IDEAL BOILERS and RADIATORS LTD

TIMELINE 1895 - 2015

1895  American Radiator Co. establishes one room UK sales office at 143 Queen Victoria Street, London. The business imports U.S. cast iron radiator equipment manufactured by American Radiator Co.

As sales increase the office is moved to 89/90 Shoe Lane, London with warehouse in Silvertown (east end of London).

1905  National Radiator Company formed in UK to establish a factory to manufacture cast iron radiators and boilers.

Hull is chosen as the site through the determination and support of Hull corporation. The site is on fields to the north west of existing buildings in Hull and the original postal address was 33 Chanterlands Ave. but the site is some way off that thoroughfare. The road on which the factory is situated is eventually named National Ave. and the access road and area is developed with housing.

Work starts on the factory site in March 1906 with the works corner stone dated 31/5/06. Manufacturing on the site commences with the first cast 20/12/06. Foundry, machine and enamelling shops are on site. A large two storey brick office block faces the road with a lawn and ponds. Peacocks are said to have been in this area outside the offices prior to WW1. The company purchases its own railway shunting engine (it survives until 1970, latterly as reserve to a diesel shunter) and steam traction engines are used for local transport. The site has its own bore hole for water supply and 2 competing railways (North Eastern and Hull & Barnsley railway cos.) for supply of raw materials and shipment of finished goods.

Initially a cast iron radiator range is produced followed by U.S. design hot water and steam boilers.

1910  Head office and showroom now at 439/441 Oxford Street, London.

Radiator foundry is extended with further foundry extensions in 1911.

A wide range of accessories are available from the company to provide in modern parlance ‘a one stop shop’ for heating installations, e.g. valves, tanks, gauges, fittings, tools etc. The company issues manuals broadly on an annual basis, showing full information on the product ranges and these books include data to enable heating calculations to be made for system design.

Works events include sports days with prize giving by management. Later facilities are provided for tennis and bowling.

1914-8 Limited boiler and radiator production continued through WW1 with shells and munitions being supplied in quantity. Women are now part of workforce.

1917  Foundry core room extension.

1920s  UK designs replace the U.S. designs as it is realised that their size and appearance is a disadvantage in the UK market. The Cookanheat free standing stove combines a boiler providing hot water and heating together with a cooker all in one unit. It starts development of CH in lower cost properties.
The company uses motor cars for national sales representation together with steam lorries for local transport. A motor lorry is built as a travelling showroom with fully working heating system (A header tank can be extended above the lorry roof and steps allow the public to walk through).

1929  Foundry is rebuilt and renewed with latest technology.

1930  Showrooms are now open at Great Marlborough Street London, 35 Paradise Street Birmingham and Brighton reflecting the increase in product sales. Warehousing is developed during the 1930s to meet demand and includes London, Bristol, Birmingham, Manchester and Glasgow.

Boilers are now available for gas, oil and solid fuel as the markets develop. Domestic boilers are available in a choice of enamelled colours showing recognition of customer requirements. The vitreous and stove enamelling is done on site and shows the breadth of manufacturing processes the company has invested in which also include chrome plating (for decorative purposes on casings). The foundry is capable of casting iron, brass and aluminium. Rayrad radiators are introduced to offer a smooth surface still using cast iron sections and can be used for standard or overhead heating.

1934  Company name changed to Ideal Boilers & Radiators Co.

Name change as site expands and company business increases boiler sales. Extensive domestic heating advertising is undertaken aimed at a developing middle class home owner market.

Solid fuel commercial / industrial boilers are continuously developed to automate firing. Magazine boilers are available as well as automatic stokers through Ideal.

A separate R & D building is opened on land to south of Perth Street West at the junction with National Ave. to provide additional resource.

1935  Vitreous china factory opens adjacent to boiler factory and enamelled cast iron baths introduced. American Radiator co. having combined with Standard Sanitary inc. in the U.S. in 1929.

1939-45  Foundry modernisation. Munitions are again produced in large quantities with limited radiator and boiler production maintained for essential building works. The Luftwaffe targets the site but fails to achieve damage.

1953  Company renamed Ideal Standard Ltd.

UK company subsidiary of American Standard Inc.


A large brick building to the north of the expanded vitreous china plant is opened housing an enlarged sheet steel plant. This building includes a steel panel radiator production line equipped with British Federal welding machines in response to market developments.

Ongoing development of domestic solid fuel appliances see rocking grates introduced for quicker and easier servicing whilst some models include thermostat control. The Neofire solid fuel back boiler unit is introduced providing heating and hot water within a standard fireplace for the increasing domestic central heating market as the post war housing building boom continues. Gas boilers in particular develop with more customer control and more stylish casings.
Commercially overhead unit heaters are offered, the Ideal Tropic.

1960s An SG iron foundry (Spheroidal graphite iron is stronger than standard grey cast iron) is opened adjacent to the main foundry to produce higher pressure industrial boiler sections.

A training school together with the Quality department and R&D balanced flue and SEduct test rigs are created within ex Spinks building. (This building is directly opposite the main site on National Ave, opened in the 60s but closed in the early 70s following partial use by the HR dept. The rigs are to allow testing of new flue designs increasingly being used in new housing of the period including multi storey flats. Warm air heaters are initially sourced from the Canadian American Standard subsidiary but UK developed designs quickly follow.

New large commercial boiler designs are manufactured from designs developed at the French sister company facility at Blanc-Mesnil.

1967 Launch of the compact Concord RS floor standing domestic boiler sized as a kitchen unit to fit in with modern kitchens. It featured an elegant control panel with integral programmer and thermostat behind a smoked finish lift up cover, something of a trendsetter. Available as natural or towns gas versions reflecting the ongoing national change to North Sea gas. Developed in CF versions and basic E type to lead UK domestic boiler market. It becomes one of the major success stories of the UK domestic heating market with production only ceasing in the 1980s and many still in operation today. Redevelopment of the domestic solid fuel range in a similar size provides the Marquis range but solid fuel is in rapid decline as the fuel of choice for most householders and developers.

1968 Trident on the hearth gas fire and back boiler unit launched providing central heating solution for smaller properties as the market develops with natural gas conversion and the favourable economy. This is one of the earliest gas back boiler units and is developed into the 1970s.


1970 Research & Development building is extended to twice its original area to meet ongoing developments as the UK market continues to grow on the back of North Sea gas and a rising economy.

Ideal retires from the radiator market and the steel radiator line is closed in 1970. Factory reorganisation moves the sheet steel plant into the existing main buildings and this new building is disposed of in 1971.

1970s Production of cast iron baths and radiators are discontinued in the early 1970s due to market changes.

Ideals first wall hung boiler (W10/15) is developed as pressure on space in UK kitchens drives manufacturers and installers to consider wider possibilities for boiler siting. Improved designs (WRS and WCF) with wider model outputs are introduced and are continuously developed to include fanned flue variants in the 1980s.

1976 Metal Box Ltd buy heating interests only (Ideal boilers) of Ideal Standard. They already own Stelrad radiators (6 sites) and Vulcan boilers (Mexborough).
Company renamed Stelrad Group Ltd initially retaining Ideal brand.


1979 Ideal introduces Concord Super modular boiler for commercial applications providing close load matching with compact, light high efficiency 50kW modules in a single insulated casing. They feature single flue, gas, system connections for multiple modules up to 600kW maximum. A circular finned tube copper heat exchanger with central burner gives excellent efficiencies under varying load conditions. A later 1984 development adds the Super Plus with 100kW aluminium tube modules.

1980s A new foundry with advanced moulding and core making is installed in the early 80s at a cost of £6M.

1982 Ideal Mexico floor standing boiler introduced providing a wide range of outputs 30-125kW in a standard kitchen sized unit. It is more compact and efficient than the Concord / E type ranges they replace. It leads the market for these units but it is a declining sector as UK kitchen space is also required for washers, fridges and other floor standing appliances.

1984 Ideal launches first UK domestic high efficiency condensing boiler (initially called Prima but quickly renamed Turbo) following extensive trials with British Gas and University of Manchester at a site in Stockport. It features a finned aluminium alloy heat exchanger in compact delta layout with downfiring premix burner. Such a product is expensive compared to standard designs and volumes only slowly develop until the UK Government forces market changes with Building Regulations changes in 2005.

1985 Introduces successful Sprint combination boiler and is one of the first UK manufacturers of this product type initially championed by European manufacturers.

Commercial Concord CX floor standing cast iron boiler range introduced quickly becoming market leader. Condensing high efficiency brought to the commercial market with the CXC version introduced in 1989.

1989 April.

Metal Box becomes MB Group Ltd.

Mexborough site closed and Vulcan name used as product name of an Ideal boiler.

Classic wall hung cast iron boiler range launched providing lightweight, kitchen unit size and is a very successful range through 1990s being developed with installer input. The engineering ensured reliability through simplicity which included an integral pilot arrangement doing away with separate pilot pipes. Both fan assisted and natural draught room sealed versions are available with large market share penetration achieved. Many are still in operation today.

1989 November.

MB Group reverse takeover by Caradon plc (Caradon management takes control with Peter Janssen as MD of company MB Caradon).

Company now Caradon Heating using Ideal branding.
1993 Ideal forms part of Caradon Plumbing Division as Caradon Ideal Ltd (alongside Mira, Twyfords and Stelrad).

1994 Caradon Heating split into two companies, Caradon Ideal for boilers and Caradon Stelrad for radiators.

1995 £1M investment in updating test facilities in the Product Development laboratory. It sets the standard for the UK industry for many years.

1996 Ideal forms agreement with De Dietrich Thermique to brand and sell its pressure jet and large atmospheric gas commercial boiler range (D-D closes its UK subsidiary sales organisation). Ideal ceases manufacture of own Pressure Jet and large atmospheric ranges). Green sand foundry closed at Hull.

1999 Private equity group Ideal Stelrad Group (backed by HSBC Private Equity) takes over Caradon Plumbing division.

Head office moved from High Wycombe to Newcastle. Trevor Harvey is CEO.

Mira and Twyfords sold 2000. Stelrad and Ideal retained.

2002 Ideal in cooperation with some European manufacturers to provide broadened combination boiler range.

Ideal develops commercial condensing wall hung boilers through the 2000s with first the Maximiser followed by the Imax W. Their compact flues are also a benefit with simple supply from Ideal. These products are also used in cascade to provide higher outputs with close load matching and inbuilt back up for efficiency and reliability as well as simplifying servicing.

Later in the 2000s Ideal increase the commercial condensing boiler range with the floor standing Imax Xtra with outputs up to 560kW, as the market moves to condensing to reduce operating costs.

2005 UK Building Regulations change to require domestic installations to be condensing boilers as part of governments emission reduction policy. Ideal is well placed with Isar and Icos ranges following early market development with Turbo and Minimiser ranges. The Isar / Icos ranges introduced gas / air modulation for increased efficiency.

2006 Ideal Stelrad Group backing is now majority provided by Warburg Pincus. The old foundry is demolished.

August. Keston Ltd (Bromley office) bought with a manufacturing plant in Romania (Celsius). Unique small (50mm dia.) twin duct flue /air system on all models providing easier siting with long run capability. New ranges based on Ideal designs introduced in 2013, manufactured at Hull replacing previous ranges.

2009 July. Logic combination boiler range introduced providing kitchen unit size lightweight product in a range of outputs following extensive installer / contractor discussions which ensured benefits include ease of installation, servicing and siting. The range develops to include system and heat only products using the compact aluminium alloy heat engine platform with 5:1 gas / air modulation. A wide range of programmers both electro-mechanical , electronic including RF capability are provided as options to fit within the boiler casing. As system efficiency becomes an
increasing requirement through Regulations and cost, the provision of weather compensation as standard in this domestic boiler is recognised as a benefit. It is very successful with Ideal market share increasing each year and basic product developed for merchants and caravan / mobile home industries.

2011 Evomax commercial condensing wall hung boiler launched, quickly becoming largest selling UK commercial boiler as market continues to move to this product type and use in multiple in cascade formats.

2012 Foundry closed.

2013 Bregal Capital take control of ISG Group.

2015 January.

French Groupe Atlantic buy Ideal Boilers from ISG with Ideal and Keston brands retained. GA are large manufacturers of heating products in Europe.