

VERY HEATH ROBINSON

STORIES OF HIS ABSURDLY INGENIOUS WORLD

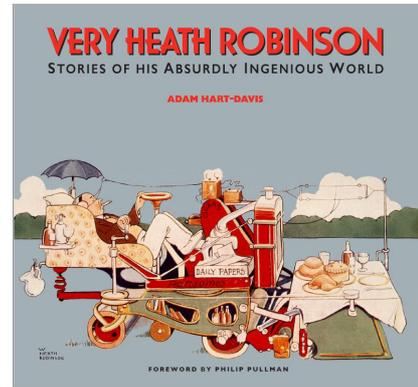
by Adam Hart-Davis with a Foreword by Philip Pullman

This book takes a nostalgic look back to the imaginative world of William Heath Robinson, one of the few artists to have given his name to the English language. According to the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the expression Heath Robinson is used to describe 'any absurdly ingenious and impracticable device'. You will find plenty of them here. *Very Heath Robinson* is full of quirky contraptions for lighting cigars, making coffee, extinguishing candles and generally making everyday life easy. You can even mow the lawn in comfort thanks to the super deluxe Ransomes' motor mower, complete with wireless, drinks cabinet and tiffin table.

Adam Hart-Davis is the perfect person to set the artist's mechanical fantasies in context, to tell the stories of rapid technological and social change that lay behind Heath Robinson's idiosyncratic brand of satire and to laugh along with the jokes. Known for his popular television series *What the Romans Did for Us* and other programmes on the history of science and engineering, he is an avid fan of Heath Robinson and full of stories that lie behind the pictures. His love of Heath Robinson is endorsed by Philip Pullman, who conveys the charm of the Heath Robinson repertory company, the earnest, top-hatted men who oversee the machines and are 'convinced they are being rational and clever and up-to-date'.

A dozen collections of Heath Robinson's work have been published over the last 80 years, starting in his lifetime, but most have been compilations of pictures with minimal text. *Very Heath Robinson* is the first to explain the technical and social background out of which the pictures grew and to weave art and history into a connected story. It portrays Heath Robinson as the visionary he was, foreseeing technical advances decades before they occurred and commenting wryly on urban issues such as traffic jams, litter and flat living that regularly niggle us today.

Heath Robinson, used *attrib.* or *ellipt.* of any absurdly ingenious and impracticable device of the kind illustrated by this artist. —
A Supplement to the Oxford English Dictionary,
Volume II (1976)



SPECIFICATIONS

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