of Tennyson Road – by the time of the 1957 *Kelly's Directory*. Also radio and electrical engineers. On 7 June 1957, with the advent of the BBC's VHF-FM system, the siblings advertised their services in *The Bournemouth Times* but they seem to have ceased trading after a very short period. The shop later became 'Three Cross Motor Cycles' and is now Lyndon, 'elite male grooming'.

R. T. Parsons: initially a sole trader operating from his bungalow, 7 Edifred Road, Muscliffe, around 1959. It was probably the same trader who was behind Parsons Electrical (Bournemouth) Ltd., 'radio & electrical engineers',⁴⁴ incorporated on 26 January 1962 and trading from 10 Melville Road, Winton, by 1965 and up to and including 1969; gone by 1972.

Rumbelows owed its existence to Sydney Rumbelow (1909-74), a native of Hatfield, who set up a string of music and electrics shops in Hertfordshire and Essex bearing his name; these were purchased by Thorn, owner of D.E.R. and Radio Rentals, in 1971. (The eponymous Mr. Rumbelow was also a musician, conductor and bandleader, according to his son-in-law⁴⁵ – but alas, he appears to have had no links to Bournemouth.) Having bought out the company, Thorn then applied the name 'Rumbelows' to all ninety of its Fred Dawes shops across England and Wales – this being a separate string of TV and rental shops, which had been acquired by Radio Rentals in 1969. Many readers will remember the company's advertisement from the 1970s in which animated Rumbelows characters, with Arthur Lowe facial features and tiny legs, scooted around fictitious stores extolling the virtues of certain product lines; the tag-line went 'We take your money and [change of tone to a gruff voice] *serve you right.*' A branch was set up at 336 Wimborne Road in 1972, but seems to have ceased trading after two years; the other local outlet was in Poole, at 10-12 Arndale Centre. The company never made a profit in all its 24 years of trading and in the 1990s, Thorn-EMI converted most of its remaining branches into outlets of D.E.R. (which was still trading, though only just), or Radio Rentals; the 285 Rumbelows stores which were not thus rebranded closed in February 1985. As for 336 Wimborne Road, this has morphed seamlessly into a South Korean grocery store, 'Seoul Plaza'.

Servitel Television Ltd., a TV rental and maintenance company, seems to have originated in the north of England; when Macmillan's government did away with credit controls in 1958, the company announced that it could now reintroduce its no-deposit rental terms, 'which we introduced in the Midlands and the North as long ago as 1936'.⁴⁶ By 1958, the head office of this company was at Winton Banks – 319 Wimborne Road (now the Best One convenience store, near the corner of Crimea Road). It also served 'all districts within 15 miles',⁴⁷ however – and retained further branches at King Street and Chester Road in Manchester. Its managing director, throughout the 1950s, was Mr. G. H. Oakes, 'ex-Admiralty Scientific Services',⁴⁸ and it was under his stewardship that the company enjoyed a £9,000 injection of share capital, 'beyond the registered capital of £1,000',⁴⁹ towards the end of 1955. The company changed its name to Supertel Ltd. around 1971 but kept its head office at Winton, with additional branches at Highcliffe, Ringwood, and 'Bus Station Buildings' in Poole (now of course part of The Dolphin Centre); there was also an outlet in Wareham, where one Moordown correspondent purchased a state-of-the-art tape-recorder in the 1970s, being friends with the manager. ('Even with his "special discount" applied, it still cost more than I was willing to tell the wife!')⁵⁰ The company disappears from local directories in 1979, after which the Winton premises were evidently used as an outlet of **Visionhire**, video rental specialists – but they too had gone by 1991.

Windser's, where Eileen Barker sourced her first set in 1959, was initially based in Poole, where by 1954 it had three outlets (two in the High Street, one in Lower Parkstone). The outlet on the corner of Smithfield Place opened later that year, under the aegis of Windser Furnishing Co. (Winton) Ltd., with Francis Sorge as managing director. 'Present customers know of Windser's standards of quality and service',⁵¹ proclaimed an advert of November 1954, and the terms were reasonable for the period prior to the TV boom: new sets from 59 guineas, with interest of 1s. in the £ for those buying on HP. Primarily, however, the company traded as house and hotel furnishers, supplying carpets, lino, tiled fireplaces, three-piece suites and the like, their advertisements enlivened by housewifely axioms from 'The Merry Wife of Windsers', which included poetry of which Cumberland Clark would have been proud. The company went into voluntary liquidation in the 1980s.

Winton Wireless began operating at 741 Wimborne Road in 1925 under the proprietorship of Charles Edward Brooks, who described the business, accurately, in 1952 as 'the oldest established radio dealers in Bournemouth'.⁵² Brooks was born on 24 November 1905 and died in May 1995 in Poole, having lived in Branksome for many years. He offered a wide range of the best-known makes and promised the customer aerial installation within 24 hours of purchase. By 1954 he was giving demonstrations from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. daily and had started providing HP agreements, with two-year terms. The Moordown branch, on the corner of Moorfield Grove, continued trading until 1967, when planning consent was given to C. F. Marks to use the premises as an estate agent's. 415 Wimborne Road continued to trade, however, and when colour TV began on 1 July that year 'Winton Wireless' was agent for most of the best-known brands: Bush, Ecko, Murphy, Phillips, Sobell and Ultra. It continued trading at 415 until 1978, when planning permission was given to L. Glucksam to convert that and the neighbouring shop into one unit; this is now a Chinese take-away, 'Premier Wok'.

- 1 Sydney Moseley, interviewed in *The Bournemouth Times*, 16 November 1957.
- 2 *The Bournemouth Daily Echo*, 2 May 1930.
- 3 Interview, Eileen Barker.
- 4 Al Kirtley, e-mail to author, 19 January 2016.
- 5 Al Kirtley, e-mail to author, 14 December 2015.
- 6 *Ibid.*
- 7 *The Bournemouth Times*, 28 November 1952.
- 8 *Ibid.*
- 9 Steve Mott, e-mail to author, 22 December 2015.
- 10 *The Bournemouth Times*, 28 November 1952.
- 11 *The Bournemouth Daily Echo*, 2 March 1953.
- 12 *The Bournemouth Times*, 22 August 1952.
- 13 *Ibid.*
- 14 *Ibid.*
- 15 *Ibid.*
- 16 Howard Dalton, e-mail to author, 14 September 2015.
- 17 Roger Shore, e-mail to author, 5 December 2015.
- 18 Interview, Michael Stead.
- 19 *The Bournemouth Times*, 12 November 1954.
- 20 *Ibid.*
- 21 *The Bournemouth Daily Echo*, 2 April 1956.
- 22 *The Bournemouth Times*, 12 April 1957.
- 23 *Ibid.*, 27 September 1957.
- 24 *Ibid.*
- 25 *The Bournemouth Daily Echo*, 16 May 1958.
- 26 *Ibid.*
- 27 *Ibid.*
- 28 Steve Mott, e-mail to author, 11 December 2015.
- 29 *The Bournemouth Times*, 22 October 1954.
- 30 Howard Dalton, e-mail to author, 14 September 2015.
- 31 *The Bournemouth Times*, 8 March 1957.
- 32 *Ibid.*, 22 March 1957.

33 *Ibid.*

34 Interview, Eileen Barker.

35 *The Bournemouth Times*, 4 January 1957.

36 *Kelly's Directory of Bournemouth and Poole, 1947* (London: Kelly's, 1946), page reference mislaid (sorry).

37 *Kelly's Directory of Bournemouth and Poole, 1961* (London: Kelly's, 1960), p. 1587.

38 *The Bournemouth Times*, 5 November 1954.

39 *Ibid.*, 4 February 1955.

40 When Wenvoe began transmitting in 1952, *The Bournemouth Times* reported that only ten of the 3,000 council houses in the borough had TV sets installed. Given the draconian conditions imposed by the Council, the surprise is that there were that many! First, TV aeriels had to be installed by an approved contractor, to a design approved by the housing manager. As it happened, the housing manager for Bournemouth at the time, Mr. J. Scruton, was obliged to follow the stipulations of the Council's housing committee, and they had already resolved to approve of only one type of aerial – the 'garden-pole' type, which cost £36. This was £16 dearer than an ordinary chimney or window-frame aerial. In addition, the householder was obliged to pay premiums on an insurance policy taken out by the Council to cover the extra risk involved in setting up the aerial. Scruton justified this, telling *The Bournemouth Times* of 22 August 1952 that the insurance contributions would decrease as greater numbers of tenants purchased sets: 'I don't think it will run to more than two or three shillings a year.' Bournemouth Borough Council relaxed these conditions in 1954 and allowed light frame aeriels to be attached to window frames and fascia boards – but they still forbade any type of aerial being fixed to a council house chimney.

41 *The Bournemouth Times*, 16 August 1957.

42 *Ibid.*, 5 April 1957.

43 *Ibid.*, 15 February 1957.

44 *Kelly's Directory of Bournemouth and Poole, 1965* (Kingston-upon-Thames: Kelly's, 1964), p. 1609.

45 'jeb12', www.rootschat.com pioneer, 3 January 2006; <http://www.rootschat.com/forum/index.php?topic=29965.18>

46 *The Bournemouth Times*, 14 January 1958.

47 *Ibid.*, 17 April 1959.

48 *Ibid.*, 30 August 1957.

49 *Ibid.*, 4 November 1955.

50 Private information.

51 *The Bournemouth Times*, 12 November 1954.

52 *Ibid.*, 15 August 1952.