

EARLY RADIO IN BRITAIN

The British post office was responsible for broadcast regulations, and licensed companies to transmit radio communications. The original companies were Marconi Wireless Telegraphy in Essex and Western Electric in Birmingham. They began broadcasting gramophone music, news, and talks to radio experimenters for half an hour each night (they were forbidden to broadcast to the general public). However, the *Daily Mail* paid Marconi to broadcast a recital by Australian opera singer Nellie Melba on 15-6-1920.

Public broadcasting was finally allowed in 1922, with the first licence being 2MT at Writtle, granted to the British Broadcasting Company, owned by six electrical and receiver companies, using one kilowatt on medium wave. Funding was obtained from royalties on receiver sales and from receiver licenses issued by the post Office. Reception difficulties led to the establishment of 5XX at Daventry in 1925 on 200 KHz. longwave using thirty kilowatts. 5XX was one of the most famous stations in Europe, closing in 1935.

A 1926 Government committee recommended that broadcasting in Britain should be conducted by a public corporation. The British Broadcasting Corporation commenced on 1-1-1927 with 2LO, taking over the staff and equipment of the British Broadcasting Co. including General Manager J. Reith (later Lord Reith) being appointed Director General. It was due to his influence that the BBC established a high standard of integrity. The BBC was barred from broadcasting advertisements. Their independence and objective treatment of news was their highest asset, establishing it throughout the world as being free from political and commercial pressures.

During the late 1920s the BBC attracted an evening news audience that was larger than the circulation of Britain's largest newspaper. Their variety, music, and drama programs were said to be keeping people away from cinemas and live shows. Churches complained that people stayed home to listen to religious programs rather than go to church. BBC commentators were banned from live sport, believing that sport attendance would drop. By the 1930s however, the BBC was part of the British way of life, including sport.

On Christmas Day 1932, King George V broadcast the first 'Round-the-Empire' message. Radio usage by Royalty did much to enhance the stature of radio. The Queen's Christmas Message is still listened to with great respect by millions of people worldwide.

In 1938, as the world moved towards WWII, the BBC began broadcasting in foreign languages with Spanish, Arabic, Portuguese, French, Italian, and German. They were directly financed by the Government to provide these services, stipulating what countries their broadcasts were aimed at and the number of hours devoted to each language. During WWII they broadcast in over 50 languages to the people of occupied Europe. Listeners in Germany and in German occupied countries were forbidden to tune to the BBC news.

The BBC WWII service was perhaps the greatest era in broadcasting history. Home broadcasting was merged with national programs, with information, inspiration, and entertainment helping the British endure the war. Many messages to the underground fighters in France and partisan groups were broadcast using coded and guarded phrases like 'The White Rabbit is safely asleep in his burrow' meaning an English underground agent called 'The White Rabbit' operating in France, had returned safely to London.

After WWII, the Light service was introduced, providing entertainment and relaxation for the masses. The Regional Home service was reactivated for 'middle-of-the-road' audiences. The Third network was for minority audiences whose education and tastes enabled them to appreciate broadcasts of artistic and intellectual distinction. They broadcast Open University programs, evening study sessions, schools broadcasts, plus sport results and news on weekends.

"Pirate radio" in the UK first appeared in the early 1960s when pop music stations such as Radio Caroline and Radio London started to broadcast from offshore ships or disused sea forts. At the time, these stations were not illegal because they were broadcasting from international waters. The stations were set up by entrepreneurs and music enthusiasts to meet the growing demand for pop and rock music, which was not catered for by the legal BBC Radio services. The first British pirate radio station was Radio Caroline which was launched by Irish music entrepreneur Ronan O'Rahilly, and started broadcasting from a ship off the Essex coast in 1964. The format of this wave of pirate radio was influenced by Radio Luxembourg (6WA in Wagin, Western Australia bought a 10,000 watt transmitter from Radio Luxembourg). Many followed a top 40 format with casual DJs, making UK pirate radio the antithesis of BBC radio at the time. By 1966 almost £2 million worth of advertising a year was sold to customers, including the government-funded Egg Marketing Board. By 1967 ten pirate radio stations were broadcasting to an estimated daily audience of 10 to 15 million. Spurred on by the offshore stations, land based pirate stations took to the air on medium wave at weekends, such as Radio Free London in 1968. Radio Caroline's audience was one third the size of the Light Programme in the parts of the country where it could be received, but the Light Programme's audience did not decrease, indicating that pirate radio appealed to an audience that the BBC did not serve.

In 1964, Manx Radio was launched as a commercial station on the Isle of Man and is often referred to as the first commercial station in Britain. However, technically, the Isle of Man is not British so Manx Radio cannot claim to be the first British commercial station.

In 1967, the BBC Light and Home services were replaced by Radio 2 and Radio 4, with the introduction of Radio 1 for pop music. Radio 2 broadcast light and popular music, and music for specific tastes like jazz, folk, and country. Radio 4 carries more intellectual programs of current affairs, news, documentaries and dramatic plays. Radio 3 presents 'good' music from brass bands, plus opera and more serious music with the great popular works of classical and romantic composers. There are also drama, poetry, interviews, and talk programs. The Further Education programs, including the Open University broadcasts on Radio 3 are called 'Study 3'.

Commercial radio was introduced in 1972, when a group of sixty local stations were approved by Parliament under the Independent Broadcasting Authority. They owned the transmitters, with radio groups contracted to utilise them by presenting a commercial service to a specific locale. The first stations were two in London and one in Glasgow in 1973. 1974 saw stations in Swansea Birmingham, Manchester, Newcastle, Sheffield, and Liverpool. 1975 saw stations in Edinburgh, Plymouth, Stockton, Nottingham, Bradford, Portsmouth, and Ipswich. 1976 saw stations in Reading, Belfast, and Wolverhampton. There were no more until the 1980s.

EARLY RADIO IN AMERICA

American physicist Reginald Fessenden made the first radio voice broadcast in 1900. Until that time, messages had only been sent in Morse. In 1906 a ship's radio officer was astonished to hear through his earphones, not the usual Morse code, but a voice saying 'If anyone hears me, please write to Reginald Fessenden at Brant Rock'. Reginald had succeeded in broadcasting his voice out to a ship at sea. He also broadcast phonograph music – all of this nearly twenty years before radio broadcasting began.

In 1919 Westinghouse engineer Dr. Frank Conrad, broadcast music in Pittsburgh, and a David Sarnoff saw how this stimulated crystal set receiver sales. The Radio Corporation of America was formed by Westinghouse, General Electric, and the American Telephone and Telegraph Company to explore David's broadcasting suggestions, with David as General Manager.

On 2-11-1920, the first regular broadcast by a radio station was from KDKA in Pittsburgh. They commenced with the results of the Harding/Cox presidential election, which is now celebrated as the first big popular event in broadcasting history. Radio advertising began in 1922 when a Jackson Heights real estate firm sponsored the first commercial broadcast. By 1923 the names of radio personalities had become household words with over 500 stations broadcasting concert hall programs, theatre plays, and sports events.

By the 1930s radio had become part of life for people in Britain, Europe, America, and Australia. Technical competence had improved with regular and dependable broadcasts using a degree of fidelity. The listening audience had grown enormously with programs covering news, theatrical dramas, quiz shows, and classical and popular music. Advertisers became an integral part of production as increased running costs made radio stations dependent on commercial support. The network system in America and Australia developed, whereby stations across the country were linked together for national advertisers programs. The stations all shared the production costs with advertisers. In America, where broadcasting now plays so large a part in the national life, advertising was non-existent in 1924, but by 1930, nearly \$100 million a year was being spent on radio. At first, advertising was stilted and limited, and the prices of products were rarely mentioned. During the late 1920s listeners heard the sponsors name linked to programs, e.g. the 'Ipana Troubadours' and the 'General Motors Hour'.

Radio and the movies existed together without great opposition because radio was wholly aural and the movies essentially visual. Like the cinema, radio too had its great stars, who were paid enormous salaries and had an incredible number of fans. Some people were stars of both radio and cinema. The stars of vaudeville often became stars of radio, and many broadcasts were conducted in front of live audiences, with the sound of laughter and applause being an integral part of the early live radio broadcasts. Stars included Eddie Cantor, Burns and Allen, Al Jolson, Jack Benny, Amos and Andy, and Bing Crosby.

Radio started to reach a mass audience and was creating popular singers, orchestras, and sport stars. The dance band era of the 1930s was given great impetus by radio, with Tommy Dorsey, Benny Goodman, Guy Lombardo, and Glenn Miller being listened to by millions of people. It was also an era of exciting newscasts from Government leaders. Franklin D. Roosevelt grasped the potential of radio with his 'Fireside Chats' being heard by millions. On the day of his inauguration, Roosevelt had to avert a crisis in banking. He called for calm over the NBC and CBS networks and gave assurances that the monetary crisis would pass. His 'Fireside Chats' became a great success as the President seemed to be talking to listeners individually. These subdued 'Fireside Chats' contrasted sharply with the hysterical shouting of Adolf Hitler and Benito Mussolini in Europe, who used radio to promote their propaganda.

Radio grew as a source of news, and so did the role of radio journalists and commentators. By 1942 the voices of H.V. Kaltenborn, Ed Murrow, Lowell Thomas, Walter Winchell (and Richard Dimbleby on the BBC), were well-known. Radio kept people in touch with what was happening on the war front in Europe, but it also offered an escape into entertainment, music, and comedy.

As WWII came to a close in 1945, electronics firms returned to radio manufacturing. From 1946 to 1948, over 50 million sets were sold. As television was introduced into America, radio went through a depressed era of skeletal news services and sports commentaries, and disc jockeys simply played more records and less live performances. From 1960, radio gradually made a comeback, with more than 170 million radios being sold during the 1960s – 1970s. The growth of FM stations also added to the resurgence of radio. There is now a wide range of program formats available with different stations catering for diverse interests e.g. KADS broadcasts only advertisements, WSDM uses only female announcers, and several stations broadcast continuous news, the most notable being KNX in Los Angeles, using 50,000 watts. By 1980 there were over 350 million radios in use throughout America.

EARLY RADIO IN NEW ZEALAND

New Zealand's first broadcast was on 17-11-1921 from the University of Otago by physics professor Robert Jack. Radio Dunedin (4XD) began transmitting in 1922 and is the longest continuously broadcasting station in the Commonwealth. By the end of 1923 stations were broadcasting from Dunedin, Christchurch, Wellington, Auckland, Nelson, Whanganui and Gisborne. All content had to follow a strict moral code; advertising was banned, and Sundays had to have substantial religious programming. In 1926 the Radio Broadcasting Company (RBC) was established to provide a national broadcasting service. The RBC's main revenue came from a compulsory annual radio licence fee. Existing independent stations became known as 'B' stations, in contrast to the RBC's 'A' stations. To avoid interfering with newspaper advertising revenue, advertising was prohibited on radio. Many of the 'B' stations only stayed on air because they were sustained by voluntary support or were subsidiary activities of radio and record retailers.

The 1920s saw the development of many standard radio features, including children's programs, plus school, sport, and religious broadcasts. In 1932 the RBC was replaced by the government's New Zealand Broadcasting Board (NZBB), which inherited the RBC's stations. The number of stations and range of programs increased, but the conservative nature of broadcasting did not change. Programs generally followed a formal structure resembling a concert. All stations closed no later than 2200. Many people then listened to Australian stations. The state controlled 'A' stations were often criticised for bland and unpopular programming.

The cash-strapped 'B' stations often relied on listeners to donate records. Many listeners preferred the livelier, independent B stations. They were subject to strict government inspection and were forbidden to run advertisements, but from 1931 programs were allowed to name a sponsor. In 1935 the NZBB absorbed all of the 'B' stations, other than Gisborne's 2ZM (renamed 2XM) and Dunedin's 4ZD (renamed 4XD). With these two exceptions, broadcasting became a state monopoly for the next 25 years.

From the 1930s to the early 1960s well-known announcers included Maud Basham (Aunty Daisy), Ian Watkins, Selwyn Toogood, Jack Maybury, Phil Shone, Winston McCarthy, Gary Chapman, and Grace Green. The National Broadcasting Service's (NBS) programming included pre-recorded talks, religious programs, comedies, sport, news (including the Maori language), and drama. Music included records plus live performances by brass bands, orchestras, instrumentalists and vocalists.

The 1950s saw three basic program structures emerging: Light, popular entertainment, based on the ZB commercial radio format: Mixed or middlebrow, based on the YA stations: Highbrow, the YC stations, modelled on the BBC's Third Program format.

In the early 1960s, commercial stations played popular music, but broadcast bureaucrats continued to resist pop music. In response a pirate radio ship was launched in November 1966. Radio Hauraki, broadcast from international waters, capturing Auckland's young listeners with its Top 40 programs during its 1,111 days at sea. In 1970 Radio Hauraki and three other private stations were granted licences. Changes in commercial radio formats followed as more private stations gained licenses. Music stations focused on popular music. The talk radio format was established, beginning with Auckland's Radio I. New stations focused on target audiences, determined by factors including age, gender, social status and lifestyle. The number of private radio broadcasters rose from five in 1972 to 22 by 1984. Popular radio personalities included Merv Smith (1ZB), Kevin Black (Radio Hauraki) and Barry Corbett (3ZB).