

**From Sound to Print in Pre-War Britain: the Cultural and Commercial
Interdependence between Broadcasters and Broadcasting Magazines in the 1930s**

Julia Taylor

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The Media School, Bournemouth University

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Abstract

This thesis is a study of key broadcasting magazines published in the United Kingdom prior to the Second World War. At its centre is the premise that the relationship between broadcasting and the magazine industry evolving around it was symbiotic in nature. The relationship was complex because the broadcasters provided much of the material for the magazines to publish and therefore could potentially use this as a tool for influence and publicity, as they sought to stimulate the demand for their output in the British public. However, the magazines were the mediators of the flow of communication. Their editorial content not only provided a critical commentary on material broadcast but also represented a direct conduit between the readers/audience and the broadcasters by providing a forum for the readers/audience to publish their views. Exploring the history of early broadcasting from the perspective of this material reveals the interdependency between the radio stations/broadcasters, the magazines and ultimately, how they connected to the readers/audience. While there have been other partial studies of broadcasting magazines, particularly the *Radio Times*, these have not assessed the magazine against other contemporary magazines, nor have they placed the magazine within a broadcasting history context. This study not only considers the magazines against the background of the growing broadcasting industry, it also explores what wireless *meant* to its first audience. This was a crucial element for understanding how the public responded to the developments which were taking place in the 1930s, when commercial enterprises encroached on the BBC's monopoly and attempted to poach its listeners.

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Declaration of Authorship

I, Julia Taylor, hereby declare that all the material contained in this thesis is my own work.

Introduction

For all the wealth of material evidence in the Archives the detailed character of pre-war broadcasting is forgotten today.¹

The relationship between new media and the media they supersede has always fascinated me. When studying incunabular for an MA in Bibliography, I realised that the earliest printed books looked so like the hand-written ones that preceded them, that it was actually very hard to tell the difference between them. The earliest printers cast their moveable type in moulds which mimicked the script of the transcribing monks. Spaces were left in the text for illuminators to paint in their richly coloured illustrations and decorations. The early printers had not yet grasped the opportunities that the new medium presented; they could have no idea that the ability to print words *quickly* would enable the rapid spread of ideas and would eventually lead to an entire religious Reformation. Similarly, when the first broadcasters sent their words and music out into the ether, they had no model for how their new medium should be structured, to whom it would appeal, or even who was listening. Within a very short period of beginning its broadcasts, the British Broadcasting Company, as it was, then (and the General Manager J.C.W. Reith in particular) realised that the old medium of printed words still held a power which the new ephemeral medium needed.² And so, an alliance was formed between the old and the new; radio broadcasting depending on magazines to advertise its programmes and exchange ideas about its output, while the magazine industry was presented with a whole new area of interest and a market with a voracious appetite. All the limitations of the new medium, the momentary nature of it, and the lack of any visual element, could be more than compensated for by the magazines. At the centre of this research therefore, is the premise that the relationship between broadcasting and the magazine industry evolving around it was symbiotic in nature.

Stone (1979) defines narrative history as being “the organization of material in a chronologically sequential order and the focusing of the content into a single coherent story, albeit with sub-plots” Narrative history is essentially descriptive and its primary focus is on “man” rather than circumstances (Stone, 1979, p.84). This has been my over-arching method for presenting my material; interpreting the significance of events and actions, and making

¹ Scannell, & Cardiff, 1991, p.xiii.

² Reith once compared himself to William Caxton, who introduced the printing press to Britain in the 15th century (Robinson, 2012, p.61).

crucial connections between them, and, as Stone suggests, concentrating on the “particular and specific rather than the collective and statistical” but developing a theme and an argument (Stone, 1979, p.85).

In this context, a confidential report, which the BBC commissioned in 1945 by the Russian historian Igor Vinogradoff, has been an extremely informative source because, in the report, Vinogradoff is effectively explaining to the BBC what its own attitude had been to the events of the 1930s, and even where it could have responded differently. The report, entitled the “History of English Advertising Programmes Broadcast to the United Kingdom from Foreign Stations down to the Outbreak of War”.³ Running to 68 pages, and with multiple appendices of supplementary evidence, the report is a highly detailed summary of the BBC’s attitude to foreign competition prior to the Second World War, and it sets out the reasons why foreign competition was able to mount a challenge to the BBC monopoly in the first place, the factors which enabled it, and the options which the BBC could have taken for counter-action. The timing of the report was no doubt triggered by the re-emergence of a commercial threat after the end of the Second World War; although the War had concluded Radio Normandy’s activities, Radio Luxembourg reopened its commercial English-language transmission on 1st July 1946 (Street, 2006, p.227). It is clear from the sources quoted that Vinogradoff was drawing upon articles in the press and from the level of detail of the memoranda quoted, that he had full access to the BBC’s own files. The report is significant because Vinogradoff reconstructs the events, making the connections between them, and putting the pieces of the jigsaw back into place. He did not mince his words, and concluded that the challenge was to some extent inevitable, since the BBC had themselves provided “an obvious opportunity for competitive programmes” which were specifically designed to fill in the intervals when the BBC transmitters were silent on Sundays - a “peak listening day” (Vinogradoff, p.2, 1945).

When the British Broadcasting Company began life in 1922, “broadcasting” meant radio broadcasting; although television was being developed during this period, the BBC did not begin a regular service until 1936, and the outbreak of War closed the Service abruptly four years later on 1st September 1939.⁴ The connection between the broadcasters and the

³ Previously Vinogradoff had co-written a BBC radio series with A.L. Lloyd called "Shadow of the Swastika." broadcast in six parts: Nov. 17, 29, Dec. 14, 28, 1939, and Jan. 11, 25, 1940. (Gregory, E. David “A. L. Lloyd and the English Folk Song Revival, 1934-44” *Canadian Journal for Traditional Music* (1997) <http://ejtm.icaap.org/content/25/v25art2.html> Accessed 22nd June.)

⁴ Briggs, 1965, p.594, p.622.

magazines was complex because the broadcasters provided much of the material for the magazines to publish and therefore they could use this as a tool for influence and propaganda (a prevalent word of the time) as they sought to stimulate the demand for their output in the public. But the magazines were the mediators of the flow of communication; they provided both a critical commentary on the material broadcast and a direct conduit between the readers/listeners and the broadcasters, offering a channel through which the readers/listeners could publish their views. Exploring the history of early broadcasting from the perspective of this material reveals that the magazines had a vital role to play in connecting the radio stations/broadcasters with the audience. This aspect of broadcasting has not yet been explored, mostly because the magazine component of the history of broadcasting was not regarded in the light of a homogeneous subject. Previous studies on the history of broadcasting have tended to explain and understand its development by examining the broad forces which affected the whole of society, seeing it from an institutional view point, or through its regulation. This study considers the role that broadcasting magazines played in the development of early broadcasting prior to the outbreak of the Second World War.

Briggs describes the “cumulative impact” of the daily programmes as the “stuff of radio” (Briggs, 1965, p.23). The difficulty for the researcher of broadcasting history is that one of the most important primary materials for their research no longer exists, as the programmes from this period were mostly lost to the ether the moment they were aired. It is not possible to hear the programmes in order to assess their collective influence on the listening public, but even if the programmes had survived, hearing them would still not explain what their impact had been on the audience of the time. Many of the broadcasting magazines from the period have survived however, and they are a particularly valuable resource not only for reconstructing the daily output, but also for appreciating the social background of broadcasting, and how it was received by the audience. Magazines offer a context for the cultural history of a given era, in that they hold up a mirror to their readership.⁵ Moreover, it was not until 1936 that the BBC, finally bowing to the pressure, began any systematic listener research. Before this, the BBC could not know with any certainty about their audience’s behaviour and tastes “about which virtually nothing was known other than through casual letters from listeners”.⁶ In the light of the scarcity of surviving primary material, Scannell & Cardiff recognise that “something of the quality and character of the outputs of Radios

⁵ Hackney, 2007, pp.2-3; Briggs 1965, p.24.

⁶ Crisell, 1997, cited by Street, 2006, p.22.

Normandie and Luxembourg can be got from the pages of *Radio Pictorial*" (Scannell & Cardiff, 1991, p.295).

There is another source of data from this period which can yield considerable information on its own development, which is the wireless technology itself. Observing how it developed as a physical artefact from scientific contraption to object of desire and aspiration reveals much about its journey towards being assimilated into the home (see fig. 15.2). The developments of the technology had an effect on the magazines that supported it, and reported on its progress. Moreover, understanding certain aspects about the early technology allows the researcher not only to recapture elements of the experience of the audience, but also to recognise why radio technology followed the path of assimilation that it did. Appreciating what radio meant to its first audience is crucial in assessing how the public felt about the developments which were taking place in the 1930s, when commercial enterprises encroached on the BBC's monopoly and attempted to poach its listeners. In this respect, the readers' letters to the magazines become a very important extant residue for research of this period, for which there will be very few surviving members of the original audience. The letters to *Radio Pictorial* and the *Radio Times* offer the researcher the opportunity to read the thoughts and feelings of members of that early listening public, allowing an insight into what was important to them, and what was perceived as important by the magazines that printed the letters.

The rise of Captain Plugge and his International Broadcasting Company (IBC) forms part of this research, because there were several pivotal points at which his activities intersected with those of the broadcasting magazine press, most significantly with Bernard Jones' *Radio Pictorial*. The magazine had a relationship with both the IBC and with Plugge's other company, the Radio International Publicity Service (RIPS), thereby bringing together the interests of some of the most important protagonists in the events of the 1930s. Because the RIPS had a business arrangement with the BBC, there is a lot of material held in the files at the BBC Written Archives at Caversham about Plugge and his companies, much more so than can be found on the activities of Radio Luxembourg, over which the BBC had little influence. The BBC's response to the alliance between the IBC and *Radio Pictorial* is particularly worthy of study, because through its entry into the magazine market much is revealed about the BBC's reaction to its competitors. When discussing the emergence of competition to the BBC in the 1930s, it should be remembered that the BBC had entered the

realm of competition itself when it decided to launch a magazine. At no point did the BBC hold a Charter for a monopoly in the broadcasting magazines market, and it had no remit for public service. However, the broadcasting monopoly undoubtedly gave the BBC an advantage in its commercial publications activities, which meant that the two elements of broadcasting and magazines were interconnected. Together they formed the basis of the BBC's authority, and a challenge towards either one represented a threat to its interest. Events in the 1930s, with the help of Captain Plugge, conspired to offer just such a challenge.

During the course of this study I have considered a number of research questions:

- What part did the broadcasting magazines play in the arrival of commercial competitors to the broadcasting environment in the 1930s?
- What effect did radio's journey from male-orientated scientific contraption to object of aspiration and glamour have on the broadcasting magazines?
- How did the BBC respond to the commercial threat to its magazines and was its public attitude always consistent with its private reaction?
- Did the content of the magazines reflect any agenda on the part of the publishers, and if so, how was this manifested?
- What can be deduced from an examination of the readers' letters about the audience's response to the specific issues dominating the broadcasting environment during this period?

In Chapter One I examine the studies which have previously been made into areas related to the present research, focusing initially on specific magazine-related research, but extending this to include related areas of interest, such as the technology and its assimilation into the home. I have also studied the accounts of contemporary figures who played a part in the development of broadcasting, and also more general commentaries on broadcasting history, but in which broadcasting magazines played a part. Finally, in order to understand the backdrop against which broadcasting magazines developed, I researched pertinent social and cultural histories of the period.

Chapter Two is an explanation of the tasks I undertook and the methods and methodologies I used to complete them. These include the first, which was to define what constitutes a “broadcasting magazine” and then to compile a bibliography of titles. I then proceeded through a number of steps to refine the focus of my research in order to select specific titles for more in depth and comparative analysis. Identifying a methodology which was suitable for the close analysis of the readers’ letters as extant texts was my last task, and an explanation of the method I chose is given in Chapter Two. Finally, the Chapter also contains an explanation of some of the solutions used to solve particular difficulties.

Broadcasting magazines, like all magazines, are a product of their time, and in Chapter Three I reflect on the events and influences which the British public was experiencing during the inter-war period when broadcasting emerged as a new invention. I explore the factors which combined to form the particular *zeitgeist* of these years and argue that the reason radio was able to spread so ubiquitously was that, even in the harsh economic conditions and the consequent social instability of the era, was because radio was available to almost all sections of society.

In Chapter Four I examine how the developments of broadcasting were reflected in changes to the broadcasting magazine market. What began as the wireless press, catering for the amateur enthusiasts, metamorphosed into a more sophisticated and broader market, aimed chiefly at women. I trace radio on the journey it undertook to become assimilated into the home, and to modify from the province of the male hobbyist to a domestic essential. I explore the BBC’s entrance into the magazine market, as a highly significant event both for the broadcasting magazine industry, and also for the BBC, since its decision to launch the *Radio Times*, took the BBC into the domain of competition and advertising.

In Chapter Five I conduct a close analysis of the *Radio Times* magazine, examining it in physical and visual terms, so as to recreate something of the appearance and feel of the magazines, and thereby reaching an assessment of the impact it had on its readers and the market. Much is revealed about the BBC’s representation of itself to the public through the magazine. The content of the magazine is also examined to determine the target readerships, and to probe the messages from the publishers concealed within the magazines’ presentation. I also consulted the files in the BBC Written Archives at Caversham, for an inside view of the magazine.

I briefly consider the nature of the BBC's broadcasting monopoly in Chapter Six, because it was believed that placing UK broadcasting under the control of a single authority would prevent the growth of a commercial model. I argue that the BBC's foreign programmes listing magazine *World-Radio* had a strategic importance, which the BBC went to considerable effort to protect. I also find evidence for the fact that by so doing, the BBC inadvertently cultivated both an interest and a skill in tuning in to foreign broadcasts in the British public. I examine the role of Captain Plugge and his companies, the Radio International Publicity Services and the International Broadcasting Company, again with extensive reference to the BBC's own memoranda and letters.

In Chapter Seven I demonstrate that the activities of Captain Plugge had a considerable effect on several broadcasting magazines during this period. I also argue that it is from the viewpoint of the BBC becoming a commercial competitor when it launched its magazines, that its real attitude to any agency which threatened its interest is revealed. In this respect, the letters and memoranda held in the BBC files provide much of the evidence for the BBC's private behaviour in its correspondence.

Chapter Eight is devoted to an examination of *Radio Pictorial*. As with the Chapter on the *Radio Times*, the magazine's physical appearance and content are described and assessed, particularly with regard to it being aimed at a female readership. *Radio Pictorial* was launched at the very point that marked a watershed between the British public having no choice but to listen to the BBC, and the new situation where they could defy the opinions of Reith and enliven their leisure time with the entertainment of their choosing. *Radio Pictorial* is therefore particularly worthy of study because it provides a graphic, and indeed pictorial, representation of a pivotal moment in radio's history. I examine the relationship between the BBC and *Radio Pictorial's* editor Bernard Jones in detail, because the alliance formed between *Radio Pictorial* and Captain Plugge's International Broadcasting Company collectively threatened the BBC's interest in the 1930s.

In Chapter Nine I establish the importance of the *Radio Times* as a major source of revenue, and the extent to which the BBC exploited it. I contend that the BBC displayed an equivocal approach towards advertising, asserting a moral superiority with regard to its broadcasting, which, on examination was undermined by its acceptance of a lucrative income from advertising via its magazines. I also argue that after *Radio Pictorial* began to print the IBC's

Foreign Programme Sheet, the nature of the competition it presented to the BBC changed, not because it could compete with the BBC's circulation figures, but because it offered an unwelcome comparison to the content of the *Radio Times*, and by exploiting the gaps which the BBC left in its service, it exposed some of the policies of the BBC as anachronistic.

The readers' letters pages in *Radio Times* opened a channel for direct and public comment on the BBC's output. In Chapter Ten I contend that this gave the section of the magazine a greater importance than it might otherwise have assumed, had the audience access other channels for feedback. I explore the BBC's attitude to its correspondence with the public in order to determine whether there were discrepancies, as with some of its other attitudes, between the officially expressed opinion and privately held views. The BBC's internal correspondence and its public statements in its annually published *Handbooks*, *Year-Books* and *Annuals*, provide a great deal of insight into this issue.

The readers' letters pages in a magazine are an important section for both the readership and the publishers, and during the 1930s, the *Radio Times* allowed more space for them than was average. This was partly because when queried about their lack of audience research, the BBC habitually pointed to its extensive post-bag. In Chapter Eleven I analyse the readers' letters to *Radio Pictorial* and the *Radio Times* written in 1934, in order to identify recurring themes, and to recapture details about who wrote the letters and why. Much of the interest lies in how similar the letters to the two magazines were, but there is also much insight to be gained in studying where the similarities diverge; these separations require interpretation and a narrative explanation.

Conclusion

This thesis is a study of broadcasting magazines in the context of both the magazine market and the development of the radio industry during the inter-war period. The fact that the 1930s saw the rise of commercial broadcasts in defiance of the BBC's monopoly to broadcast to the British audience has already been recorded. However, the part played by the broadcasting magazines, which supported the industry, but on which it also depended, has not yet been articulated. This thesis reframes the BBC's reaction to the competition confronting it, revealing that while it toiled to deliver a public service, for the benefit of the people and

funded by them, it was simultaneously engaged in the world of commerce, and on occasions the two very different ideologies under which it operated betrayed it into double standards.

By examining pre-Second World War broadcasting magazines in detail, the *Radio Times* is repositioned from a lucky “spin-off” to a publishing phenomenon, on which the BBC depended; *World-Radio* is accorded its true status, not as a minor magazine which was neither particularly interesting nor very successful, but as a magazine with strategic significance, which the BBC fiercely defended. The thoughts and feelings of a proportion of the 1930s audience are also salvaged and in particular, the British audience’s enthusiastic reception towards the introduction of foreign competition to the UK monopolist broadcaster model.

Chapter One

An Examination of Previous Studies on Broadcasting Magazines and Related Subjects

Introduction

Research into the history of broadcasting has necessarily depended on paper resources, since before 1932 the technology to record radio programmes was not available (Street, 2006, p.117). Surviving paper archives, mainly the BBC's Written Archive at Caversham, and some commercial archives, have provided researchers with sufficient secondary material to reconstruct a history of the facts surrounding the early days of broadcasting, and to develop a degree of understanding about the context within which the programmes were created. However, as Gifford points out, the commercial stations are the hardest to research since "having no public duty, the commercial companies kept no archives" (Gifford, 1985, p.7). It is the task of the researcher therefore to identify sources which through which this lacuna may be addressed.

This study uses as its primary focus extant broadcasting magazines published prior to the Second World War. There have been a comparatively small number of studies of groups of magazines, and as broadcasting magazines have not previously been regarded as forming a discrete group, accordingly very little has been written about them. The growth of a strong wireless press which supported the interest in the wireless technology of the 1920s has received some attention, but no attempt has been made to compile a comprehensive bibliography of this type of magazine, and there has also been no study of their readerships.

There have been a number of articles, studies and monographs on the subject of broadcasters (particularly the BBC), the history of broadcasting (again, until recently mostly BBC focused), and some studies which have drawn on individual titles for specific quotations and extracts. The narrow field of the history of wireless technology has been researched in detail, and there have also been several in-depth studies on the reception of the technology into the home as it became "domesticated". In order to place the magazines in their context, it has also been necessary to consult a number of social and cultural histories of the inter-war years.

The types of texts examined to support this thesis divide into the following categories:

- Studies of groups of magazines
- Readers' Letters
- Development of radio technology
- Accounts on the development of broadcasting by contemporary figures of the 1920s/1930s/1940s, including newspaper coverage of radio in the 1920s
- Post Second World War commentators on broadcasting which include broadcasting magazines
- Social and cultural histories of the period

The summaries below provide some examples of the type of secondary literature which has been examined during the course of this study, although, some of the key accounts of early broadcasting were written during the actual time period under review and therefore constitute both secondary and primary material at the same time.

1. Studies of Groups of Magazines

The lack of any previous study on the specialism of broadcasting magazines specifically has made it necessary to identify studies of other groups of magazines. There have been a small number of such studies, predominantly focusing upon women's magazines, which were flourishing during this period (titles such as *Good Housekeeping*, and *Our Homes and Gardens*) (Braithwaite, 1995, p.20); Greenfield & Reid (1998) conducted a study which concentrated on women's magazines and commercialisation. Hackney describes how the magazines which targeted women's hobbies became a component of the new commercial culture of home-making in the period but also offered women "opportunities for self-expression, agency and self-determination" (Hackney, 2006, p.23). Razlogova (2011) includes a wide-ranging scan of fan magazines across seventeen archival collections in the United States, including references to "radio fan magazines", in a broader study of how the American public participated in the formation of the country's radio. There have been few concentrated studies of discrete groups of magazines, and most have exclusively focused on post-Second World War magazines. Indeed, the majority have focused on the phenomenon of women's magazines, such as the works by Dancyger (1978) and Braithwaite (1995). These works have tended to be descriptive and populist, with little explanation of systematic methodology. While Hermes's (1995) work is a scholarly ethnographic study, its primary

focus is on interviewing the readers, and it is therefore not a study which yields a contribution to the current research. In the same way that the social and domestic environment of the period under scrutiny is important to consider, it is also essential to have an understanding of the contemporary magazine market, within which the broadcasting magazines were competing. A subsection of this is the research which has been conducted on Letters to the Editor or Readers' Letters which is discussed in the next section.

White's (1970) study differs from other surveys of magazines because she includes an explanation of the means employed to gather her data. While she makes no mention of broadcasting magazines, her study has been extremely valuable because of this methodological insight. She describes her aim as being:

To analyse the modern women's periodicals against their historical background, relating the development of the industry to social, economic and technical change, and showing how these three sets of factors have affected its structure and evolution, and influenced the scope and character of magazine content.⁷

Reed's (1997) monograph is an extremely detailed analysis of the historical and economic context of popular magazines, but his treatment of broadcasting magazines is confined to a discussion of the *Radio Times*, and his description of the magazine is neither extensive, nor analytical, but rather factual in nature. He describes the inception of the magazine but further account is confined to a description of the typographical characteristics of the magazine's physical appearance. Massie & Perry's (2002) study concentrates on the life and magazines of the US radio magazine publisher Hugo Gernsback. Their research does include descriptions of Gernsback's magazines as physical objects, and has been useful therefore in suggesting techniques for describing fonts and cover features.

It has been useful to examine other such studies of magazines, even though few mention broadcasting magazines specifically, to provide an understanding of the particular complexities of researching this form of publication, where some elements of the content and appearance remain stay the same, week by week, but other elements are necessarily different each time a number of the magazine appears.

⁷ White, 1970, p.18.

2. Readers' Letters

A subsection of the study of magazines is the research which has been conducted into letters to the editor, readers' letters pages, or the letters section, as this familiar component of a publication is variously called. Research into letters has been cross-disciplinary and included, for example, sociology, politics, linguistics and history. None of the studies identified have focused specifically on readers' letters to broadcasting magazines, although some researchers have been interested in whether the letters have raised the sociological question of the media's own attitude to itself. Moreover, many of the studies identified have been conducted on post-Second World War magazines: they generally examine letters to daily newspapers as opposed to weekly magazines, and have tended to concentrate on the United States press for research. The studies have also tended to deliberate on recurrent themes, such as the extent to which letters pages can be viewed as demonstrating democracy in operation. Previous studies have ranged from the highly specific, such as Pedersen's research (2004) into the use of *noms de plume* in letters from women to daily newspapers in Edwardian Scotland, while others have been more generic such as Hynds' investigation (1992) in which he interviewed newspaper editors about their use of readers' letters. Others, such as Razlogova's (2011) examination of letters in radio fan magazines, have used readers' letters as evidence in a wider study. While these have a different focus to the present study, the data uncovered and the conclusions reached can still usefully inform the current research.

Readers' letters represent the public's, or specifically, a readership's ability to contribute to a constantly fluid open debate, and potentially even to intervene with observation and opinion on individual issues. This, as Nielsen remarks, is "something of an anomaly in predominantly one-way mass media" (Nielsen, 2010, p.21). The desire to study readers' letters has, in the main, been inspired by a belief that this will yield information about the nature of readership of a given publication and those readers' experiences of, and responses to, the editorial material. For example, in his discussion of whether the media maintains a tradition of addressing its attitude to its own ethics, Thornton asks rhetorically "why study letters to the editor?" (Thornton, 1998, p.42). As a response, he cites Popovich (1995), and several others, including Jolliffe (1995) and Nord (1995), who, he explains:

have called for more study about magazine readers and their reaction to content. Popovich wrote that although a growing body of research "gives us some insight into the type of readers who seek out magazines," there is little

study of the kind of “strength of the relationship readers may have with magazines... Without that kind of information we have a poor perspective on the role magazines play in our society today”.⁸

This, of course, immediately gives rise to a number of crucial and inter-related questions: if the objective is to gain a greater understanding of a readership, how accurately do those readers who choose to write to the publication represent the readership, and as a related issue, what filters do the publications’ editors apply when deciding which letters they choose to publish?

Thornton tackles the first of these questions, drawing on previous research (Foster and Friedrich (1937); Tarrant (1957); Grey & Brown (1970); Buell (1975); and Hill (1981). He warns that there is an inherent difficulty in establishing “whether public opinion can be definitively ascertained through letters to the editor” (Thornton, 1998, p.42). Like other researchers, Thornton begins with the premise that letter writers are, *de facto*, literate, opinionated and visible (Thornton, 1998, p.42). Letter writers are effectively a *self-selecting* sub-group of the publications’ readership because they choose to write the letters. They cannot generally, however, influence whether or not their letter will be published. Cottle concludes that due to the complex interplay of a variety of factors, the news media (press and broadcasting) hold the power of privileging the voices of the powerful and marginalising those of the powerless (Cottle, 2000, p.427). This should be compared to Pasternack, who, while agreeing that letter writers differ from the normative population and are therefore a poor gauge of public opinion, nonetheless cites the letters editor at the *Los Angeles Times* who said that “the flow of mail indicated almost exactly when public sentiment shifted against President Nixon during Watergate” (Pasternack, 1989, p.3 citing Shaw, 1977, p.1). Hynds (1992) also doubts that the letters section has an important role in the effective operation of a democracy: in his opinion while the letters cannot necessarily accurately measure public opinion, still they can “help identify public issues and concerns, and can foster an exchange of ideas and information concerning action or inaction by government and others” (Hynds, 1992, p.124).

Wahl-Jorgensen considers readers’ letters in a number of separate journal papers. In one study on the role of letters to the editor in public discourse (2002a), she seeks to determine whether the letter writers to a local newspaper could be described as forming an accurate

⁸ Popovich, 1995, p.32 cited by Thornton, 1998, p.42.

demographic reflection of the electorate within the paper's circulation. To collect the contextual data, Wahl-Jorgensen conducted a series of in-depth ethnographic interviews with letters editors in the San Francisco Bay Area on daily and weekly newspapers from 15th June to 15th July 1999 (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2002a). She also looked at more than 60 articles in which letters editors discussed their work in *The Masthead*, the trade journal of the US National Conference of Editorial Writers. Wahl-Jorgensen's research draws on fifty years' worth of previous studies on the letters section; she also cites Emmett Buell Jr's (1975) study which used data from a national survey during the 1972 US Presidential campaign, as well as Volgy et al. (1977); Sigelman and Walkosz (1992); Hynds (1994) from which she finds:

Most studies of letters are conducted from a social scientific, quantitative approach, and set out to test "empirically the degree to which letters writers are similar to the electorate", or whether, in demographic terms, they differ from the "public".⁹

In her pursuit of a resolution as to whether the letters section provides a platform through which "regular citizens" can engage in democratic debate, Wahl-Jorgensen invokes Habermas' discourse on ethics to consider whether the letters can be seen as "a key institution of the public sphere" (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2002a, p.69). Ultimately Wahl-Jorgensen concludes that the letters section cannot, in fact, provide the "intersubjective public deliberation" as depicted by Habermas (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2002a p.78) for the very reason that it is formed from opinions which have been *selected*, which makes it is too much of a construction to fulfill the requirements of this model. The issue then becomes less a consideration of whether the letter writers may or may not represent the views and opinions of the readership *en masse*, but rather the ways in which the filtering process surrounding their publication distorts the message.

In further works (2001 and 2002b) Wahl-Jorgensen uses the material she gathered in the San Francisco Bay Area to examine the relationships between the public, the press and democracy; to this end she switches her focus from the letters themselves to the people charged with sifting through the correspondence and making decisions about which letters to select for publication: the letter editors, who "must navigate the jungle of public discourse to make decisions about the legitimacy of the parties involved" (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2002b,

⁹ Buell, 1975; Volgy et al., 1977, p.32, cited by Wahl-Jorgensen, 2002a, p.70.

p.189). She is concerned, therefore, with the letters editors' "understandings of rationality, citizenship and public participation" (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2002b, p.185).

This leads on to the second of the questions crucial to understanding what letters to the editor represent; the extent to which the letters editors constitute themselves as "gatekeepers" with the decision-making power of what to print and what to reject. Richardson & Franklin bring together the themes of gatekeeper and mediator of the public forum for debate:

Newspaper editors are gatekeepers: they select letters for publication and thereby give form and shape to public debate within their letters pages. Their professional instincts steer them towards inclusion of the widest possible range of viewpoints. All of this is broadly desirable, as long as debate remains within the framework of legislation and regulation which outlaws offensive, harmful or injurious views.¹⁰

Sigelman & Walkosz, ask whether readers' letters are the "thermometer of public opinion" (Sigelman & Walkosz, 1992, p.938) and Wahl-Jorgensen calls the letters editors the "custodians of the public sphere" (Wahl-Jorgensen 2002b, p.184) while Paine & Paine feel magazines themselves are "a barometer of contemporary culture" (Paine & Paine, 1987, p.13).

From her research, Wahl-Jorgensen concludes that the letters editors' decisions form a pattern, to the extent that definite "rules" can be identified, which govern how letters are selected for inclusion on to individual letters pages. These rules, she argues, emerge repeatedly and dictate who is given a voice (by the paper or magazine etc.) and conversely create those who "never stand a chance of being heard" (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2002a, p.70). These letter writers fall into the "under-represented", as Nielsen summarises, "young adults, retired people, the unemployed, and those with less than average incomes" (Nielsen, 2010, p.24) who are deselected from a democratic debate, by being outside the readerships of newspapers and magazines.

Other researchers who discuss "rules of selection" include Pasternack (1998), Hynds (1992), Benwell (2001), Cottle (2002), Pedersen (2004), and Nielsen (2010). Nielsen sums up these rules, generally accepted to be in operation to some degree:

¹⁰ Richardson & Franklin, 2003, p.191.

The majority of editors emphasize six [rules]: news, value, textual quality, speed, individualized representation, fairness, and disagreement. A few only mention three or four of these, but there is broad agreement on almost all, leading credence to the idea that the letters operate as a relatively homogenous institution with similar informal rules across different organizations.¹¹

Like Wahl-Jorgensen, Nielsen considers the extent to which the letters can be regarded as having “participatory potential ... as a concrete instance of mediated public debate”, although his primary focus is the extent to which the “letters institution” differentiates from the “news institution” from within which it operates (Nielsen, 2010, p.21). Nielsen’s methodology comprised a scrutiny of a diverse set of Danish newspapers and interviews with past and present letters editors, including a content analysis of received and printed letters at one paper. He argues that not a single one of the editors he interviewed claimed that the letters were representative of “the public” let alone “public opinion” and it is precisely because letters editors are highly sensitive to the “peculiarities” of the writers of letters that they feel that the forum must be mediated, and edited (Nielsen, 2010, p.25).

Examining the use of the *nom de plume* in women correspondents to Scottish daily papers, Pedersen found that at least 30% per annum of female letter writers used pen names when corresponding with the editor of a paper. She researched all letters to the editor printed the two newspapers which were signed either with a female name, or with a *nom de plume*, identifying as female any correspondent who provided her full name, who used a recognisable female pen name, or who reveals herself as female in her letter. Pedersen notes that the use of gender-specific pennames was prevalent citing ‘A Working Man’; ‘Dorcas’ or the very popular ‘A Mother’, but for some it was impossible to identify gender, with names such as ‘A Reader’ or ‘Annoyed of Crathes’. Recognising that her criteria for selection will inevitably have meant that she could not identify all letters written by women, she does not feel this compromised her overall method:

It has to be accepted that some female correspondents were not counted using these criteria. However, the overall research was focused on analysis of the letters of women who chose to identify themselves as female in their correspondence with the press. Since a correspondent using such a non-gender-specific name obviously did not want to be identified as a woman -and was presumed by subsequent correspondents to be male - this did not affect the overall findings.¹²

¹¹ Nielsen, 2010, p.25.

¹² Pedersen, 2004, p.176.

Pedersen found that female letter writers often chose to justify their reason for intervening in public affairs by their relationships – meaning that they portrayed themselves as writing on behalf of their son, or most powerfully “as mother”. In choosing such a pen name, women were choosing to hide their identity from employers, or husbands, but not the fact of their female gender. Pedersen notes:

One section of women correspondents used familial pen names to justify their discussion of certain issues; extending their domestic sphere to incorporate newspaper debate on household and familial subjects. Their roles as wives and mothers were given as the justification for their rightful concern in these areas and used to create a civic identity for the correspondent.¹³

During the war, the use of pen names decreased significantly, but since most letters during this period were actually appeals for donations, the actual names and addresses needed to be supplied.

3. Development of Wireless Technology

While the primary focus of this study is broadcasting magazines, it has also been necessary to refer to the development of wireless technology itself, partly to explain the context for the growth of the wireless press and partly because the physical attributes of the technology had a direct correlation to who was using the radio, and therefore who was comprising the market for the magazines. An enormously detailed account of the development of wireless technology has been conducted by Hill (1986), encompassing all the phases through which the technology passed, with extensive descriptions of the development of radio sets from the earliest days of broadcasting through the design-conscious years of the 1930s, to the mass production of the austere War-time Utility Sets of the 1940s. Hawes’ (1991) engaging and colourfully illustrated study of radio design also provides immense and rich detail about the sets themselves, with the model names, numbers and features and charts the changing design of radios from scientific contraption of the 1920s to the “hi-tech” of the late twentieth century. Butsch (1998), through studying the United States, provides useful and insightful comparisons to the assimilation of the radio into American home.

¹³ Pedersen, 2004, p.184.

Moore (1988, 2000) considers the gendered interpretations of the technology, once the British public had embraced the wireless as its own, which ultimately led to the power to influence the programmes being broadcast. His work, which includes oral history interviews conducted in Warrington which records the memories of the wireless' first audience, provides evidence for the journey which the technology travelled, and the way it was viewed by the individual members of the household. The different angles by which the magazine industry approached its target markets cannot be properly understood without the context of the technology itself as scientific contraption turned aspirational object of domestic desire.

4. Accounts by contemporary figures of the 1920s/1930s/1940s

Broadcasting was such an extraordinary phenomenon that there are several accounts of its "birth" which were written almost contemporaneously as the events unfolded. Broadcasters and technicians recognised at the time the fascination that their profession was exercising over the imagination of a growing audience. As General Manager of the British Broadcasting Company, John Reith wrote up his own description of the inception of the Company as early as 1924. This account is deeply patriarchal in tone and is fascinating because it demonstrates an apparently deeply rooted sense of ownership of broadcasting at all levels.¹⁴

Similarly Arthur Burrows, the British Broadcasting Company's first Director of Programmes wrote an early account in 1924, in which he reminisces about a time when voices on the ether seemed like a form of magic (Burrows, 1924, p.274). There are many accounts from the former practitioners within the broadcasting industry, including broadcasters, editors and engineers: the first editor of *The Listener*, R.S. Lambert wrote his memoirs in a 1940 account, the BBC's first Chief Engineer, Peter Eckersley's 1942 work was a critical assessment of his years with the BBC, and the former editor of the *Radio Times* Maurice Gorham's more sympathetic account, was published in 1948. As employees of the BBC during the 1920s and 1930s, these figures were active protagonists in the BBC's history, and their recollections, though necessarily subjective, provide useful insights into the historical events of early broadcasting. The journalist and radio critic Sydney A. Moseley (1935), who commented cynically from outside the broadcasting industry, provides a valuable counter-view, and in

¹⁴ Reith even felt it is necessary to lay a linguistic claim on broadcasting terms and commented: "the verb "to broadcast" follows the conjugation of the verb "to cast" and hence not "broadcasted" but "broadcast" for the past tense. This was a decision of the B.B.C! After all, it is our verb" (Reith, 1924, p.162).

1935 Christopher Stone, although he had every right to be bitter after the BBC blacklisted him for working with commercial competitors, remains resolutely uncritical of his former employer. (The incident is discussed in Chapter Eight.) Briggs notes an interesting commonality between many of these accounts, which even Reith's shared:

Most of the accounts of the BBC during the years covered in the volume were written by 'rebels', by people who were forced to leave it, who did not like its ethos or who criticised its organisation. I now believe that I should have paid more attention in Volume II to what they had to say, but I would judge its tone and content in the light of my general observation. It is interesting to note that Reith himself ended by being a rebel.¹⁵

Some of these works, such as Eckersley's, contained verbatim accounts of their broadcasts from the announcers' memories (Street, 2002, p.21). Since these reminiscences often referred to the same incidents and people, when put together they can be triangulated to present a detailed impression of the personalities and issues influencing early broadcasting.

The early experimentation with radio waves attracted growing public interest and this was reflected by coverage in both the general and the scientific press. Some newspapers, such as *The Daily Mail* were active in sponsoring high-profile demonstrations of the new technology, and the press also provided extensive coverage of national events such as the Prince of Wales' address (Briggs, 1961, p.77). The domestic local and national press followed wireless events and demonstrations, particularly the *Daily Mail*. In addition to carrying articles on the emergent technology, the daily press eventually granted a significant concession when they collectively decided to carry limited details and times of the BBC's daily programmes, possibly recognising a means of boosting their circulation figures (Briggs, 1961 p.77). The *Daily Mail* considered itself to be a leader in ensuring that the British public was kept abreast with new developments with wireless technology, and announced its intention to promote wireless as it had promoted motoring and flying, as Hennessey records:

'Watch the *Daily Mail* for the latest developments of Wireless and the latest news of broadcasting' was its exhortation, set out in a half page advertisement in one of the new technical periodicals (*Popular Wireless*, 3 June 1922). In addition to Associated Newspapers (*Daily Mail/Evening News*), the *Daily News*, *Daily Express*, *Evening Standard*, *Westminster Gazette*, and the *Provincial Liverpool Courier* all took a special interest in broadcasting.¹⁶

¹⁵ Briggs, 1980, p.11.

¹⁶ Hennessey, 2005, p.126.

The stakeholders of the Nation's press had a complex relationship with broadcasting, and at different times held a pivotal role in its key developments. There is not the space to elaborate on this theme within this study, but Briggs (1961) records many examples of the clashes between the Newspaper Proprietors Association and the BBC, including the press boycott of programme details of February 1923, which led directly to the BBC's decision to publish its own magazine, the *Radio Times* (Briggs, 1961, p.142). Some elements of the newspaper press may have felt that they had a part to play in keeping the public informed, but there was an inherent difficulty in performing this service, when the general public was not necessarily ready for the complexities of this new wireless service. Hennessey explains that while the press might have the will "the national and provincial press had to draw the line when it came to initiating readers to the mysteries of wireless. They had to concede that this was a job that only the technical press could perform" (Hennessey, 2005, p.126). When, in the early months of 1922, the first experimental broadcasts were reaching the astonished ears of the British public, both amateur enthusiasts and the newly curious lay audience had little printed matter to initiate them into wireless' mysteries. An earlier pre-war generation had been served by the text books of J.C. Hawkhead and R.D. Bungay and these were still being sold after the War (Hennessey, 2005, p.127). As a result, the wireless press sprang up to cater for the market created by broadcasting; a market which was sufficiently large to hold several titles in direct competition.

The contemporary accounts and the newspaper coverage all contribute to enabling the researcher to appreciate the impact which broadcasting had at the time, and serve as a reminder that to listen to voices carried on the airwaves was a truly remarkable experience for the first audiences of the 1920s.

5. Post Second World War commentators on broadcasting which include broadcasting magazines

Within this category there is a further sub-division between academic studies with an analytical intent such as the works of Curran & Seaton (2003) and Scannell & Cardiff (1991), and accounts of magazine titles which were of more general and nostalgic interest. The *Radio Times* holds a prominent position in the affections of the nation, and has, accordingly, been the subject of several populist reminiscences. These are exclusively post Second World War, such as Tony Currie's (2001) and Susan Briggs' (1981) works.

Generally the major works on broadcasting history fail to engage with the aspect of broadcasting magazines in any depth. In the view of Scannell & Cardiff (1991) there is a particular difficulty confronting the broadcasting historian which is that the very subject under research has almost entirely vanished and, in fact, may only be studied at all by the imprint or shadow that it left on surviving materials. It is the task of the historian to attempt to recapture the lost detail, and hope “to stimulate an interest in the historical recuperation of the character of broadcast output” (Scannell & Cardiff, 1991, p.xiv). And yet their research makes little use of the rich resource of broadcasting magazines.

Briggs’ comprehensive work on the history of broadcasting is a dominant authority in this field, even if his BBC focus led him to over-look some important developments which were taking place beyond the BBC. His work falls into the first sub-division of an in-depth study Post Second World War commentary on broadcasting. In a subsequent article Briggs says of his multi-volume history:

In 1961 there were no general histories of broadcasting in any country with the exception of Gorham (1952) on Britain and Archer (1938) on the United States: Erik Barnouw did not publish the first volume of his three-volume trilogy on American broadcasting until 1966 ... Several books on broadcasting institutions had already appeared, some of which included brief historical sections, and many autobiographies of leading personalities concerned with broadcasting—a genre in themselves—had been produced.¹⁷

Briggs has a short section on the BBC’s magazines, *The Listener*, *Radio Times* and *World-Radio* (Briggs, 1965, pp.280-292) but otherwise references to them are comparatively few and far between, the majority being incidental, referring to items of interest which were printed in the flagship magazine, the *Radio Times*. Briggs’ primary use for the *Radio Times* is as a source for referencing the opinions of the principal figures within the BBC, rather than as a publication with its own intrinsic interest. However, Briggs emphasises that the *Radio Times* was a publishing phenomenon, noting “By the end of 1928 it had passed the million mark. Profits for the *Radio Times* helped to carry the BBC through its financially lean years” (Briggs, 1961, p.297). This information is key to understanding the *Radio Times*’ importance to the BBC, and might have been an argument for devoting more space to such an important source of revenue.

¹⁷ Briggs, 1980, p.6.

If Briggs' account focuses on the BBC, Street (2006) charts the threat to British public service radio posed by the commercial competition before the Second World War. Street uncovers the previously neglected story of the pre-War rise of International Broadcasting Company and Radio Luxembourg. While he does not describe the entire content of the magazines from the period in detail, he acknowledges their importance. He also devotes attention to the advertisements which *Radio Pictorial* carried, as an intrinsically interesting topic for research, capturing as they do the interests, aspirations and anxieties of the times. Street describes the origin of the BBC's *World-Radio*, as the BBC's response to the commercial activity which had struck upon the lucrative business of buying airtime on foreign radio stations to make programmes catering for an English audience. (Street, 2006, p.148). Critically, Street uses the programme listings for the continental stations in *Radio Pictorial* to make a direct comparison with the programmes being broadcast by the BBC. For Street, this is a key part of the evidence that the Reithian Sunday policy of broadcasting was instrumental in allowing the continental stations to gain such a firm foothold as a regular source of leisure and entertainment for UK listeners. Thus, the present study develops several of Street's themes, in investigating the BBC's decision to add another magazine to its portfolio and assessing the part that the magazines played in rise of commercial competition.

Pegg's work on the early wireless press (1983) captures the enthusiasm of both the amateur wireless hobbyists and also of the wireless press itself, conveying an impression of how joyfully the editors tackled the complex details of their readers' queries (Pegg, 1983, pp.45-49). Wallis' autobiography of the IBC's Captain Plugge (2008) uncovers a great deal of details about the Continental broadcasts from the 1930s, and moreover provides a vivid pen portrait of the highly colourful Captain Plugge. Murphy's account of women working in the BBC from 1923-1939 has been invaluable for providing the BBC context of the period and in particular detail about the Isa Benzie, who was Foreign Director for much of this period and who was therefore either the author or recipient of several of the memoranda and letters examined for this thesis at the BBC Written Archives at Caversham.

Other more general studies of the time period with the broader focus of mass communication provide a backdrop for the adoption of early radio. LeMahieu, for example, makes a pertinent remark that can be applied to radio:

Much remains uncertain about the structure of demand for the commercial mass media, particularly in the early decades of the twentieth century ... knowledge of the age, sex, class, region, and occupation of the audience for newspapers, films and music would reveal only part of the story. ... The essential nature of demand for mass media particularly in earlier eras, will always remain largely unknown. The elusiveness of demand may explain why most interested historians and sociologists prefer to concentrate on supply.¹⁸

The broadcasting magazines and, particularly, the listeners'/readers' letters which they carried do provide an insight into some aspects of this elusive demand, by recording the requests and comments of a small sample of the audience.

The *Radio Times*

The *Radio Times* has been the subject of a number of studies, reflecting its appeal as an omnipresent artefact, and an object of cultural significance within the home. Several monographs have been devoted exclusively to the magazine. However, the majority of works have concentrated on the *Radio Times*' illustrations. Usherwood's erudite 1961 work describes the *Radio Times* as having "established before the war a reputation as one of the leading patrons of a great tradition of graphic art" (Usherwood, 1961, p.10). However, his work is exclusively a review of the artwork and therefore is only of limited usefulness for the current research. The *Radio Times*' artwork is an important feature of the contemporary impact which it had, but it is of limited value for capturing the intrinsic character of the magazine, and its importance to the BBC.

Baker's study (2002) of the artists of the *Radio Times* is similar, although it provides a limited history of the magazine's inception. Baker asserts "The drawings, many created by the finest artists of the time, are as valuable a record of the twentieth-century as any images in the great photographic libraries" (Baker, 2002, p.15). Once again, however, the focus is entirely upon the magazine's "avant-garde" artwork. Driver's (1981) work also focuses on this single aspect of the magazines, although it does provide an astute forward by Briggs.

Susan Briggs's monograph is a nostalgic *homage* to the *Radio Times* (1981) and Currie's (2001) is a populist history. These both fall into the second sub-division of modern non-academic commentaries, aimed at readership seeking entertainment rather than being critical

¹⁸ LeMahieu, 1986, p.11.

analyses of the magazine. Further studies have trawled the magazine for specific aspects, such as Alan Beck's study (2000) which draws extensively on the *Radio Times*, but purely as a source for programme details. All of the works on the *Radio Times* published to date examine the magazine in isolation from both other contemporary magazines, and developments in broadcasting. They are therefore of limited value for describing the impact of the magazine, beyond the recognition that it was a publishing phenomenon, in terms of its unprecedented circulation figures and as a pioneer in its commissioning of *avant-garde* artists.

6. Social and cultural histories of England during the Inter-War Period

This thesis draws upon a number of works which describe the conditions of the 1920s and 1930s, in particular Branson's two studies (1971, 1975; the 1971 work is with Heinemann) of the economic and employment conditions of the 1920s and 1930s, which so vividly brought to life the harsh conditions of the period. Mowat describes the increasing leisure hours the working class came to have, and how they spent this new-found leisure (1966). Carey's (1992) thought-provoking work opened up considerable insights into the attitudes prevailing between the classes, in particular the response of distaste exhibited by the intelligentsia to the growth of the mass culture enjoyed by the working classes. Todd's extensive studies (2003, 2004, 2005 and 2009) of the conditions of working-class women provided the background into the class relations of the period, and added insights into the human stories behind the statistics. These social and cultural histories are important in providing the backdrop to the developments of broadcasting. This would necessarily have been different if it had come at another moment in history, when the lower classes had less leisure time and fewer aspirations, or when society had not been so profoundly shaken by the impact of the First World War.

Conclusion

There have been studies of magazines in the past, but none have dealt specifically with broadcasting magazines, apart from the subject of the wireless press, which has attracted a degree of attention. However, even studies on the wireless press have not set the magazines against the context of the contemporary wider magazines market. This is an important exercise because the comparison reveals aspects of this sector of the magazine market which

were unusual or even unique. The readers' letters, section of a publication, mostly in newspapers, is another area which has received considerable attention and these studies have been very useful in identifying firstly that readers who have chosen to air their views cannot necessarily be regarded as representing the opinion of the rest of the readership, and secondly that editors apply filters which fit their agenda when deciding which letters to publish. These are important qualifications to understand when analysing the meaning and significance of the letters.

There is a body of literature to be found around the subject of broadcasting, which is concerned with the technology itself and how the wireless was assimilated into the home. But none of these texts make the link with the magazine market, which is the subject of this research. The accounts on the development of broadcasting by contemporary figures of the have assisted in the recreating the impact of early broadcasting, and some recollections, such as those of the *Radio Times* editor Gorham, have provided critical information which could not have been found elsewhere. Post Second World War histories, notably Briggs' work on the BBC and Street's work on commercial competition, have provided information on the construction of the broadcasting "machine" in the UK; social and cultural histories of the period have provided the context to complete the picture.

Reviewing the literature on or around the subject of broadcasting, the contribution which broadcasting magazines made to the creation and support of the industry represents a gap in collective knowledge. Moreover, studying the magazines through this lens highlights the cultural contribution which the magazines were making to society at the time, and have left to posterity. Since no previous studies exist on this specific area of research, investigation was required using the primary material of the BBC's own documents, held at the BBC Written Archives at Caversham, much of which has only been recently released. In addition, the magazines themselves have represented a most important primary resource. For the first time, this thesis integrates the themes of the magazines, the commercial competition of the 1930s and the BBC's reaction to it and the response of the British listening public, as indicated in their letters to the magazines.

Chapter Two

An Explanation of Methods and Methodology

Magazines can be studied as shapers, reflectors, cultural crucibles, agenda setters, power brokers, historical entities, community builders, framers, feminist manifestos, economic commodities, advocates, post-modern documents, and more. How do we tackle magazines and their meanings? What kinds of methodologies should we use? Should our approach be quantitative, qualitative, historical, descriptive, Marxist, literary, feminist, post-modern, or economic?¹⁹

Overview of Methodology

The first task was to determine what constitutes a broadcasting magazine and to gather the titles together into a bibliography. From this list it would then be possible to group the magazines together, identify different types in order to select suitable material for closer analysis. It was necessary to identify effective methods for accomplishing the following:

1. Compiling a broadcasting magazine bibliography
2. Categorising broadcasting magazine titles into types
3. Positioning the magazines in the context of their own medium
4. Narrowing the selection of individual titles
5. Selecting component sections of the magazines
6. Selecting specific weekly numbers for comparative analysis
7. Identifying a methodology for examining readers' letters in individual numbers

Of all the studies of magazines examined there was one which offered a methodology for categorising material which can serve as a model. The aim of White's (1970) work was:

To analyse the modern women's periodicals against their historical background, relating the development of the industry to social, economic and technical change, and showing how these three sets of factors have affected the its structure and evolution, and influenced the scope and character of magazine content.²⁰

White's work has some similarities with aspects of the present study, and she meticulously explains the method employed to examine such a broad spread of titles. Her initial task was to compile a list of the magazines published within the specified period. She then examined

¹⁹ Johnson, 2007, p.524.

²⁰ White, 1970, p.18.

an example of each title, and compiled a brief record of its “characteristics”, devising a general description of the typical contents, classifying each title according to a type, and assigning a class and age group to establish the probable targeted market. Such classification was necessarily subjective.

Drawing a sample from the list, White selected 42 titles for analysis, attempting to provide a “representative, chronological coverage of all women’s magazines published between 1800 and 1968” (White, 1970, p.18). White proceeded to examine an extant example of each of her chosen titles, initially at 25-yearly intervals in the Nineteenth Century, 10-yearly intervals between 1900 and the Second World War, and 5-yearly intervals in the Post-War period; the intervals were progressively compressed to allow for the accelerating pace of social change. She then constructed a list of generic content categories, and assessed “the cumulative composition” (White, 1970, p.19) of an entire year’s worth of issues against this list. Crucially, she too felt it necessary to undertake a survey of the changing social situation over the past two centuries, particularly with regard to the changing position of women.

White’s work has been useful in suggesting a structured, methodical framework for categorising a sub-genre of magazines and for selecting material study, and the methodology for this study drew upon White’s techniques for categorising the titles.

1. Compiling a Broadcasting Magazine Bibliography

The first task was to define the terms and set the parameters to determine which titles could be designated a broadcasting magazine. The term “broadcasting magazine” has been taken as a weekly or monthly printed publication primarily devoted to covering one or more aspect of radio broadcasting. The study is limited to magazines published in the United Kingdom (although occasional references are made to developments in the industry in the rest of Europe and the United States). The time period under consideration is the beginning of formal broadcasting in the 1920s up to the outbreak of the Second World War, which effectively changed the whole nature of the industry, however the concentration has been on the early to mid 1930s, because this was a period of significant activity. Moreover, the situation with the foreign competition had reached an *impasse* between 1935 and 1939.

As discussed in the previous chapter, as very little has been written directly about broadcasting magazines as a group, and no comprehensive previous study on this subject matter has been identified, my research necessarily began with the construction of a bibliography of titles. The methodology for compiling a bibliography involved the use of a variety of primary sources: a key word search of the British Library Integrated Catalogue provided many of the titles, and this list was cross-referenced against Copac, a resource which gives access to the merged online catalogues of the major UK and Irish academic and National libraries, as well as increasing numbers of specialist libraries. This was complemented by a search for references to broadcasting magazines within contemporary texts and modern commentaries. Massie & Perry's (2002) study on the US magazine publisher Hugo Gernsback used "Worldcat" as the principal source. This is an online union catalogue which itemises the collections of 72,000 libraries. Their terms of reference for defining a "radio magazine" are not explained but may have been narrower than those used for this study, since Massie & Perry found only half the number which I identified. Massie & Perry remark:

How many different radio magazines were published in the early development of radio? An exact number is uncertain, but one can get an approximation. Using the WorldCat (FirstSearch/OCLC) database, 50 monthly or quarterly English language magazines emerge on either radio or radio broadcasting between 1907 and 1929. The vast majority of these were published in the United States starting after 1920.²¹

2. Categorising Broadcasting Magazine Titles into Types

Once the bibliography had been compiled, it was necessary to group the magazines into separate categories to reflect the differing primary foci. The categories which were included in the definition of a broadcasting magazine are:

1. **Technical interest magazines:** publications targeted towards a readership interested specifically in the science of wireless technology, commonly called at the time the "wireless press". These were the first category of magazine to emerge, with the very first, the *Marconigraph*, dating from 1911. This started life as the Marconi Company's in-house magazine, but it opened out to a wider readership in response to the huge wave of interest in its subject. The title was swiftly changed in 1913 to

²¹ Massie & Perry, 2002, p.270.

Wireless World. Some aspects of the history of *Wireless World* have been investigated in this study where the magazine came into competition with the BBC's magazine *World-Radio*.

2. **Programme Listing magazines:** weekly publications providing times and details of programmes, with supplementary material on the process of broadcasting and giving information about the personalities involved, and “behind the scenes” information. The first was the *Radio Times* which began life in 1923, shortly after the British Broadcasting Company was formed. The BBC then brought out the *Radio Supplement*, first published in July 1925 and changing its name in June 1926 to *World-Radio*. This catered for the phenomenon of “distance listening” in vogue in the 1920s and 1930's. *World-Radio* directed listeners to classical music broadcasts by the state national radio of other, mostly European, countries. However, in 1934, *Radio Pictorial* additionally carried the listings for English language slots on foreign commercial stations, such as Radio Normandy and Radio Luxembourg.
3. **Broadcasting interest magazines:** publications devoted to the programmes themselves, usually one type of niche programme such as the *Children's Radio Magazine* dating from 1925 and *The Listener* launched in 1929, which featured reprints of the BBC's Talks.
4. **Adapted magazines:** a study of the fluctuations in the titles of magazines indicates that publications pre-dating the advent of radio, with a primary focus in a related field such as the electrical or music market, frequently expanded their interest to absorb the developments in the emergent technology. This category includes “the scientific press”, which followed wireless technological developments as an aspect of their general interest in related innovations. Titles include *The Electrical Review* and *The English Mechanic and World of Science*. Both of these journals were extremely well established, dating from 1892 and 1865 respectively. This is primarily where the pre-history of radio technological developments can be found documented (Hill, 1986, p.21).

These categories form the core of the material identified, but there were other magazines which might have been appropriate for inclusion. Such examples include those magazines

which capitalised on the sudden surge in the popularity of the radio and remarketed themselves. An example of this category was *The Pianomaker*, which was first published in 1913, but which became in 1923 *The Pianomaker and Music and Radio Merchant's Journal*. The reverse process may be observed a few years later, once the saturation point in the broadcasting magazine market had been reached. For example, in 1930 the highly successful journal *The Gramophone* absorbed the short-lived *Vox: The Radio Critic and Broadcast Review*.²² Most of the magazines in this supplemental category were directed at a trade market.

The bibliography of broadcasting magazine titles can be found in Appendix VII.

3. Positioning the Magazines in the Context of Their Medium

In order to understand more fully the type of audience the radio stations attracted and therefore, to whom broadcasting magazines were designed to appeal, it has been important to study the broader social context of the 1920s and 1930s. Clearly, broadcasting magazines must also be placed in the context of their own medium, which has required research into other contemporary and popular magazines, particularly family magazines and magazines targeted towards women. A number of smaller studies of magazines have been identified and described in Chapter One, which had a predominant focus on women's magazines. Johnson (2007) conducted his research into other studies of magazines and concludes:

While there are many excellent content analyses and framing studies, we seem to be studying the same magazines and the same topics over and over again. If we want to study how news magazines framed a particular political event whether it's an election or a war we use *Time* and *Newsweek*. If we want to know about women's magazines and their attitude toward sex and romance, we look at *Cosmopolitan*; for men, we turn to *Maxim*. For much of the 1940s, 1950s, and 1960s, researchers used *Ladies' Home Journal* as a key to understanding women's magazines.²³

As Johnson indicates, most studies have tended to examine magazines published post Second World War. Many studies of magazines represent general surveys, tending to be descriptive with little explanation of systematic methodology, or explanation of the method employed to

²² Both of these titles were edited by Compton Mackenzie. Sir Edward Montague Compton Mackenzie was a writer and a cultural commentator who co-founded the Scottish National Party in 1928.

²³ Johnson, 2007, p.526.

gather the data. Some of those which are scholarly ethnographic studies use interviews with readers as primary data, a technique which is not a practicable methodology for this study, for example, Hermes (1995); Wahl-Jorgensen (2002a,b); Hackney (2007).

However, the early 1920s saw a number of titles launched which were self-evidently aimed at the woman at home and an understanding of the magazine market during the period under review is essential to interpreting the extent to which broadcasting magazines were following established norms of content, and also the ways in which they differed from their contemporaries. For example, the UK version of *Good Housekeeping* was first published in March 1922, and was therefore a close contemporary of the *Radio Times*. The magazine contained articles designed to appeal to the issues confronting its selected readership, some elements of which the *Radio Times* copied: articles dealing with the practicalities of running a home, but also erudite articles on the serious political issues of the day (Braithwaite, 1995, p.32). Studies such as those by Dancyger (1978) and Braithwaite (1995) have been particularly useful and informative for this purpose. Similarly, *Woman's Own* was launched two years before *Radio Pictorial*, and there were similarities between the visual style of the covers, the content and the market at which both were aiming.

4. Narrowing the Selection of Individual Titles

By applying a broad definition to the term “broadcasting magazine”, the number of potential titles for consideration is extensive: nearly one hundred titles have been identified as complying with the model under the terms defined and over the time period of 18 years. Moreover, as with the magazines investigated by White, broadcasting magazines altered their formats, changed their styles and foci, a tendency which was all the more prevalent because the readerships were growing increasingly sophisticated in its expectations, as the subject matter grew more familiar.

While broadcasting magazines remain a distinct group, bound by their topic of interest, there are considerable differences in the magazine's target audiences, and in their content, to the extent that a comparison across too many types of broadcasting magazines would necessarily be superficial and the insights would be overwhelmed in the detail. As more titles were uncovered and added to the bibliography, it became clear that it would be necessary to narrow the selection of material for closer study from a range of magazines to a much smaller

sample. I decided to shift from an overview of the magazines to an in-depth analysis of two titles and I chose the *Radio Times* and *Radio Pictorial*. Comparing like with like has allowed the essential research questions to be investigated, and enabled a close study of the ways in which these magazines mediated between the broadcasters and the listening public.

Radio Pictorial and the *Radio Times* were selected for closer investigation because they represent the two chief sectors of the broadcasting landscape in 1930s Britain; the *Radio Times* supporting the programmes provided by the BBC, in its capacity as the state-endorsed monopoly, and *Radio Pictorial* which, although it was also primarily preoccupied with the BBC output, also covered the details of the English programmes broadcast from abroad by the advertising-led entrepreneurs. The *Radio Times* was one of several contemporary magazines to which the researcher can refer to recapture something of the flavour of the early broadcasts, and in supplying the details of the weekly broadcast programmes it was a particularly rich resource for researchers who cannot hear the programmes themselves. Moreover, the channel of communication between the broadcasters and the listening public which the magazines offered was, at least potentially, two-way; the listeners could send in their letters, and the broadcasters, and even sometimes the radio artists themselves, could respond.

Radio Pictorial was one of the most lively and rich resources for broadcasting material of the period. It was first published on 19th January 1934, and continued until the outbreak of the Second World War closed down the Continental stations for which the magazine provided the listings. The insights which can be gained by studying this magazine are greatly enhanced by evaluating it in conjunction with another broadcasting listing magazine, thereby offering opportunities for comparative analysis. Although the *Radio Times* has been examined in previous studies, these have not assessed the magazine against other contemporary magazines, nor have they placed the magazine within a broadcasting history context, as discussed in Chapter One. Moreover, *Radio Pictorial's* relationship with the International Broadcasting Company (IBC) makes it a particularly important “player” during this period.

The two titles chosen provide sufficient material for a comparing and contrasting exercise, since there were some core similarities between the two, but also marked differences in their target markets and in their content and tone. They were both weekly listing magazines; and both had a vested interest in the broadcasting industry; the *Radio Times* because it was a BBC

publication, and *Radio Pictorial* because the broadcasting industry (particularly the BBC) formed its staple material. However, the dissimilarities between the two include the fact that the *Radio Times* was established in 1923, and *Radio Pictorial* commenced publication in 1934; *Radio Times* was conceived as a projection of the BBC's public service broadcasting mission, but *Radio Pictorial* was openly commercial with a populist tone and published by an independent publisher.

During the course of this study, it soon became apparent that *World-Radio* had a critical significance to the BBC during this period and this magazine was therefore examined too. *World-Radio* and the *Radio Times* both had elements of their content which placed them in competition with *Radio Pictorial*, but as a magazine the *Radio Times* was much closer to *Radio Pictorial* than to *World-Radio*. The point of connection between *World-Radio* and *Radio Pictorial* is in the provision of the foreign programme listing, and the decision was taken therefore to limit the comparisons between *Radio Pictorial* and *World-Radio* to the significance of the competition they presented to each other, and not to a comparison of content. *World-Radio* was a very technical magazine, concerned chiefly with the narrow field of broadcasts from primarily state-run broadcasting organisations abroad, as opposed to sponsored commercial programmes; the object of this study is to examine the experience and response to broadcasting rather than the technicalities of the technology. Similarly the correspondence to *World-Radio* was technical and therefore not relevant to this study.

5. Selecting Component Section Sections of the Magazines

Broadcasting magazines may be placed into separate categories, but each publication can be broken down further into their composite parts: regular sections included short stories, articles on the radio "stars", items on announcers, "behind the scenes" exposés, editorial commentaries on issues of the day, foreign policy and the government, comments on the BBC's policy, radio-related messages, such as how to maximise the performance of sets and also advice to readers about totally non-radio related household topics. However, one aspect which was highly prevalent in both the listings magazines and the technical magazines was that they both inspired and encouraged extensive correspondence from their readerships (*Wireless Constructor*, May 1925, cited in Pegg, p.47). Some of these letters from the readers were printed and answered within the magazine; others were gathered together into topics of common interest which were responded to with articles and features.

Most magazines, newspapers and journals include a generic “what the reader thinks” page. In the case of broadcasting magazines, the readers’ letters inform not only on the reception of the content of the magazine, but also on the response to the content of programmes broadcast, and the letters are therefore potentially of interest to the maker of the programmes. This is an unusual separation: newspapers and magazines commonly invite direct comment from readers on the merits and the demerits of their own publication. In the case of broadcasting magazines, the editors specifically invited comment on the output of a third party, even though, even in the case of the *Radio Times*, the magazine was published by a department which was separate from the programme department, and the magazine editors had no input into what was broadcast. The magazines were the messenger, however. Undoubtedly they had editorial policies with an agenda; and such agendas may be explicated by a close analysis of the topics printed in one and compared to the topics printed by the other.

6. Selecting Specific Weekly Numbers for Comparative Analysis

It is apparent from White’s model that an over ambitious selection of material could weaken the study by forcing it to become necessarily superficial. I therefore decided to research the extant issues of the *Radio Times* and *Radio Pictorial* for the six year period from 1934, when *Radio Pictorial* was launched, until 1939 when the Second World War brought about its demise. A longitudinal study of each title would require a methodology for the selection of material along the principles outlined by White and described above, since even focusing on a seven year period would comprise at least 728 copies (14 years x 52 weekly numbers). I decided to conduct a cross-sectional case study instead, concentrating on a twelve month period which was rich in activity and involved many developments which repositioned the environment for broadcasting in the UK. On this basis I chose to concentrate on 1934. This represents a period of experimentation for the newly created *Radio Pictorial*, but it also reflects a phase for the *Radio Times* during which, as the files held at the BBC Written Archives at Caversham indicate, the BBC was all too well aware that it had credible competition for the first time. I examined the letters page of every number for both titles for the period from 2nd February 1934 to 25th January 1935 and was fortunate enough to track down every copy for the period involved (as a new publication, *Radio Pictorial* had no letters page for the first two weeks after its launch). The year 1934 was chosen for particular investigation for the following reasons:

- *Radio Pictorial* started on 19th January 1934
- IBC started publishing IBC Foreign Programme sheet in *Radio Pictorial* from 31st August 1934
- This period provided the greatest percentage of letters for *Radio Pictorial* letters which could be obtained as a year on year comparison with the *Radio Times* because after this date, *Radio Pictorial* did not include readers' letters in every single number
- Because *Radio Times* contained over three times as many letters as *Radio Pictorial*, taking 1934 provided the highest percentage of *Radio Pictorial* letters to compare to *Radio Times* of any year during *Radio Pictorial*'s publication history
- 1934 was a pivotal year in terms of the rise of competition to the BBC from commercially run broadcasters, chiefly Radio Luxembourg and the IBC
- Prior to 1934 much of the correspondence to the BBC had been about technical issues; 75% of listeners' letters received by the BBC in the 1920s were concerned with problems of reception (Pegg, 1983, p.400).

The page of letters entitled "What the Empire Listener Thinks" in the *Radio Times* was not included in this study. When this irregular feature occurred it was in addition to the usual letters page, and adding it would have skewed the data because, inevitably, most of the letters came from listeners around the Empire and also, these letters contained a recurrent theme of listeners reporting on the strength of the signal. There was a strong element of the amazement of listeners at being able to receive the signal and hear sounds from home while abroad. In addition, *Radio Pictorial* had nothing similar with which to compare this section.

7. Finding a methodology for Examining Readers' Letters in Individual Numbers

Once the magazines for case-study had been selected, the methodology required an inductive approach, based upon a qualitative analysis which codified the types of reasons for the readers' letters being written, a process of recursive abstraction was then undertaken in order to identify salient points and issues raised within the narrative of each readers' letter (See Saunders, Lewis, and Thornhill, 2009, p.91 for an explanation of the inductive method). A hierarchy of codes was created and this information was analysed to reveal information about the letter writers and identify trends, similarities and divergences in the authorship, content and provenance of letters being printed in each magazine. I used a qualitative methodology rather than a quantitative approach with preconceived categories or codes, instead allowing

the codes to emerge from the content of the letters, which also allowed me to situate the letters within their contexts. This was necessary, not only to draw out the meanings embedded within the letters, but also to answer the last of my research questions: what can be deduced from an examination of the readers' letters about the audience's response to the specific issues dominating the broadcasting environment during this period?

I was interested in a number of separate pieces of information about the writers of letters: gender and location, and whether or not they had used a *nom de plume*. I also wished to ascertain to whom their letter was directed, that is to say, the magazine itself or the broadcaster, and furthermore whether their letter was a complaint, praise, request or general observation. The subject of the letter was also important, and I divided the letters into a number of recurring themes such as those which were concerned with the general service that the BBC was offering, or comments or questions about specific programmes. The programme content was divided again into frequently mentioned topics such as children's programmes, women's programmes or drama. Letters which discussed music had a third sub-division, Classical Music and Variety. I researched a number of sources to determine an appropriate contemporary definition for these two categories, including the BBC's *Hand Books/Year-Books/Annuals 1928-1944*, and an article in a 1936 number of *Woman's Own*, which explained to its readers what fell under the BBC's "Broadcast Variety" department, as opposed to its Classical Music Department. (See Appendix I for a detailed description and explanation of the coding used).

I chose as my data all the readers' letters from the *Radio Times* and *Radio Pictorial* for a twelve month period, to allow for possible seasonal variations. Although this was not a large sample in either quantitative terms, or indeed, in the context of the history of broadcasting, it was still a large sample on which to conduct such an intensive content analysis. My twelve month sample yielded 278 *Radio Pictorial* letters (representing 22% of the total sample) and 998 *Radio Times* letters (representing 78% of the total sample). There were far more letters printed in the *Radio Times* than in *Radio Pictorial*, but this inequality would have been true of any magazine which was compared to the *Radio Times*. My method was iterative; taking sample letters from both of the magazines, I examined the data in segments, gradually assembling a series of initial codes. For every letter there were two types of codes; one was contextual giving information about the letter writer, while the other was derived from in vivo coding, analysing the words of the letter itself. Sifting through these codes, I began to

identify relationships between them, elaborating and refining the theoretical codes, as I read more samples of the letters, until I reached the point of saturation where no new properties or variations were emerging which would inform my coding. At this point I was able to collapse the codes into core theoretical categories. I then went back to the original data and read every individual letter, line by line to draw out both detail and context. This enabled me to start generating themes.

Some of the themes which emerged from this method required further research to ensure that they were accurate and not anachronistic, for example, the theme of music. I researched a number of sources to determine an appropriate contemporary definition for the different types of music, including the BBC's *Handbooks/Year-Books/Annuals 1928-1940*, and an article in a 1936 number of *Woman's Own*, which explained to its readers what fell under the BBC's "Broadcast Variety" department, as opposed to its Classical Music Department. A detailed description and explanation of the coding used is attached in Appendix I.

A Note on the BBC Use of Initials in Internal Correspondence

Disentangling the route which memoranda took between personnel within the BBC has been extremely difficult, as Robert Silvey found when he was Head of BBC Audience Research from 1936 to 1960. He had immense difficulties with the fact that correspondence was addressed by initials, mostly, though not always using the initials of the post rather than the individual's name. For example: "A.C.D., Controller (P) To Director General GHS."²⁴ Sometimes there is not enough information to determine which Controller was being addressed, as in "Ashbridge, N. (C.E.) to Controller".²⁵ Silvey recalls:

[The initials] referred to the post the recipient held, not to his name. ... I learnt the subtle difference between sending a memo to X 'through' Y, which meant that Y had the right to add his comments or might even send it back with a suggestion for its alteration, and addressing a memo to X 'with a copy to Y.' Which gave Y no opportunity to comment before X got it, but did keep him in the picture, or addressing it to 1.X 2.Y, which perhaps meant that Y only received it after X had done so and perhaps had added a minute of his own.²⁶

²⁴ A.C.D., Controller (P), 1934. To Director General GHS – Radio Times (29th November). [Internal Circulating Memorandum.] Page 2. BBC WAC R43/69/1 Publications: Radio Times Make-up - Layout, 1934-1938.

²⁵ Ashbridge, N. (C.E.) 1931. To Controller (4th November) International Broadcasting Company. [Internal Circulating Memorandum.] BBC WAC E2/365/1 Foreign Gen.: International Broadcasting Company, File 1, 1930-1933.

²⁶ Silvey, 1974, pp.22-23.

This was complicated further by the fact that if X and Y did add their own, hand-written comments, they would usually sign them with the initials; of their own names. In addition, people moved positions, others left. I have done my best to unravel the author and recipient of letters and memoranda, and the author of various hand-written notes, but in some cases I found it impossible to find out to whom the initials referred, in other cases I may have got this wrong, for which I apologise.

A Note on Primary Sources and Use of Archives

A primary source of information was the BBC's files held at The BBC Written Archives at Caversham. Of particular use for this study were the "World-Radio Relations with Technical Wireless Press" files at the BBC Written Archives at Caversham, which were opened in 2006. It should be noted however, that it soon became apparent that *The Listener* fell outside the parameters of the current research. Supplementary material which explicated the nature of the relationship between the magazines and the broadcasters was also consulted, in particular the *BBC Handbooks/Year-Books and Annuals, 1928-1940*, and other company information such as advertising statistics and audience research, as well as data held in private collections. During the course of my research I have accumulated an extensive personal archive of wireless magazines, including copies of *Radio Pictorials*, *Radio Times* and *World-Radio*, all of the *BBC Handbooks/Year-Books/Annuals 1928-1944*, monographs by contemporary commentators, scientific and government reports, and various broadcasting-related ephemera which have been invaluable resources. Modern researchers benefit from the ability to photograph material and therefore the practicalities of examining an enormous quantity of correspondence was rendered more manageable. The result is that, I have, with the permission of the BBC, built up an extensive archive of copies of the relevant material from the files in the BBC Written Archive at Caversham.

A Note on Footnotes and References

Following the rules laid down in Bournemouth University's *Guide to Citation in the Harvard Style* I have embedded references to the works of others within the text. However, many of the quotations are taken from correspondence in the files at the BBC Written Archives at

Caversham, and they create references that are overlong and break the narrative flow. Accordingly therefore, I have used footnotes for the references for all quotations, for the sake of consistency.

Chapter Three

The Zeitgeist of the Inter-War Years: the Context for Early Broadcasting Magazines

As universal as the air ... it is the perquisite of no particular class or faith.²⁷

Introduction

This Chapter discusses the events and influences experienced by the British public during the inter-war period. It is valuable to examine the particular characteristics of the era, economic and social, because this provides the context in which broadcasting developed. It also illuminates who comprised the audience for radio and the market for magazines. This is all the more important, because during the period that broadcasting was evolving, there was a confluence of tensions operating on the whole of British society. The impact which broadcasting had on British households can only be properly assessed with an understanding of this environment. Similarly the diffusion of magazines is explained by the proliferation of new markets. In this context, it is also significant that the role of women in the home, and in society as a whole, was shifting; indeed, the home itself was changing. A number of factors combined to form the particular *zeitgeist* of the inter-war years in Britain. These changed the relationships between the classes, thereby producing an unprecedented degree of social instability. Specifically, it was the fact that opportunities were opening up for the first time to the lower classes that not only challenged the accepted order, but also created a whole new market.

Classless Radio

The fact that radio receiving sets could be constructed or purchased by *all classes of society* effectively made broadcasting available to everyone, and this was both a critical factor in its development, and a contributory factor to the shifts to the inter-war social equilibrium. The nature and definition of the stratification of the British system of classes is not discussed here, as it could form the basis for an entire thesis, but the very use of the term “classes” acknowledges the potential existence of multiple sub-divisions.²⁸ Briefly however, the basic trinitarian model of upper-middle-lower classes still held, but the characteristics which defined each class were becoming more blurred than they had ever been previously.

²⁷ Reith, 1924, p.217.

²⁸ See Stearns, 1979 pp.377-396 for a rehearsal of the subtleties of class distinction.

Moreover distinct sectors of society were developing different tastes and cultures, with correspondingly different patterns in their behaviour of consumption (LeMahieu, 1988, p.8).

It was the lack of restrictions to the access of broadcasting for all sections of society which made it so potentially disturbing to societal balance; because the signals were sent through the airwaves, they could be picked up on a receiving set which could be obtained at a modest price, effectively making it available to all. (The means through which even the unemployed and low-waged could still construct wireless receiving sets is discussed in the next chapter.) The purchasing power of the classes had previously been relatively static. But in addition to the lower classes being able to access radio, there were shifts taking place in the social paradigm during this period which had the effect of altering traditional balances of power and influence, and one of these was a redistribution of wealth (Braithwaite, 1995, p.29). Braithwaite explains:

The sweeping economic repercussions of the war dramatically transformed society: some of the rich lost their wealth and many of the lower classes became more affluent, having worked for the war effort in the factories. The girls in domestic service, a diminishing occupation even before the war, were unlikely to be enticed back to work for private families after tasting the freedom and easier life of other forms of work. The middle classes would increasingly have to fend for themselves, with full-time maids often being replaced by 'dailies'.²⁹

Several strands which are key to understanding the ambience of the time are referenced here, some of which contributed to the prevailing changes: the inequality of the numbers of women to men, and the consequent force of women as a newly enlarged market, both for potential employment and for consumerism, and also the adjustments to the distribution of wealth across the classes. Braithwaite also cites another corollary of the social flux which became known as the "servant problem" (Braithwaite, 1995, p.30) which is discussed in more detail below. In spite of the fluctuating economic conditions, the inter-war period was dominated by consumerism and the pursuit of entertainment for the first time across all classes. This included a whole range of pleasures, of which broadcasting was one, and a new purchasing power to buy magazines was another. This period also saw changes to the nation's domestic arrangements, which in turn had a considerable impact on the lives of women, since home-making was still their principle occupation. It was therefore into an environment of domestic revolution that radio, initially on the periphery, gradually edged its way to the centre.

²⁹ Braithwaite, 1995, p.29.

Economic Turbulence

Economically, the 1920s saw pronounced fluctuations in the home and international markets, which in turn created severe vacillations in the prosperity of many families. In the two years immediately succeeding the peace, the economy had experienced an inflationary boom. In 1919 and 1920 international shortages had led to a wave of intensive purchasing (Branson, 1975, pp.69-70). This had driven up prices, and the high price of British exports created an impression of prosperity. But the boom proved unsustainable, as it became apparent that the warehouses of Europe had overstocked, and the resulting price cuts meant that by 1921, British exports had fallen to less than half their pre-war figure (Jones, 1985, p.92). The collapse of the export-trade led to wide-spread unemployment, and severe hardship among certain sections of society. By December 1921 the figure for unemployment had surpassed 2 million, or nearly 18% of the insured working population (Branson, 1975, pp.69-70). As Whiteside & Gillespie note “gross irregularity of employment, a major cause of poverty and pauperism, was endemic in many trades and was present on the fringes of nearly all the remainder” (1991, p.665). There were never fewer than a million unemployed after 1921, and a “hardcore” of unemployed who had not had one day’s work in several years appeared to have become a fixture in British society (Reubens, 1944, p.206). It was an uncertain period for many British working-class families, some of whom had to depend, for the first time, on contributions to the family income from young women (Todd, 2005, p.789). This had a corollary in increasing the financial and social independence of this group during the inter-war years, narrowing the distinctions between genders (Todd, 2005, p.791).

A third phase of partial recovery succeeded the dip, which was longer lasting, but in 1929 the Wall Street Crash plunged not only Britain, but also the rest of the world’s markets into an economic crisis with unprecedented after effects. Even during the period of relative recovery, different sectors of the British industrial landscape had widely differing fortunes (Jones, 1985, pp.94-100; Branson, 1975, pp.69-75). Technological advances created nascent industries including electrical goods, scientific equipment, some parts of the chemical industry and engineering and transport, in particular manufacturing of motor cars and the railways, also enjoyed considerable expansion, while the older industries including coal and ship-building, iron and steel products encountered declining markets and chaotic industrial relations (Heim, 1984, p.586). One of the successes of the technological breakthroughs in the electrical field was the huge increase in the business of entertainment, comprising

broadcasting, the production and sale of gramophone records and equipment, and the cinema (Jones, 1985, p.100).

The Aftermath of War

The First World War inevitably had a profound impact on society, which affected all classes, although the exact distribution among the British classes of men lost to the war is an issue for debate.³⁰ Overall, the fighting had cost Britain an estimated 800,000 men; a further 2 million had been wounded, nearly half of these being sufficiently debilitated to qualify for a war pension (Branson, 1975, p.2).³¹ There had always been a biogenetic inequality in the numbers of males and females, but the loss of such a large number of men accentuated this disparity, particularly between the ages of 20 and 40, where there were now 7 million women to every 6 million men (Branson, 1975, p.2). This was a huge number of mostly young men who were eradicated from society in one short period, and their absence tore a gaping hole in their communities. The prevailing balance of the sexes was accordingly disturbed, which had consequences to the structure of society. In particular, it altered the comparative economic importance of women to the family finances; as Todd phrased it “region, gender, and life cycle, as well as class, fractured the experience of socio-economic change in interwar England” (Todd, 2005, p.791). Bailey notes how this affected families:

Another effect of long-term unemployment was a reordering of familial relations, with many unemployed men – the enduring image of the 1930s is the unemployed man – having to assume responsibility for household chores whilst their wives and children worked instead.³²

Altogether, the issues of unemployment, a fluctuating economy and a general uneasiness to international relations, led to a wide-spread atmosphere of anxiety. In addition, many of those returning from the First World War were suffering from the little-understood manifestations of “war neurasthenia” or “weakness of the nerves” and this disorder, which would now be called post-traumatic stress disorder, was acknowledged as a genuine complaint from which even those who had not been involved in the fighting could suffer.³³ One of the extant pieces

³⁰ See Winter, 1977, pp.449-466

³¹ The figures are estimated because, as Alexander explains “by a savage twist of fate, an estimated 60 percent of British military records from World War I were destroyed in the Blitz of World War II” (Alexander, 2010, p.60).

³² Bailey, 2007, p.465.

³³ See Alexander, 2010, p.59 and see Leese, 1997, pp.1055-1067.

of evidence for this can be seen in the articles and advertisements in magazines of the period, which included advertisements for pills and remedies to calm the nerves.³⁴

There was another consequence of the vast loss of young men which society had sustained: the majority of those fighting, dying and suffering in the First World War were men, while the womenfolk remained in their former stations, the principal activity of which was still homemaking during this period. In 1921 over 90% of all married women remained in the home; less than 9% were classed as “gainfully occupied”. Even in 1931 this figure was only slightly over 10% (Todd, 2005, p.792; Branson, 1975, p.213, Greenfield & Reid, 1998, p.163). Half of all working women still worked in the "traditional" women’s industries of domestics, textiles, or clothing manufacture, and their salaries were half that of their male counterparts (Pycroft, 1994, p.705). Although it was only a small percentage of the overall female adult population, the number of women working full-time during the First World War rose by 1.3 million. The working woman became a new phenomenon after the First World War, as Pycroft describes:

The sudden visibility of working women, especially their shift from the "hidden" world of domestic service, dressmaking, and textile factories to the very public of transport, clerking, and munitions work, reinforced the image of the newly working woman. Ironically, the nearly six million women already employed before the war did not receive the same attention as the million-and-a-half who began to work after war broke out.³⁵

Changes to the Status of Women

An epiphenomenon of these events was therefore the change to the status of women; previously working women had been comparatively out of sight in their quasi-domestic employment, but although many women were still in those roles, there was now a spotlight on their more prominent working counterparts. Not only was there now a greater proportion of young adult females to males, but also many these women were of necessity single due to the casualties of war, and these women were managing households over which they could extend their influence and exert newly acquired powers.³⁶ As Greenfield & Reid (1998) summarise “a key aspect of the reconstruction of British Society which took place in the aftermath of the 1914-1918 war was the re-making of gender roles in the context of

³⁴ *Radio Pictorial* carried many advertisements for cures and tablets for “The Torture of Nerves” (*Radio Pictorial* 17th August 1934). See Appendix III.

³⁵ Pycroft, 1994, p.706.

³⁶ See Holden, 2005, pp.388-409.

changing inter-war economic and social conditions” (Greenfield & Reid, 1998, p.162). Moreover, the young, mostly working-class, women were prominent consumers of the “new forms of leisure” which comprised dance halls, cinemas, and magazines (Todd, 2005, p.789). As Braithwaite recognises, the period was an encouraging time for the publishers of magazines:

Women were emerging as a political and social force. They were getting jobs, traveling, motoring, cycling, joining clubs for their hobbies and becoming avid readers of magazines. And the magazines were only too ready to respond to their thirst for information, education and entertainment. Publishers were beginning to see the financial advantages of targeting their titles to specific classifications in order to attract the advertisers. Magazines began to be directed positively towards the young, or the middle-aged, working girls, society women or housewives.³⁷

The following chapter will develop this theme, and examine in more detail some of the magazines which were created for the growing female readership. The characteristics which were employed by *Radio Pictorial* in particular to appeal to female market will be analysed in detail in Chapter Eight.

In addition to the gendered aftermath of the First World War, divisions began to open up between the generations. Some of these trends were already apparent before the First World War, even in the previous century; Seaman (1970) argues that the rate of social change gathered pace after the War to such an extent that a breach opened up between the young and the old. The young working-class women who were finding paid work outside the home had a new-found financial and social independence which increased markedly during the inter-war period, and the difference between their lifestyles and those which their mothers’ led accentuated a distinction between the generations. As Todd (2005) explains, it also “narrowed gendered distinctions in the leisure patterns of young workers” (Todd, 2005, p.791). In addition, with the death of many young men who would otherwise still be present to bridge that gap, Seaman describes the development of a “cult” of youth:

because young men seemed to have been the war’s sacrificial victims. Youth had to celebrate its survival, and assert its independence of all the older generation’s values. The alleged shortage of young men in the twenties helped to accelerate the social emancipation of women.³⁸

³⁷ Braithwaite, 1995, pp.23-24.

³⁸ Seaman, 1970, p.157.

The determination of the young people to enjoy post-war life and the rejection of the values of previous generations chimed with various other moods evoked by the era and contributed to a mood of social emancipation; Seaman goes on to describe how the liberation which young women were experiencing was reflected in their changing dress. Women began to discard their elaborate and restricting coiffures for neat bobs, and symbolised their metaphorical, but also actual, new-found mobility by shortening their skirts (Seaman, 1970, p.157). For a society which habitually regarded women as naturally socially and intellectually inferior to men, demonstrations of personal emancipation denoted an overt challenge to patriarchal society.

In addition to the artificial disturbance to the natural balance of the sexes which the First World War had created, there were two pieces of legislation passed in 1918, which were to have even further repercussions. The first was the creation of the Ministry of Health, with responsibility for housing, and the second was the extension of the franchise to women over the age of 30, through the Representation of the People Act 1918 who met minimum property qualifications (Jeremiah, 2000, p.40). This Act also included the majority of men in the political system for the first time.³⁹ Political emancipation was thus allied to social emancipation and Jeremiah argues that these factors, when taken together, altered the position of the housewife within society; and this was a period in which the number of houses being built rose dramatically (Jeremiah, 2000, p.40; Cope, 1951, p.38). In England and Wales alone the figure rose from 91,653 in 1923 to 202,060 in 1930 (Carey, 1992, p.47). Another factor which was socially significant, and highly pertinent in the context of the history of broadcasting, is that all houses were increasingly being connected to the electricity supply, but especially the newly built suburban houses, which were being attached to the National Grid automatically (Hill, 1986, p.110). The Central Electrical Board was set up in 1926 and by 1939 two thirds of all households were connected to the National Grid (Scannell & Cardiff, 1991, pp.203-5). The 1920s had declared itself to be “the Electric Age” (Jeremiah, 2000, p.66); the conditions were perfect for the uptake of radio in British homes across the classes.

³⁹ The Representation of the People Act 1928 extended the voting franchise to all women over the age of 21.

The Inter-War Labour Market

During this period, the rural economy was also being subjected to pressures, though of a different kind, which ultimately contributed to the metamorphosis of the labour market of the 1920s (Heim, 1984, p.589). Yass (1975) describes how the increased use of mechanization on the farms affected the ability for rural economies to sustain the labourers with the result that “the farm workers drifted to the towns at the rate of ten thousand a year. Between 1914 and 1931 the proportion of workers employed on the land dropped from 7½ to 5 ½ per cent” (Yass, 1975, p.18). The British economy was undergoing structural changes that were necessary to support its continued growth, but these changes required an alteration to the work force with the result that labour “was sought from various spheres outside the existing industrial structures of British capitalism - from agriculture, from the household, and from uninsured occupations such as domestic service” (Heim, 1984, p.594).

This was linked to the phenomenon which Carey identifies occurred simultaneously all over the countries of Western Europe as a consequence of the previous century’s pursuit of an “imperialist and international economy” (Carey, 1992, p.58). The employment market for positions in commerce, banks and insurance exploded between 1860 and 1910 with the consequence that the clerical profession became one of the most swiftly growing occupations in the employment market (Carey, 1992, p.58). This had the effect of swelling the numbers of the middle and lower middle classes. The First World War had also created an expanded governmental bureaucracy which required clerks to process the increased paperwork. As this did not necessitate much training or skill, it was work which attracted middle-class women, as Pyecroft explains “clerking emerged from the war as one of the clearly segmented, lower paid jobs for women, along with unskilled mass production, nursing; and teaching” (Pyecroft, 1994, p.708).

A Clash of Cultures

One of the inevitable consequences of an unequal expansion of certain sectors of society was that it should have a transforming effect on the culture of the nation. One group’s favoured form of entertainment was another group’s abhorrence, and swathes of the population were stigmatised by the rest for the characteristics of their pleasures (Yass, 1975; LeMahieu, 1988; Carey 1992; Curran & Seaton; 2003; and Todd, 2009). Seaman draws on the contemporary

expressions to explain how “people in the twenties were parcelled off, in the vogue words of the period, into highbrow, middlebrow and lowbrow” (Seaman, 1970, p.159). The division in the aesthetic tastes of the classes was so distinct that it required a vocabulary to articulate it. Naturally, each of these categories contained an inherent value judgment, although, which was good and which bad was completely subjective. The terms, which were universally understood by contemporary society, were frequently applied to broadcasting (Carey, 1992, p.10). This classification of taste represents a *leitmotif* of the period, as the terms were used as a short-hand to express disapproval of the entertainment choices of other classes; a verdict, incidentally, which operated in either direction, both up and down. As observed above, one of the distinctive characteristics of broadcasting was that it was, quite unusually, a pleasure which was open to all classes of society, and therefore wide divergences in the tastes of its audience was problematic. The lowbrow/highbrow discussion was the subject of constant complaint, and defence, from the BBC’s earliest days, and the BBC was frequently accused of not only be too “highbrow” but also of adopting a tone which many sections of society found patronising.⁴⁰

The difficulty was that the classes had increasingly little in common, and this was exacerbated by the fact that the most rapidly growing section of society had a relatively low educational level, which extended little beyond basic skills. Carey describes how during this period 40% of children left school earlier than the statutory age of fourteen, and education was a prerogative of the wealthy:

In 1926, of over half a million children who left elementary School each year, only 0.5 per cent went on to secondary schools. Admission to universities depended on money and privilege rather than ability.⁴¹

Thereby, sections of society were disadvantaged by a lack of access to the education and training which characterised their social superiors. The politicians of this period did nothing to address this injustice, LeMahieu explains, with the Conservative Party upholding existing privileges and the Labour Party deferring to “traditional notions of pedagogy”, so that above all “politicians agreed that the country could not afford a more equitable educational system” (LeMahieu, 1988, p.10). As the strata within society expanded and multiplied, so the distance, and the enmity, between those at different levels grew. The chosen theatre of war

⁴⁰ Winston Churchill famously accused the BBC of “pontifical mugwumpery” (Marquis, 1984, p.390).

⁴¹ Carey, 1992, p.58.

was frequently culture; which was highly challenging for a broadcaster with a public service remit.

In his controversial work examining the relationships between the “intellectuals” and “the masses”, Carey describes the division between them as particularly bitter “with the former despising the latter as uneducated and vulgar (Carey, 1992, pp.93-99). Carey explains how the concept of “the mass” had begun in the last century. He quotes Bodanis, who pointed out that there was a connection in the public mind between the bacteria discovered and described by Louis Pasteur, and Pasteur’s own right-wing politics, which considered people, working-class people, with the same distaste: “[Pasteur] inaugurated the immensely influential cultural concept of bacteria, which he described in terms analogous to those used to characterise the seething unclean masses” (Bodanis cited by Carey, 1992, p.26). Carey’s interpretation is not universally accepted however; Avery, for example, feels that Carey’s argument is marred by “an often unmitigated contempt for modernism” (Avery, 2006, p.34). He argues that the very fact that the Bloomsbury Group, as representatives of modernist intellectuals” did challenge the cultural politics surrounding the BBC’s output, while embracing the medium itself, means that a “reassessment of facile high-versus-mass cultural distinctions” is required (Avery, 2006, p.36). However “the mass” was regarded by those who felt themselves to be separate from it, it had expectations of its own and an appetite for pleasure. The nature of the amusements that appealed was dictated by the social class to which the pleasure-seeker belonged, and if these were despised by those outside that class, this was hardly a deterrent.

The Right to Entertainment

As the middle and lower-middle classes were growing, the right to be amused, which had hitherto been the prerogative of the rich and leisured minority, was seen increasingly to belong to the majority. After the First World War ended, the average number of hours in the working week dropped from 55 to 48 hours (LeMahieu, 1988, p.9). By October 1938, the average weekly hours of manual men and women were 47.7 and 43.5 respectively (Jones, 1985, p.93). The working classes were enjoying a gradual increase in their freedom to dispose of some of their own time as they wished and they were seeking distractions to fill their time enjoyably (Mowat, 1966, p.248). Some sectors of the new labour market were experiencing an increase to their previous wage, since the newly employed industrial workers earned much more than they had as agricultural labourers (Heim, 1984, p.587). LeMahieu

explains how the “structure of demand” changed radically during the period 1890 to 1930, particularly for commercial mass media, and “The public which streamed into the cinemas and purchased daily newspapers by the millions differed substantially from the popular audience of the nineteenth century” (LeMahieu, 1988, p.8). Notwithstanding the difficult economic environment during the inter-war years, the demand conditions were still favorable. Jones explains that “even the unemployed and those on low incomes continued to spend money on recreation” (Jones, 1985, p.93). In fact, concerns about how the unemployed spent what little money they had extended to a prevalent fear of social unrest, as Bailey (2007) explains:

An even greater extravagance was for the unemployed to spend their means on inexpensive luxuries such as fish and chips, tinned salmon, chocolate, and the cinema. Indeed, Orwell ... was of the opinion that these ‘cheap palliatives’ were a ‘sort of “bread and circuses” business’, which had the effect of holding ‘the unemployed down’, thereby averting revolution.⁴²

The government was sufficiently worried by the idea of how this under-class spent their “enforced leisure” that it devised a series of schemes aimed at unemployed workers which were designed to instill in them “‘the right use of leisure’, that is to say, recreational activities deemed necessary for cultivating an educated and politically obedient citizenship” (Bailey, 2007, p.465).

Mass Culture and Technology

Mass culture was being shaped by the technological developments by which it was delivered, and radio had rapidly become an integral part of this (Carey, 2006, p.36). But it was not the first; society had been primed for the advent of radio by the phenomenon of the cinema. Before the First World War, the British film industry had not been nearly as well established as the American industry, and after the War it took a long time to recover. As a result British public watched silent “movies” which were all manufactured in America, the industry dominated by the Hollywood behemoth (Mowat, 1966, p.242). The total admissions to British cinemas in 1934 were approximately 963 million and the total gross box-office receipts were approximately £41 million (Rowson, 1936, p.70 cited by Jones, 1985, p.93). Jones comments: “it is therefore not too surprising to find that, despite American

⁴² Bailey, 2007, p.465.

competition, the gross output of the Cinematograph Film Printing Trade increased from £672,000 to £1,439,000 in the years 1924-35.”⁴³ Although popular with the British public, the stars of the cinema did not present serious competition to radio, which had the enormous advantage of its domestic accessibility; the number of wireless licences sold in 1926 was 2,178,259 and in 1938 this had risen to 9,082,666. Correspondingly, the radio manufacturing companies also expanded significantly during the period, although by the end of the 1930s they were catering largely for replacement demand.⁴⁴

In addition to the cinema, technology also provided another new entertainment in the form of the gramophone record; as well as cheap machines on which to play them. A chain of music entertainment-orientated supply and demand had begun before broadcasting even existed, and the introduction of radio formed the final component (Baxendale, 1995, p.141). Lacey’s research is directed towards women and radio in Germany, but her remarks are pertinent to the British situation when she observes “it is women’s enfranchisement that signals the advent of mass politics in the twentieth century and the arrival of radio which heralds the modern era of mass communication” (Lacey, 1994, p.48). The Representation of the People Act of 1918 had extended the franchise to “the mass” but to address society *en masse*, required mass communication and technological progress. The spread of technology in general had always had the potential to have a destabilising effect on social order (the part that the printing press played in the spread of the Reformation has already been noted). Mowat explains that what technology could do “was to spread ideas, news, falsehoods, entertainment more rapidly and to more people than had ever been possible before” (Mowat, 1966, pp.240-241).

However, both wireless and cinema had been preceded by another technological invention which could address a wide audience; printed newspapers had long been the primary purveyors of mass communication. In 1918 the circulation figures for national dailies was approximately 3.1 million; in 1926 it was 4.7 million, with a growing number of titles being controlled by a few organisations (LeMahieu, 1988, p.12). One of the major protagonists was Alfred Harmsworth (later Lord Northcliffe) who took newspapers in a new direction by recognising the potential of the female market (discussed in Chapter Four). Newspapers (and

⁴³ *Fifth Census of Production*, 1935, p.617 cited by Jones, 1985, p.93.

⁴⁴ Briggs, 1965, p.450; *Investors' Chronicle*, 12 November 1938 cited by Jones, 1985, p.93.

the advertisers who provided a large part of their profits) were able to aim at particular markets, but the BBC's output had to cut across all markets; gender and class. The newspaper press was duly suspicious of broadcasting as a potential threat to its own sources of revenue, the motivating fear being a rival in advertising. Reith had more than one altercation with the Newspaper Proprietor's Association (Briggs, 1961, p.142) and yet the newspaper press was not seriously challenged as a form of mass communication.⁴⁵

The uptake of technological advances in the home during this period is complex, but there is little doubt that the ownership of a radio was a symbol of aspiration. In the early days of broadcasting, the possession of a radio initially demonstrated scientific sophistication; the ownership of one of the subsequent expensive models denoted wealth and leisure. Scannell & Cardiff's findings support the hypothesis that, as a technological household appliance, the universality of the adoption of radio was unique:

The possession of a radio set pointed to a marginal surplus of disposal income and time for its purchase and enjoyment as an affordable pleasure. The spread of radio throughout the whole of Britain in the pre-War period to the point of ubiquity indicated that its ownership could not be thought of as a social luxury, but as a social necessity that catered for quite new kinds of needs.⁴⁶

This recalls LeMahieu's observations that new commercial culture had created a new chain of demand, because the burgeoning lower middle classes had very different tastes from the middle and upper classes who had previously been the principle creators of demand. Accordingly they looked for ways to spend their money which suited their own appetites. However Carey argues that in the eyes of the "intelligentsia" the very ubiquity of radio symbolised a lowering of the intellectual mean. This was a view held by F.R. Leavis, who believed that "the mass media – radio, film, Northcliffe's newspapers – have brought about an over-throw of standards" (Leavis cited by Carey, 1992, p.9). The "lowbrow" versus "highbrow" was a recurrent issue for the BBC, as it tried to navigate a careful path through its audience's differing demands and taste, and it became even more of an issue in the 1930s when populist competitors presented the UK public with alternatives.

⁴⁵ See Curran & Seaton (2003) for a comprehensive accounts of the industrialization of the UK Press and the ebb and flow of titles and circulation figures.

⁴⁶ Scannell & Cardiff, 1991, p.365.

Economic impacts on the Home

As articulated by Braithwaite above, the inter-war period saw the development of the “servant problem”. Some of the middle classes found that, as the value of the pound fell and prices continued to rise, they could no longer afford to pay for their servants (Yass, 1975, p.18). Others found that they could not find a labour force willing to work for them in the traditional roles as live-in servants. As more opportunities of paid work opened up for women, particularly in factories (Reed, 1995, p.30) the potential workforce for servitude dwindled, as noted by Todd: “a gradual but considerable change in young women’s employment distribution was taking place, as domestic service declined in importance while industrial job opportunities expanded” (Todd, 2003, p.295). The always vexing issue of securing servants had become a national crisis, to the extent that questions were persistently asked in the House of Commons, and two government committees were set up to investigate the problem, one in 1919 and the other in 1923 (Branson, 1975, p.211).

The “standards” of the middle-class home were under attack as a consequence of the scarcity of servants, because this required families to manage their households without the aid of paid assistance. For the middle-class housewife, Dancyger notes, “reared on the gospel that ‘a lady’s hands must always be white and soft’ it was a traumatic experience” (Dancyger, 1978 p.131). One consequence of this was a gradual change in the very appearance of the home: the cluttered, fussy décor of the Victorians gave way to a more streamlined-look; middle-class housewives boldly swept away the figurines and ornaments of their mothers’ generations, motivated, as Dancyger suggests, “not by any blinding flash of ‘aesthetic awareness’ but by the hideous realisation that if all the junk was to be dusted, cleaned and polished, she herself would have to do it” (Dancyger, 1978, p.134).

A significant consequence of the interest which the middle-class housewife now had in the home was the progression of household technological equipment. Methods of mass production of items for the home were developing rapidly and homemakers looked increasingly to technology to solve their logistical problems. A distinction should be observed between the technological advancement of “time-saving” appliances and “time-using appliances”. As Bowden & Offer suggest:

“*Time-saving* technology is applied to housework, while radio and television are typical time-using goods. Time-saving goods can increase the quantity of discretionary time, whereas time-using goods enhanced its perceived quality”.⁴⁷

Listening to the radio clearly fell in to the latter category, because this was an era which looked forward to its leisure. Dancyger notes that this was “the beginning of the long love-affair between the housewife and her household gadgets” (Dancyger, 1979, p.141). She explains that whereas previous generations of housewives would never have acknowledged their acquaintance with household cleaning apparatus “conversely the new appliances conferred a social status symbol previously equated with the number of one’s servants” (Dancyger, 1979, p.141). This initially had a pragmatic effect on the way in which the middle-class house was managed, with an increased focus upon efficiency and economy of effort. But as the decade advanced, the efficiently run home became, not just a coping mechanism, but rather a symbol for modern, post-servant living. It was not only the home which was required to be efficient, it was also the housewife, and Greenfield & Reid identify a phenomenon of the inter-war years whereby housework had become “professionalised”. This occurred “through the utilization of labour-saving devices, ‘scientific’ motherhood, efficiency in the home, and the consumption of domestic goods by women” (Greenfield & Reid, 1998, p.162).

Although the cost of electricity, and the appliances dependent on it, were prohibitively expensive for many, the vision of the all-electric house of the future had been conceived. One prophetic article entitled “The Wonder House” published in the *Municipal Journal* in 1920 described “a home of modern magic; fire is produced at a touch, water is heated without a flame, and work of all kinds is done so easily that leisure become the exception not the rule not the exception” (Jeremiah, 2000, p.66). The key point here is that leisure was seen as the goal, and technology the means of achieving it. Moreover technology was to become increasingly imbued with associations of glamour and sophistication, and once the wireless set had developed beyond its initial contraption-like incarnation, it too would find a welcome place in the housewife’s modern home.

⁴⁷ Bowden & Offer, 1994, pp.725-748.

The Rise of Leisure

In spite of, or perhaps more accurately, as a correlation to all the difficulties experienced during the period, the inter-war years saw a huge increase in the public demand to have the time which was free time from their working lives filled pleasurably. This was a phenomenon which Baxendale and others (Jones, 1985; Todd, 2005) argue had already begun towards the end of the nineteenth century: the 1880s and 1890s saw a steady rise in the disposable incomes of a varied audience, and an investment boom in all forms of popular entertainment:

Blackpool Tower (1893) was a symbol of an age in which popular entertainment became big business. National chains of variety theatres, lavish in scale and opulent in design, grew rapidly from provincial origins to national dominance, and displaced the small scale music-hall.⁴⁸

Jones argues that “entrepreneurs in the leisure field increasingly realised that a lot of money could be made out of people's spare time, and entertainment became big business” (Jones, 1985, p.95).

For LeMahieu the development of commercial culture, as exemplified by the mass media, was influenced by growth of the lower middle classes – the white collar workers – which had begun in the late nineteenth century and rapidly increased during the inter-war period: “Taking salaried workers as a whole, the number rose from 1.67 million in 1911 to 3.84 million in 1938” (Aldcroft cited in LeMahieu, 1988, p.8). The First World War had been supposed to settle the intolerable atmosphere of uncertainty and hostility, but as Seaman explains, after all this sacrifice, by 1922 any sense of achievement had dissolved. Contrary to expectation, peace had not brought prosperity but rather unemployment and dwindling wages. The political situation was extremely unsettled. Seaman sums up the situation:

the most gifted of the Conservatives were estranged from the new Conservative Government, the Liberal Party cleft into two bitterly quarrelling halves, the Labour Party a dumping ground for working-class protests rather than a source for inspiration or of hope for the immediate future. Since the struggles of the past decade had availed so little, the country was swept by a desire to ignore social and political problems altogether. People wanted a rest; as one of the bright young men of the period said in a radio debate in 1927, ‘This is the age of aspirins not aspirations.’⁴⁹

⁴⁸ Baxendale, 1995, p.140.

⁴⁹ Seaman, 1970, p.153.

The national mood had swung towards apathy and political disaffection which brought with it a newly heightened appetite for pleasure (and, incidentally, a tendency towards hypochondria and nervousness, as observed above, which this remark also touches on). Baxendale argues that the BBC therefore played a part in increasing social instability, since after its formation and the commencement of regular broadcasting:

A new and expanded public sphere emerged, based on the mass media and a mass audience, whose hallmark was its inclusiveness. Within this sphere, the exercise of traditional cultural authority became increasingly problematical: even the BBC, guided by John Reith's quasi-Arnoldian cultural project, was obliged to embrace popular entertainment, though on its own idiosyncratic terms.⁵⁰

The BBC (in the form of Reith) was acutely aware that there was a delicate balance to strike when catering for the tastes and interests of society in its entirety, as its remit was under the Charter. “The common denominator of a nation is not so easily determined, and in any event it keeps changing; even if it is found, the individual peculiarities have to be catered for to some extent also” was how in 1924 Reith expressed his view of the issue at stake (Reith, 1924, pp.122-123). The BBC did not engage in systematic audience research during this period, but Reith intended to provide the British audience with what he thought they should be given. He justified his position thus: “It is occasionally indicated to us that we are apparently setting out to give the public what we think they need – and not what they want – but few know what they want and very few what they need” (Reith, 1924, p.34). The BBC was not unusual in conducting no research in 1920s because such activity was not widespread. LeMahieu explains that although some British advertisers did start conducting audience research in the 1920s, it was not until the 1930s that broad statistical data became available “and much of this material lacked sophistication. ... The ‘masses’ consisted of individuals whose distinctiveness statistical aggregates easily obscured” (LeMahieu, 1988, p.11).

Opinion is divided about how successful the BBC was in identifying and maintaining a satisfactory balance in its output and this is without entering into a discussion of the meaning of their undertaking to provide a public service. For Seaman, the BBC’s attempt to cater for a wide range of tastes and interests was successful at avoiding both the “ultra-violet of excessive intellectualism or the infra-red of the music hall” to the extent that “broadcasting

⁵⁰ Baxendale, 1995, p.150.

was thus a beneficent instrument of social and cultural melioration” (Seaman, 1970, p.160). The task was made all the more impossible by the fluidity of the class structure, and the antagonisms that were being exacerbated by the growth of a class hungry for entertainment but limited in its opportunities to develop an aesthetic appreciation. Referring back to the stark distinctions in education between the classes, LeMahieu observes “commercial culture entertained a public the government claimed it could not afford to educate” (LeMahieu, 1988, p.11).

Entertainment was most easily and satisfactorily achieved though music and music had been a staple form of entertainment in the home for centuries. Scannell describes how very dependent the BBC had always been on music to form the majority of its programme output: “From the very first days of broadcasting the ether has been filled with sounds intended to give delight and hurt not” (Scannell, 1981, p.1). Yet music was not free from class-related issues of taste and Scannell also refers to the “different and antagonistic ‘taste publics’” which made music “a perhaps unexpectedly polemical aspect of broadcasting”. He invokes the high- versus lowbrow argument surrounding the musical taste exhibited by the different factions, citing “dance band fans who complained of too much highbrow music, versus the ‘serious’ musical public who deplored ... the crooners and dance bands who flooded the airwaves with their tasteless rubbish” (Scannell, 1981, p.1). Baxendale argues that the critical shift towards popular music in the 1910s and 1920s, created vibrations through the social strata:

Not only did the forms of the music change, absorbing African-American and Latin American influences, but so did the technology of its reproduction - sound recording and the wireless - its whole mode of production and distribution, with the rise of the multinational 'music industry'; and the social context of its use, with the shift from music-halls and theatres to dance-halls and the home.⁵¹

While much of the negative response to popular music could be attributed to a certain reactionary panic, as well as casual racism and sexism, there was still an underlying change in the cultural evaluations which were now being formed on a regular basis, by all levels of society. Baxendale sees this as representing a shift from the aesthetic values of the Victorians with their “sentimental and moralistic” criteria, to a new set of distinctions which “hinged on a number of dichotomies: serious/popular, artistic/commercial, authentic/inauthentic”

⁵¹ Baxendale, 1995, p.137.

(Baxendale, 1995, p.148). These antithetical considerations were divisive, and so too was the indignation of the upper classes that their social inferiors could now share some of their pleasures. This makes the cultural *mêlée* even more complex, because even if the lower classes embraced the “highbrow” enjoyed by their social superiors, this created the outrage of a privilege usurped. Such displeasure was apparent in the prevalence of cartoons on the subject which date from the period (see fig. 1.1). All but the very poorest families could assemble crude crystal sets, partake of the entertainment and news, and enjoy concerts broadcast from the Savoy Hotel. Crisell (1997) provides the historical context by explaining that in pre-war Britain the concert hall, opera-houses and theatres were beyond the financial means of the large majority of the population during the inter-war period. For this reason, the BBC did not necessarily believe that there was an intrinsic link between social class and taste: from the earliest days it had set itself against American influences which were considered “vulgar”, but there was a prevailing and relatively enlightened view that, if only given the opportunity, “everyone – not just the elite – could appreciate Bach and Shakespeare” (Crisell, 1997, pp.29). The BBC was willing to provide this experience (Crisell, 1997, pp.29-31). It was however, fully alive to the difficulties in placating its audience, as explained plaintively in the *BBC Hand Book 1928*:

The appeal of Broadcasting to the emotional side of individuals naturally renders the subject of programme criticism so diffuse as to be difficult of analysis. ... There is, again, the impression that anything particularly disliked invariably predominates. To those to whom dance music is anathema it appears to be broadcast in every programme. A listener who does not care for talks cannot switch on without finding one in progress, and another who longs for variety entertainment is utterly bewildered at the interminable transmissions of symphony concerts.⁵²

Conclusion

There was no doubt that British inter-war society had experienced some seismic shifts, in the boundaries between the classes, the economy and an almost *anti*-cultural revolution caused by an outburst of demand from the lower classes. The shock of war was still reverberating through society, and behind it had been left a disquiet about how long the peace would last; the political scene was unsettled and nobody could find a servant to keep their house for them. Young women were seeking work outside the home and many young men had not

⁵² *BBC Hand Book 1928*, 1928, p.79.

returned from the First World War. And yet, in spite of the political disaffection, the servant problems, the pockets of severe poverty caused by the unstable economic situation, the era was characterised by an ever constant theme of a desire for, and an expectation of, pleasure. Broadcasting, with all its potential and power for mingling class cultures, could scarcely have made its entrance at a more apposite time.

The period was also a particularly fertile one for the burgeoning magazine market, another area benefitting from the new-found consumerism and the increased leisure and pleasure time enjoyed by the lower classes. The biggest growing sector of this was a stratified market of young, working-class women, middle-aged women at home, and even aspirational women looking for glamour; these women were all consumers of magazines targeted directly towards their interests, which made a highly tempting prospect for advertisers too.

Chapter Four

Where Radio Goes, the Magazines Follow: From Male Hobby to Domestic Hub

When they say "The Radio" [people] don't mean a cabinet, an electrical phenomenon, or a man in a studio, they refer to a pervading and somewhat godlike presence which has come into their lives and homes.⁵³

Introduction

This chapter examines the early developments of broadcasting, and how these were reflected in the early wireless press, which grew up to service the clamour for information from the amateur enthusiasts. The input of these amateurs is particularly important because they had a part to play in both the development of the technology and in laying down the basis for the relationship between the broadcasters and their audience. As broadcasting developed, the amateur wireless operator began to be supplanted by the listening homemaker as the primary consumer of programmes, and this development was reflected in the broadcasting magazines which, responding to the changing demand, capitalised on this new area of interest.

The reframing of the radio audience from the male hobbyist to the family has been noted in studies on Britain, Australia, and Germany, as well as the United States.⁵⁴ The story is very similar, of how the use of radio within the home changed gradually over the period between the wars. This was partly driven by the technology itself and partly by social factors which affected the manner in which it was adopted by the sexes, until eventually, it became an inclusive medium, connecting with the family unit. In other words, radio became domesticated. The initial readership of the technical wireless press had been predominantly male, and therefore the first audience for the programmes was also presumed to be male. This chapter argues that radio underwent a transformation, from an object with an almost exclusively male appropriation into a female one. This assertion is supported by looking at broadcasting through the lens of the magazines, which shifted in character from a dry source of technical data and scientific fact, to fonts of information on all that was lively, aspirational and glamorous about broadcasting. A key development for the magazine market was the entrance of a major competitor in the form of the BBC. The repercussions of this are traced, and the theme of the BBC's response to its new competitors is introduced.

⁵³ White, 1933, cited by Lewis, 1992, p.26.

⁵⁴ Johnson, 1981; Lacey, 1994; Moores, 1988, 2000; Smulyan, 1993; Briggs, 1981; Scannell & Cardiff, 1991; Butsch, 1998.

The Amateur Contribution and the Birth of the Wireless Press

In addition to the pioneers and inventors who made broadcasting possible, there were two other groups crucial to its development: the band of amateur enthusiasts who built their sets and conducted their own tests, and the wireless press which, prior to the British Broadcasting Company's formation on 18th October 1922, educated the interested public in the theory, and after broadcasting began in earnest, fed the new listenership's rapacious curiosity. These magazine titles shared a wireless focus which was extensive and formed a discrete tranche of the publishing market. The early magazines followed the highly technical aspects of the science and equipment rather than the programme material broadcast. Pegg describes how, as the 1920s progressed "the expansion of the wireless industry and wireless audience was reflected in these periodicals by enormous excitement and interest" (Pegg, 1983, p.46).

The part that the amateur enthusiasts played in the history of the development of broadcasting, though now acknowledged, was not always valued. The First World War had demonstrated both the potential power and the possible dangers of the technology and for the duration of the First World War and amateur experiments were banned, while the Government conducted its own research (Street, 2002, p.17). The initial male hegemony of the technology can be explained by the fact that the early crystal receiving sets of the 1920s were mostly built by hobbyists, the vast majority of whom were male; some were soldiers returning from the First World War. Once the First World War was over, the radio telegraph inventor Guglielmo Marconi was one of those who put pressure on the Government to reinstate amateur licences. While they were waiting for the legislation, the wireless press provided step-by-step instructions, diagrams and photographs which explained how to build a wireless set at home, and allowed the avid followers to refine their ability to pick up signals. The first listeners faithfully reported their findings by writing in to the editors of the now proliferating wireless press. The enthusiasm of the readers was reflected by the editors and their staff who did their best to cater for the tremendous interest (Pegg, 1983, p.46).

In her study of the formation of the radio industry in the United States, Razlogova describes the phenomenon of listeners writing letters to "radio fan magazines". She notes that the broadcasters also used these comments to respond to comments and that "these columns further affirmed listeners' power" (Razlogova, 2011, p.68). This is significant because, as will be discussed in later chapters, the public's habit of writing to express their views was for

many years the BBC's only definite means of gauging the audience's reaction to its programmes. The "epistolary exchange" as Razlogova describes it, which began with the amateurs was "fundamental to the making of broadcasting" and continued alongside the radio's development: "sensitive microphones, crooning voices, living room radios, protracted storylines, and informal speech amplified the sense of a 'personal touch'" encouraging thousands of people to write in to radio fan magazines" (Razlogova, 2011, p.9).

Titles such as *Wireless World*, *Wireless Constructor* and *Amateur Wireless*, became important channels through which the amateurs could make their contribution to the development of the technology, and their information on the quality of reception throughout the country provided vital data on the strength and power of the signals being transmitted. They pelted the editors with questions to the extent that, in the mid 1920s, both the *Wireless World* and its rival, *Wireless Constructor*, were so saturated with correspondence from curious readers that limits had to be placed on handling the letters (*Wireless Constructor*, May 1925, p.607 cited by Pegg, 1983, p.47).

Any member of the general public who possessed a wireless receiving set could attempt to detect the signals, provided they could also afford the licence fee. However, to *buy* a wireless set was extremely expensive; it was, at this point in time, a luxury commodity beyond the means of many households (Pegg, 1983, p.48). Even a basic wireless kit was an expensive purchase for a working-class family. It is one of the most significant aspects to the spread of wireless technology that it was possible to make a receiving set by assembling, gradually if necessary, the essential component parts (see fig. 1.2). The elements for home-assembly could be acquired piece by piece, but they could also be improvised from scrap materials: for example, an old motor car ignition coil could be used, and a pair of brass door knobs for the spark gap, and even sheets of tin foil (Hill, 1996, p.21; Williams, 1987, p.7). This meant that all but the most socially disadvantaged had access to broadcasts, making radio available to the "masses" as discussed in the previous chapter. As *Popular Wireless Weekly* reported listening to the radio became "Britain's most favourite hobby – afforded by everyone!" (Hill, 1996, p.40).

The Impact of Voices in the Ether

The unparalleled “wonder” factor which had first consumed the earliest wireless enthusiasts is a key element for the modern researcher to comprehend. Lewis calls the first decade of radio “the period of awe” (Lewis, 1992, p.28). The band of wireless amateurs “combined a scientific hobbyist’s passionate enthusiasm with an evangelical sense of awe at the near-miraculous nature of the device” (Street, 2002, pp.16-17). The sets resembled pieces of scientific apparatus, a series of valves, wires and crystals bolted to a wooden board; experimental equipment more appropriate to a laboratory than a living room.

The use of the crystal, and the disembodied voice carried through the air to a strange contraption seemed rather sinister to many people, and not everybody was convinced that the technology was safe. Not all those who wrote into the wireless magazines were supporters of the new technology, and some readers’ letters expressed unease at the effects of living with wireless waves. There was a certain suspicion towards science, and in particular towards the ambivalent nature of electricity.⁵⁵ Electricity was source of great power and potential danger and many people had a deep and superstitious fear of it. Even in the 1930s, when mains electricity was becoming standard, people imagined that if they did not keep plugs in the electric sockets, the electricity would leak out and damage them in some obscure way (Hawes, 1991, p.18) (see fig. 2.1). Hawes describes the public reaction at this time as “what anthropologists call *misoneism* (a deep and superstitious fear of the new)” and he cites the suspicion of the crystal (linked in the public psyche to a wealth of folklore) with the “unearthly device with apparently magical power to transport disembodied voices through thin air”. He suggests:

Connect the symbolic and mythical meanings to all this pre-existing conception of the powerful electric force of nature’s thunder and lightning as the uncontrollable, irresistible weapon of the gods and it is possible to understand the suspicion which wireless apparatus engendered on its appearance in the home.⁵⁶

Until the first verbal radio transmissions were broadcast in the early 1920s, the sounds in the home had been locally generated, with the listener being within audible range of a voice or

⁵⁵ Some of the audience would have been familiar with the first movie about Frankenstein’s monster which had come out in 1910, and the famous Boris Karloff version directed by James Whale was released in 1931. This “explained” the ability to recreate the “spark” of life through electricity and lightning, but would hardly have been reassuring for those who found the concept unnerving (Gehring, 1999, p.70).

⁵⁶ Hawes, 1991, p.18.

musical instrument. Forty (1986) explains the extraordinary nature of the listening experience for these early adopters:

Broadcasting brought sounds of the outside, public world into the home much more vividly and immediately than the gramophone and the unfamiliarity of this experience occasionally had surprising effects on listeners. ... It is hardly possible for us today to appreciate the impact of radio, because we have become used to technical innovation and the claims made for it.⁵⁷

The voices, music and sounds broadcast from the wireless set represented an unprecedented relationship between the speaker and the listener, mixed in with unfamiliar noises of static and interference. For many, the experience was both fascinating and exciting; Douglas (1999) describes this phase as “exploratory listening” and explains how early listeners heard the “eerie, supernatural mixture of natural static and man-made voices”. She continues:

They were lured by the prospect of witnessing entirely new auditory spectacles, the aural equivalents of lightning and fireworks. Turning to listening, entering the realm of listening for so many hours each night, was an entirely new cognitive, emotional, and cultural experience and one we still only have rudimentary understanding of today.⁵⁸

Aside from the simple astonishment which the first listeners felt at hearing voices on the ether, the wireless set also brought public debate and political discussion into the very living rooms of the nation. Writing about the United States, Hilmes describes how radio was able to circumvent the physical and geographical divisions which supported social distinctions:

Radio’s “immateriality” allowed it to cross these boundaries: allowed “race” music to invade the white middle-class home, vaudeville to compete with opera in the living room, risqué city humor to raise rural eyebrows, salesman and entertainers to find a place in the family circle.⁵⁹

The effect of this cross-fertilisation of culture was profound, to the extent that Curran & Seaton (2003) consider that broadcasting should be regarded as “a social invention, not a technical one” (Curran & Seaton, 2003, p.109). In other words, though resulting from the advances made in technology, broadcasting became a new medium for communication, subject to the conventions and requirements of the society for which it catered, but also

⁵⁷ Forty, 1986, p.200.

⁵⁸ Douglas, 1999, p.55.

⁵⁹ Hilmes, 1997, p.15.

introducing a new ability to cross class and intermingle cultures. The early crystal sets transmitted sound via a single pair of earphones, however, which made listening-in a rather isolating activity initially, and meant that broadcasting could only become a social invention when the technology allowed it. However, through the technological developments taking place throughout the 1920s loud speakers soon replaced earphones. This invention represents a pivotal point in broadcasting, because it revolutionised the family listening experience, by drawing in and including women and children too. It also changed the experience of listening totally, because it allowed the listener to be freed from the tether of the headphones, so that they could move around the room, come in and out, and listen to the radio while they went about their daily lives. Volek describes the invention of the loudspeaker as one of the key technological advances in that “it permitted the metamorphosis of wireless telephony into broadcast radio” (Volek, 1993, p.106). Moreover, everyone could listen together, and the programmes could become the focus of family listening, even of social events or dances.

Notwithstanding the reservations of some, by the early 1920s a considerable section of the general public was listening to everything they could pick up on their home-constructed sets. In 1922 there were 36,000 licences for receivers; in 1931 there were 4.3 million and in 1939 there were 9 million “enough for almost every member of the population to have access to a set” (Briggs, 1985, p.6 and p.253). These figures reveal that the broadcasts were accessible to all, across all classes, and for the first time, the lower classes could afford to enjoy the pleasures of the upper classes, if they cared to listen.

Arthur Burrows had predicted, back in 1924, that once “the novelty of wireless telephony” has passed then it would be possible to “to estimate the actual effect that broadcasting will have upon home life” (Burrows, 1924, pp.179-180). The extent to which these technological developments were taking place against the backdrop of an uneasy period in British history was discussed in Chapter Three; the First World War was unsettling for all sections of society but the shared experience did not have a cohesive effect, rather the opposite. As the wireless set gradually asserted its place in the home as an object of pride and aspiration it meant very different things to the listeners, depending on their tastes and their cultural background. It meant different things to men and women too, as the regular broadcast of programmes assumed a place of increasing importance in the domestic rhythms of the nation; inevitably, the control of the wireless set was a gendered issue of contention in households.

The Gendered Assimilation of Radio

By the end of the 1920s the possession of a radio was being perceived less as a luxury and more as a necessity. Wireless sets were the first domestic electrical appliance to be owned on a mass scale in Britain (Forty, 1986 p.200).⁶⁰ The ubiquity of the radio's presence in British homes, however, does nothing to explain its usage by the members of the household. As Volek remarks, radio was not "simply plopped into average living rooms throughout the country in the 1920s with a clearly understood image and use" (Volek, 1993, p.100). There were barriers and issues to the adoption of wireless, gaps in understanding, technological difficulties and naturally, differing attitudes to it, particularly between the sexes.

Aside from the technical difficulties of operating a crystal set, which would gradually be addressed by improvements to set performance and the introduction of new inventions, there was the issue of who operated the set. As discussed in Chapter Three, during this period the principal activity of women was still associated with the home, with over 90% of all married women remaining in the home, rather than seeking paid work outside, and this figure remained fairly constant throughout the period (Branson, 1975, p.213). When women were at home in the day and their husbands were at work, they had the control of the set. When the husband returned and wished to listen in the evening however, it was assumed that control of the set was the prerogative of the head of the household, as Briggs observes (Briggs, 1981, p.29). This was the picture Moores (2000) found too, and he quotes one woman's memory of this experience:

Only one of us could listen-in and that was my husband. The rest of us were sat like mummies. We used to row over it when we were courting. I used to say, 'I'm not coming down to your house just to sit around like a stupid fool.' He always had these earphones on, messing with the wire, trying to get different stations. He'd be saying, 'I've got another one,' but of course we could never hear it – you never could get those earphones off his head.⁶¹

Briggs (1981), Moores (2000) and Butsch (1981) all note the tendency for the early amateurs to be male and to regard the wireless as their "toy" (Briggs, 1981, p.29). Men "playing" with their wireless sets is a recurrent image throughout newspapers and magazines in the 1920s.

⁶⁰ Significantly, the next most electrical appliance was the electric iron, the utilisation of which was almost exclusively female (Forty, 1986, p.200).

⁶¹ Moores, 2000, p.119.

The gendered differentiation to the approach to the technology was a persistent *leitmotif* to the humour and the cartoons in both US and UK wireless magazines during this period. A long running joke was the male fascination with the machine which led him to endlessly “tinker” with the technology while his exasperated wife attempted to listen to the programme (see fig. 2.2).

As the 1930s continued, the manufacturers of the wireless sets and their components parts began to perceive that their market was at least 50% female. In 1929 only 15% of the visitors to the annual radio exhibition, Radiolympia, were women, whereas three years later the figure had increased to 50% (Hill, 1986, p.64). Moreover, while the wireless sets themselves were becoming more attractive and desirable as an artefact, there was also a glamour attached, for example, to listening to concerts in London. The wireless set manufacturers, recognising an untapped market, began to introduce modifications to their sets aimed *specifically* at women, and much was made of the improving ease of use. *The Wireless & Gramophone Trader* interviewed Ivey Smith, Publicity Supervisor for E.K. Cole about the RS3 at the 1931 Radiolympia:

What pleased me most was the interest which women took in the station dial. The idea of being able to tune-in by name captured their imagination. Instead of having to submit to the humiliation of watching the competent skill with which ‘John’, ‘George’, or ‘Bill’ tuned in foreign stations for their gratification, these women had visions of being able to do the job themselves, and of proving it by showing the name of the station to which the receiver is tuned. I think that Ekco is the first firm to produce a receiver which really appeals to women as well as men.⁶²

This provides an interesting insight into the perceived stereotypical usage of the wireless: that the printed dial potentially provided women users, not with automatic tuning, or even assisted tuning, but with the proof that they were *competent* at tuning (see fig.3.1).

The most significant shift in the path of broadcasting for women occurred in the 1930s, when broadcasters (or perhaps more accurately in the case of the UK, the BBC) recognised women as the “feminine monitors of domestic life”, and *began to order their schedule of programmes* to harmonise with the “rhythm of daily routines and especially the imagined activities of the housewife” (Moore, 2000, p.120). Moore considers that this change moved

⁶² Hill, 1986, pp.100-101.

women from their previous position at the periphery of broadcasting, where they had begun, to the very centre of the broadcasting audience (Moore, 1988, p.30).

Even those programmes which were not aimed at a female audience held the power for immensely important social consequences for women: the prevalence of the radio in people's homes meant that women, who could be comparatively isolated from public debate, now had access to an enormous, rich and varied source of information. Moreover, this information came from multiple sources in the different types of programmes broadcast, and it was purportedly unbiased and independent of state control. Volek identifies that in the United States, the radio entering the home meant that women could be freed from the political dominance of their fathers and husbands because the radio brought them information which was no longer filtered through the men in their families (Volek, 1993, p.113).

The consequences of these developments were complex for women; in some respects, radio advanced their cause as members of society with a right to participate in the political life of the country, but in other ways, radio became a vehicle through which women's prescribed domestic role was even more entrenched. These two delineations, the first identified by Murphy (2011) and the second by Bailey (2009) were not necessarily mutually exclusive; they could even be regarded as two sides of the same coin. Murphy (2011) describes how, in the UK, following the extension of the franchise to all British adult women in 1918, the BBC picked up the theme of the newly recognised political status of women with series that addressed women as citizens:

The Week In Westminster was specifically devised to educate newly enfranchised women about the workings of parliament and was presented by women MPs; *What we Pay the Rates For*, presented by Mrs HAL (Lettice) Fisher, informed listeners about the ways and means of local government; *A Woman's Commentary* was a weekly personal talk, given by Ray Strachey, on social and political developments. Evening schedules were also enlivened by women speakers and by female-orientated programmes such as the series *Questions for Women Voters* broadcast in the run-up to the 1929 elections.⁶³

Such fare gave women unprecedented access to viewpoints and information to inform their thinking. Very early in its broadcasting history, the BBC realised the need for a programme especially for women which would cover, not just political issues, but any range of subjects

⁶³ Murphy, 2011, p.262.

which might affect them. As a result, *Women's Hour* was broadcast in the afternoons between May 1923 and March 1924 (Murphy, 2011, p.36).⁶⁴ The programme was produced by a former Fleet Street journalist, Ella Fitzgerald and Murphy portrays the programme as introducing “a cornucopia of speakers and topics” to its audience. Murphy also describes how:

Talks on domesticity such as cookery, poultry keeping and shopping went side-by-side with talks on social issues such as how local government affected the home, day nurseries and the servant problem. Fitzgerald was also keen to reflect the growth of career opportunities for women with practitioners such as house decorators, solicitors, welfare workers and analytical chemists explaining their work.⁶⁵

Murphy has found an extensive body of evidence which indicates that the BBC was aware it had a large daytime audience which comprised of women, and she cites several articles appearing in the *Radio Times* from 1923 to 26, which discussed the female listeners (Murphy, 2011, p.262). Moreover, Murphy illustrates how much of the BBC output in the mid to late 1920s was domestic in nature, for example the *Housewives Talks* were broadcast in January 1927 and the fact that some elements of the series of *Morning Talks* which began in January 1929 tackled issues interesting to women (Murphy, 2011, p.262). She also notes the particular impact which Hilda Matheson had in her position of Director of Talks from 1927-1932, in that she introduced a variety to the daily output which catered for the large female audience which was listening during the day (Murphy, 2011, p.262). Matheson expressed the importance of broadcasting for women in 1933:

It is difficult to exaggerate what broadcasting has done and is doing for women... Women listeners stand to gain from the whole range of programmes... But broadcasting can give them also, as it were, a preparatory course to help them to catch up, to feel less at a disadvantage, to keep abreast of wider interests.⁶⁶

Once women were established as a primary audience for broadcasts it followed that their new position would gather responsibilities. As a result, women, widely perceived as integral to the regularisation of everyday conduct, were now targeted as instruments for conveying the norms of the state (healthy, regular and disciplined conduct) into the private sphere (Bailey,

⁶⁴ The decision to adopt a different title when the programme was resurrected as a concept in 1946 from *Women's Hour* to the current title of *Woman's Hour*, is interesting semantically, as the former addresses itself to a gender, the latter to an individual.

⁶⁵ Ella Fitzgerald was transferred to *World Radio* in 1926 (Murphy, 2011, p.218).

⁶⁶ Matheson, 1933 cited by Murphy, 2011, p.263.

2009, p.63). Moores identifies that the mother was “the monitor of domestic life” (Moores, 1988, p.31) and, as such, women became a primary target for messages about behaviours intended for the whole family, one of which was public health. As Bailey observes, the inter-war years were a period of economic hardship and the proper portions of healthy food was a matter of concern for the nation (Bailey, 2009, p.59). Briggs agrees that it was a time of great poverty for some:

We know little of the social composition of this ‘great audience’, as it came to be called, but it clearly included people from all sections of the community – among them the poorest, that large section of the population, estimated at between 15 and 30 per cent, who were in chronic poverty or near it before the Second World War.⁶⁷

Bailey’s observes that what was needed was “an angel in the house capable of performing minor miracles in the art of domestic economy with very frugal resources” (Bailey, 2009, p.59). This development and enhancement of the female role through her communication from the wireless presented what Bailey describes as:

a paradoxical challenge to the patriarchal authority of the head of the house. What father said now had to be reconciled with what ‘Auntie’ said. And for the most part, wireless was saying that, in household matters at least, Mum knows best. In this sense, household talks were potentially empowering for women, inasmuch as they were invested with a ‘natural’ authority.⁶⁸

Thus the arrival of radio in women’s lives was complicated: just when women were slowly beginning to enter the public world of politics through the extension of the franchise, public service broadcasting ascribed women listeners a social role confined to the domestic sphere of family and home (Bailey, 2009, p.63). However, the BBC’s appropriation of this role imbued it with a greater authority. Reflecting on the impact of broadcasting, Arthur Burrows, remarked in 1924: “some argue, and we are like to think rightly, that the provision of varied entertainment within the four walls of the home will do much to restore the old-time family circle, for which virtue has been claimed” (Burrows, 1924, pp.179-180). The recovery of the family circle and family moral values was dependent, as Bailey remarks, on the part women would have to play “in transmitting the cultural values of the BBC into the *sanctum sanctorum* of the home ... Women listeners were thus interpellated by gendered broadcasting discourses as housewives and mother with civic responsibilities” (Bailey, 2009, p.54). The

⁶⁷ Briggs, 1965, p.254.

⁶⁸ Bailey, 2009, p.58.

moral responsibility assigned to women as the kingpin of the family unit, and even, as the rock upon which the British economy of was founded, was ubiquitous, as this sententious advertisement in the *BBC Handbook 1928* for “Hailglass” illustrates:

To The Women of Britain - The Radio has undoubtedly helped you to keep your husband and boys away from the club and kept them where they thus experience the benefits of your gentle charm and influence, but you must now go *one step further* and make your home comfy and cheerful by having Hailglass Shades and Globes on your lights. Hailglass is made only by Hailwood & Ackroyd, Ltd., Morley, near Leeds. It is made in beautiful opals and is decorated or tinted with lovely colours and designs. Each piece is marked “Hailglass.” Don’t let your supplier foist upon you foreign glass which is made under sweated conditions. Your supplier gets a reasonable profit on our glass. We are putting up a hard fight in the face of unfair foreign competition and against certain atrocious British dealers who want *excessive profits*. Please help us to keep the Trade and British Money in Britain. Your men-folk, as they listen to the Radio in a home made bright and comfy by our charmingly coloured glassware will indeed feel that they are in a real “Heaven on Earth”, and you women of England will mutually join in this pleasure. We have an enormous range of sizes, shapes and designs.⁶⁹

The main themes of the BBC’s addresses to the housewives were their discipline and orderliness in fulfilling their housework duties. Bailey points out that in the examples he cites, including a Talk on “The Art of Easing Housework” published in *The Listener* on 9th October 1929, there is intense detail about the need to stick to a timetable: “If they were to be diligent housewives, it was imperative that they learn to conduct their lives by hours, minutes and seconds” (Bailey, 2009, p.56). The other role delineated for them, was the housewife’s pivotal position as caretaker of the public health, which Bailey calls the “discipline-health couplet” (Bailey, 2009, pp.56-57). Greenfield & Reid identify a corollary to this development in women’s magazines during the period which they define as a new ideology of “professional domesticity”. According to the new ideal, homes were to be run along the lines of management, which were almost factory-like and the housework articles featured had an almost ‘scientific’ approach (Greenfield & Reid, 1998, pp.164-170).

Studying this period in the United States, Butsch contends that while the early experimentation with wireless was left unchallenged as a male preserve, the advent of ‘broadcasting’ raised the question of “radio’s gender” (Butsch, 1998, p.557.) He finds that amateur radio telegraphy was “ensconced in the sphere of modern technology and science”

⁶⁹ Advertisement in *BBC Handbook 1928*, 1928, p.17.

and was well established as a masculine hobby (Butsch, 1998, p.557). However, the US male amateur operators soon found themselves confronting a domestication strategy of their magazines, which reflected the widening appeal of this sector of the magazine market as radio gradually transformed from wireless communication into broadcasting. This made a direct challenge to radio's technical and therefore essentially masculine character, to the extent that some US wireless magazines, whose stock readership had been male amateur hobbyists, gave themselves a "make-over" designed specifically to appeal to a new female readership (Butsch, 1998, p.661). The most obvious and striking difference was that the magazine suddenly acquired coloured covers, featuring pictures of well-dressed, upper middle-class Americans listening to the radio in their parlours, when previously the covers had shown black and white pictures of technical equipment (Butsch, 1998, p.561). The radios depicted in the new format were "tamed domestic appliances, wires and apparatus discretely contained in wood and furniture cabinets ... integrated into the families' activities". The rest of the magazine included rotogravure sections comprising pictures of glamorous film stars, and ordinary women and children, all able to operate radios apparently without male assistance (Butsch, 1998, p.562).⁷⁰

Razlogova also records how earlier radio magazines had put young experimenters on their covers (see fig. 3.2) but as they developed into fan magazines, they began to depict glamorous actresses:

In fan publishing, dazzling celebrity photos accompanied gossip tales, serial stories and beat reporting. As one woman explained in her letter, she liked radio magazines because they published "amusing articles, stories about radio folk, their ... photographs, menus, wardrobe and beauty hints, their private lives, work, romances, [and] hobbies." Listener magazines printed images galore: gag pictures, news pictures, candid shots, gallery portraits, glossy prints, "mats," and "informals".⁷¹

These observations about US magazines also resonate with the British context; as discussed in Chapter Eight, an abundance of pictures was a characteristic of the radio fan magazines, and moreover, a "pictorial" magazine was particularly associated with a female readership.

⁷⁰ Roto-gravure or photo-gravure was a printing process used in magazines for the reproduction of fine art and pictures, and was the process used to print *Radio Pictorial*.

⁷¹ Razlogova, 2011, p.59.

The Women's Magazines of the 1920s

The spread of women's magazines is important in the context of broadcasting magazines, because there were many similarities and points of connection. As discussed in Chapter Three, the changes to the social paradigm after the First World War had an effect not just on the relationships between classes, but also on the domestic relationships between genders. Braithwaite contends that these shifts were reflected in the magazine industry and resulted in the creation of a new market (Braithwaite, 1995, pp.29-30). Unlike the wireless press, for which the audience was assumed to be male, the audience for the burgeoning "home" magazine market was assumed to be female; Reed argues that the 1920s saw the development of the new female market which had an interest in the home (Reed, 1997, p.18); it was a readership which was ready to be instructed in acquiring "good" (middle-class) taste. One magazine catering for this niche sector was launched in 1919, entitled *Our Homes and Gardens*. It was published by George Newnes Ltd., the publisher which was to undertake the publication of the *Radio Times*, less than four years later. Braithwaite argues this magazine was:

certainly the first post-war title of any importance, and it set a style for home magazines which has been closely emulated over the years. The editor set the pace in the opening editorial: 'Always we shall strive to avoid the extreme, devoting ourselves instead to what is within the compass of those who think that good taste, expressed in a moderate way, is far more to be desired than what is bizarre and extravagant.'⁷²

There is an implication of either being on the inside and belonging to the "right sort" or being on the outside in this extract; *Our Homes and Gardens* was the arbiter of good taste, and its readership demonstrated their own appreciation of taste in selecting the magazine. Braithwaite considers that *Homes and Gardens* (the pronoun was quickly dropped) was a magazine aimed at the affluent (female) homemaker, "definitely a quality product, priced at one shilling, and destined for a long life of elegant presentation" and its readership would have been familiar with the current challenges represented by the 'servant problem' and the new challenges facing the modern woman of running her home with comparatively little hired help (Braithwaite, 1995, p.30). It also included erudite articles on the serious political issues of the day:

⁷² Braithwaite, 1995, p.30.

Although a celebration of the family and ‘the housekeeper’, the magazine eagerly developed the cause of the new independence for women and offered advice on how to enjoy the differing roles of wife and mother and working woman. The magazine recognized the massive changes the war had brought to the middle-class reader.⁷³

Homes and Gardens sold itself on a recognition of the upheavals which women were experiencing; in the changes to their roles, and the expectations being laid upon them. The magazine offered them guidance and counsel, and reassurance about how to deal with their newly emerging independence.

Another contemporary magazine was launched in March 1922, the UK version of *Good Housekeeping* (Braithwaite, 1995, p.32). This was also a title targeting the middle classes, and its first issue sold out. The pages contained articles designed to appeal to the issues confronting its selected readership, some elements of which the *Radio Times* copied: recipes, short stories, tips on dress-making and articles dealing with the practicalities of running a home (Braithwaite, 1995, p.32). Greenfield & Reid also identify a growth in the market of magazines aimed at the middle-class women who had previously depended on servants which they were now either unable to attract, or could no longer afford (Greenfield & Reid, 1998, p.162). Although they were primarily broadcasting-orientated magazines, the *Radio Times* and the subsequently published *Radio Pictorial* also aimed at acquiring a more extensive readership, and they were therefore still competing on some level with magazines such as *Homes and Gardens* and *Good Housekeeping*, particularly since all of the magazines recognised that their most successful strategy was to appeal to women, as will be discussed in Chapter Eight. The newspaper proprietor Lord Northcliffe was clear about the commercial importance of attracting a female readership: “We realised that women are by nature more loyal and conservative than men, and that if we got a firm footing in their homes, the value of our papers from the advertiser’s point of view would be greatly enhanced”.⁷⁴

Before the start of the First World War, there had been about fifty women’s magazines active on the market. Inevitably there were some magazine casualties of the War but when it was over there was still a healthy range of titles on sale (Braithwaite, 1995, p.27). Magazines were a popular medium for advertising, which meant that in addition to the publishers

⁷³ Braithwaite, 1995, p.32.

⁷⁴ Northcliffe (12th Dec.) To Marlowe, 1911, and (10th March) 1909, Northcliffe MSS, British Library Deposit 4890, vol. 46.

targeting the female audience, advertisers were realising that they could reach their female market through the magazines. Greenfield & Reid note:

Women's magazines were conspicuous within the publishing industry by their growth, with 25 new titles appearing between 1918 and 1928. One publisher, Amalgamated Press, urged advertisers interested in reaching women to take advantage of the range of its publications – *Home Chat*, *Woman's Weekly*, and *Woman's World* – which could offer both an 'exclusive' and large female audience.⁷⁵

Within this sector, the market was quite diversified; Braithwaite explains that through the decades leading up to the First World War, the key to success had been to “compartmentalize and specialize”. For example, there were magazines for women of a lower class, which in a similar way to the more up-market *Homes and Gardens*, understood its readers' problems, and even its secret yearnings. *Peg's Paper* was launched in 1919, described by Braithwaite as “the archetypal working-class, simple-story magazine was specifically targeted towards the shop girl and the mill girl” (Braithwaite, 1995, p.33). The guiding principal of this magazine was not so much aspiration, as escapism. Full of romantic ideals, this paper presented stories in which, Cinderella-like, the shop girl captured the affections of a man able to support her, thereby taking her out of the hum-drum realities of her life. The tone of the magazine was informal; representing a confidential friend (Braithwaite, 1995, p.33). As another example of specialised women's magazines, Hackney describes how the magazines which targeted women's hobbies became “a component of a new commercial culture of home-making in the period, offered women opportunities for self-expression, agency and self-determination” (Hackney, 2006, p.23).

As the magazine market for women was increasingly recognised to be lucrative, so competition increased. The early 1920s saw such titles as *Ladies Home World*, *The Lady's Paper*, *Ladies' Times*, *My Lady Fayre*, *Home Mirror*, *My Favourite*, *Woman of the Day*, *Woman's Kingdom*, *Home Journal* and *Violet Magazine*. All were, self-evidently, aimed at the woman at home who controlled the family's consumption (Braithwaite, 1995, p.20). In addition to understanding the loyalty of the female readership, Lord Northcliffe also recognised that women represented a significant potential market, and moreover that they had the consumer power within the household. When he began the *Daily Mail* in 1896, he

⁷⁵ Greenfield & Reid, 1998, p.162.

introduced two columns devoted specifically to topics of interest to women, having noted that:

“in working-class homes it was women who shopped for food, bought clothes, paid the rent, and made the daily financial decisions. It was women, as well, who often made the important choices about consumption in middle-class families. ‘Women are the holder of the domestic purse-strings,’ Northcliffe once said. ‘They are the real buyers. Men buy what women tell them to’.⁷⁶

Sections of the magazine market during this period duly aimed itself at women. There were established norms of content, and broadcasting magazines sometimes followed some of these formats, even though, clearly, there were other opportunities for them to offer a different and more rarified fare than their contemporaries. Razlogova notes that in the United States, the amateur and the fan radio magazines also “shared modes of operation, styles, publishers, and audiences with the pulp magazines that flourished in the 1920s and 1930s” (Razlogova, 2011, p.56). The UK magazine industry, like the broadcasting industry, was dominated by a small number of publishing houses, and it was inevitable therefore that broadcasting magazines would share features inherited from other titles. The publisher of the *Radio Times*, George Newnes Ltd., for example, also published *Homes and Gardens* and *Tit-Bits* (a controversial magazine discussed in Chapter Five) and the Amalgamated Press published *Home Chat*, *Woman’s Weekly*, *Woman’s World* and also *Popular Wireless*.

Magazines represented a powerful tool for advertisers. They provided a medium through which to extol the virtues of labour saving appliances for the harassed, now unaided housewife, and a means through which she could learn about the modern conveniences of the developing gas and electric industries. In addition, she could discover a whole range of products of interest to a wife and mother, who had a desire to adopt the latest fashions for herself, own the most innovative products for her family, and also allay the effects of alarm experienced by people living through troubled times. The advertisers could reach the aspirational and the anxious at the same time through the magazines.

⁷⁶ Stearns and Clarke cited by LeMahieu, 1988, pp.33-34.

The BBC enters the Magazine Market

When the BBC launched the *Radio Times* in 1923, it entered a commercial market, and one which was expanding. While the *Radio Times* had no direct competitor, the field of magazine publishing, was already populated by some well established titles with a distinct (albeit niche) market and the wireless press had yet to reach its peak. Rather uncharacteristically, Reith did not wish to antagonise the technical wireless press because the BBC had a mutually useful symbiotic relationship with them based around the fact that the wireless magazines provided the British public with a large quantity of technical advice often with diagrams. In an internal memorandum from the Director of Publicity William Gladstone Murray to Reith, dated 1926, Gladstone Murray reported that “90% of the turnover of the wireless apparatus manufacturers of this country is in relation to component parts”.⁷⁷ The era of the fully assembled wireless housed in an attractive cabinet belonged to the next decade; the norm at this time was still for wireless receiving sets to be composed of separately purchased parts and the technical wireless press provided the instruction on how to assemble these parts. The radio manufacturing industry used advertisements in the broadcasting press to make the public aware of their components and the ways in which the readers’ wireless sets could be improved.

Even after the first wireless home assembly craze of the 1920s had abated, the wireless press was able to tap into a plentiful core of amateur enthusiasts who still clamoured for diagrams and instructions, as this query from S.W Bentham to the “Readers’ Ideas and Questions” from a 1931 number of *Amateur Wireless* demonstrates:

Sir, - Does the “kit set” idea take away the true amateur spirit? Having lately built a kit set, I fail to regard the set as my work, but as factory built. I prefer to buy my own components separate and construct a set from a theoretical diagram, after which I feel some pride for the completed article. My opinion is that a man who builds kit sets is not a true amateur. Give the kit-set man components and no diagram and tell him to concoct a receiver and ten to one he is beaten.⁷⁸

It was a firmly held belief that the true amateur wireless enthusiast was actually the expert of his field, and that buying a factory set was in some way “cheating”; which also serves to

⁷⁷ Gladstone Murray, W.E., 1926. To Reith, J.C.W. (23rd January). [Internal Circulating Memorandum.] BBC WAC R43/150/2 Publications/Radio Times/1926-1927.

⁷⁸ *Amateur Wireless*, 7th November 1931.

illustrate the hold the technical wireless press had over its readers who relied on it to keep them up to date with such a rapidly developing technology. The technical magazines also carried articles about optimising the performance of wireless apparatus and issues which affected reception, even advice on how to choose the right accumulator or battery. This all helped to “service” the nation’s radios, and although this assisted the BBC, it was not an area into which it wished to trespass itself. For the wireless press’ part, the BBC provided the broadcasting content, without which building a wireless set would have no purpose; thus the BBC wished to maintain its connections with the wireless press as a mutually beneficial relationship. Moreover, Arthur Burrows, Director of Programmes at the BBC in 1923 was a former journalist himself, and as Briggs says, he “enjoyed co-operating with the Press and established particularly close relations with the specialized wireless journals” (Briggs, 1961, p.77).

Briggs considers that at the end of 1922 there were four main wireless magazine titles. This is an under-estimate, however, since, as has been discussed previously, for the brief period from 1922-26 the number of titles being offered to this market increased hugely; approximately 30 magazines focusing on some aspect of broadcasting were started between 1922 and the end of 1925, although nearly 50% of these had folded by 1927 (see Appendix VII). Pegg also places the number of mainstream wireless-interest magazines in circulation at this time at a much higher figure:

At the peak, from 1924 to 1926, an average of thirty monthly or weekly specialist magazines was on sale. Some were enduring but the majority were rather ephemeral.⁷⁹

As it happens, the BBC was anticipating that the over-crowded market place of the wireless press would level itself out, based on a perception that this is what had happened to the magazines that had sprung up in response to the early days of the motor industry; some would fold, whilst others would amalgamate.⁸⁰

The BBC was aware that it held a unique commodity in its programme schedule listings and it wished to publish this material for itself. Collectively it was recognised within the BBC that it was important to have “strong organ of opinion”. (Reith and Gladstone Murray both use

⁷⁹*Willings Press Guide and Mitchell’s Newspaper Directory*, 1918-1939 cited by Pegg, 1983, p.46.

⁸⁰ Gladstone Murray, W.E., 1926. To Reith, J.C.W. (23rd January). [Internal Circulating Memorandum.] BBC WAC R43/150/2 Publications/Radio Times/1926-1927.

this phrase, in internal memoranda, and in the early twenties the subtitle “The Official Organ of the BBC” appears as a tag line on the masthead of the *Radio Times*.) The *Radio Times* had a circulation far greater than a magazine could normally expect to achieve. Less than a month after it was first published Reith wrote to Major Binyon, one of the original six directors of the British Broadcasting Company, expressing slightly naïve pride:

I think you will be interested to know that the first number of the “Radio Times” met with what the Publishers regard as a phenomenal success. In a few hours it was sold out in every large town in England, and out of 200,000 copies circulated less than 2,000 were returned. The Publishers say that this is in their experience a record.⁸¹

The publishers, George Newnes Ltd., had every reason to be satisfied. The success of the magazines was hailed by the BBC in *The BBC Handbook 1928* as a “miracle” and it was moved to ask “How else indeed can it be described, this weekly programme paper that sprang like Venus “full-fashioned from the waves” – the waves of ether, not as in the case of the goddess, the foaming waves of some celestial sea?” (*The BBC Handbook 1928*, 1928, p.337). Briggs says of the *Radio Times*’ triumph:

There were few more spectacular successes in the journalism of the inter-war years. A quarter of a million copies of the first issue were printed and quickly sold out. Reith knew that the initial print was far too small, and circulation soon leapt to 600,000. At the end of December 1925 circulation was over 800,000 and a year later had risen to nearly 850,000.⁸²

Adding together the circulation figures provided by Briggs for the top four wireless magazine titles for 1925, their collective circulation was only approximately 725,000.⁸³ The *Radio Times* could indeed have dominated the market and possibly crushed the competition. But for that reason, Reith took the unusually conciliatory step of broadcasting a reassuring message about the BBC’s non-aggressive intentions in keeping its new magazine to a narrow editorial scope which did not trespass on the territory of the wireless press. In a letter to the General Post Office Reith explained:

⁸¹ Reith, J.C.W., 1923. To Binyon, B. (4th October). [Letter.] BBC WAC R43/150/1 *Radio Times* (1923-1925).

⁸² Briggs, 1961, p.297.

⁸³ According to Briggs “*Amateur Wireless* had a circulation of 100,000 in the Autumn of 1924, *Modern Wireless* had 100,000, *The Popular Wireless Weekly* 125,000, *Wireless* 150,000 and *The Wireless Constructor* 250,000” (Briggs, 1961, p.219).

Further to our conversation, I have given instructions that the following should be periodically broadcast when we are talking on the wireless about our magazine: -

Please do not think that our new magazine is meant to be competitive with existing wireless magazines which cater for the interests of the amateur, such as “Wireless World”, “Wireless Weekly”, “Modern Wireless”, “Amateur Wireless”, “Popular Wireless”, and the “Wireless Review”. They have already been of great assistance to us, and we do not propose including in our magazine the sort of technical articles which are such a feature of their productions.⁸⁴

It is clear from the numerous memoranda, letters and reports held in the BBC Written Archives at Caversham, that the BBC was monitoring the activity of the wireless press, with a jealous eye on their potential revenue from advertising (see fig. 4.1). The BBC’s relationship with the wireless magazines was complicated by the fact that many of the magazines were published by publishing groups who were under the influence of the Newspaper Proprietors Association (NPA) and the Newspaper Society; the Berry Group, The Amalgamated Press and Odhams, who “complained vigorously” about the competition which the *Radio Times* represented to them (Briggs, 1961, p.341). It was the NPA’s ban on any of its member companies publishing the BBC’s programme details in February 1923, which gave the BBC the idea to publish the schedules itself in the form of the *Radio Times* (Briggs, 1961, p.142) and although this particular episode had a fortunate out-turn for the BBC, the feuds with the newspaper groups were many and bitter.

In an internal memorandum from Gladstone Murray to Reith in January 1926, marked “Private” by hand, Gladstone Murray identified the leading journals and their publishers, and assessed their relationship to the BBC as follows:

The Berry Group, including Illife’s	“Amateur Wireless” “Experimental Wireless” “Wireless World” “Wireless Magazine”
The Amalgamated Press	“Popular Wireless”
Odhams	“The Broadcaster”

⁸⁴ Mr. Brown, 1923. To Reith, J.C.W. (23rd September). [Letter.] BBC WAC R43/150/1 Radio Times (1923-1925).

Mr Scott Taggart

“Wireless”

“Wireless Constructor”

“Wireless Dealer”

“Wireless Weekly”

“Modern Wireless” [written by hand]⁸⁵

The other papers are of no consequence. Thus the most important and best of the wireless journals belong to big publishing groups and necessarily reflect the policy of these groups. ... it should be said that on the whole they have been helpful to us and have tried to do something to assist in the development of our Service. But the basic fact remains that they belong to big publishing groups whose policy is reflected in the obstructive attitude of the Newspaper Proprietors Association and the Newspaper Society.⁸⁶

Gladstone Murray’s memorandum was written in reaction to evidence compiled by the NPA which was to be laid before the “Broadcasting Committee” (the Crawford Committee) and which would form part of their evidence in their bid to limit the advertising scope of the *Radio Times*. Gladstone Murray’s response was seven pages long and is particularly interesting because it articulates the areas where the relationship was regarded by the BBC as being mutually interdependent, and even strategic, and those areas where, at least in Gladstone Murray’s view, the BBC ought not to allow itself to be constrained by the views of the wireless press. While conceding that the technical wireless press had largely been “helpful” to the development of the BBC’s Service, Gladstone Murray still considered that the journals owed their continued success to the BBC’s “voluntary abstention from the publication of technical diagrams and technical articles”. This is important to note because the debate around whether *World-Radio* should publish technical articles or not was to become a crucial tool in the BBC’s response to subsequent threats to its commercial magazine activities. Gladstone Murray also cited the BBC’s practice of broadcasting a review of the week’s wireless publications on every Friday evening, recommending them to the listeners. Gladstone Murray felt: “It is a fact that we say much more about the wireless journals every week over the microphone than we say about our own journals”.⁸⁷ In other

⁸⁵ Bernard Jones was the editor of *Amateur Wireless* and *Wireless Magazine* which he founded for Cassell’s. In 1923 the magazines owned by the company were sold to Amalgamated Press, which was part of the Berry Group. In 1926 Bernard Jones acquired these titles for his own company Bernard Jones Publications Ltd, and thus became one of the few independent publishers which collectively made up the wireless press (*The Broadcaster Radio & Gramophone Trade Annual 1935*, 1935, p.44).

⁸⁶ Gladstone Murray, W.E., 1926. To Reith, J.C.W. (23rd January). [Internal Circulating Memorandum.] Page 5. BBC WAC R43/150/1 Publications/Radio Times/1923-1925.

⁸⁷ Gladstone Murray, W.E., 1926. To Reith, J.C.W. (23rd January). [Internal Circulating Memorandum.] Page 5. BBC WAC R43/150/1 Publications/Radio Times/1923-1925.

words, in Gladstone Murray's opinion, the BBC could have wielded its power to the detriment of the magazines, had it chosen to, but instead it was positively magnanimous.

Conclusion

The readership of the magazines discussed in this Chapter essentially divided up into those with a male market initially and a growing number with a female market. Although women were not envisaged as representing a market for the wireless press, they were still increasingly recognised as forming a significant specialised market in their own right, and the precedence for their subsequent interest to both magazine marketers and advertisers was being set. As the technology became more domesticated, and women found a role for the radio set in their daily lives, it was inevitable that they would become similarly absorbed into the broadcasting magazine market. The recognition of women as "consumers" of radio led to them being assigned the role of guardian of the nation's health, an appropriation which the magazines also identified. The male gendered hegemony of wireless had given way to a domestic audience, where all the family could share the entertainment and instruction that broadcasting could offer. Listening to the wireless had been universally reassigned from scientific experimentation to a domestic activity.

The BBC's entry into the publications field was a pivotal development, both for the existing magazine proprietors (for whom it was most unwelcome) and for the BBC itself because the two arms, broadcasting and publishing, were to be run on a very different basis, the first being funded by licence fees and the latter from its own profits. This was significant because the British Broadcasting Company running its own publications department had formed no part of the original plan when it was formed.



Fig. 1.1 Cartoon, *Radio Times*, 1924, reproduced in Briggs, 1981, p.72.



Fig. 1.2 "Hope!" Cartoon, *Radio Times*, 1924, reproduced in Briggs, 1981, p.227.



Fig. 2.1 Cartoon by James Thurber, reproduced in Hawes, 1991 p.20.



Fig. 2.2 Cartoon, *Radio Times*, 1938, reproduced in Briggs, 1981, p.47.



Fig. 3.1 Ekco AD65 at Radiolympia, 1934, reproduced in Briggs, 1981, p.39.

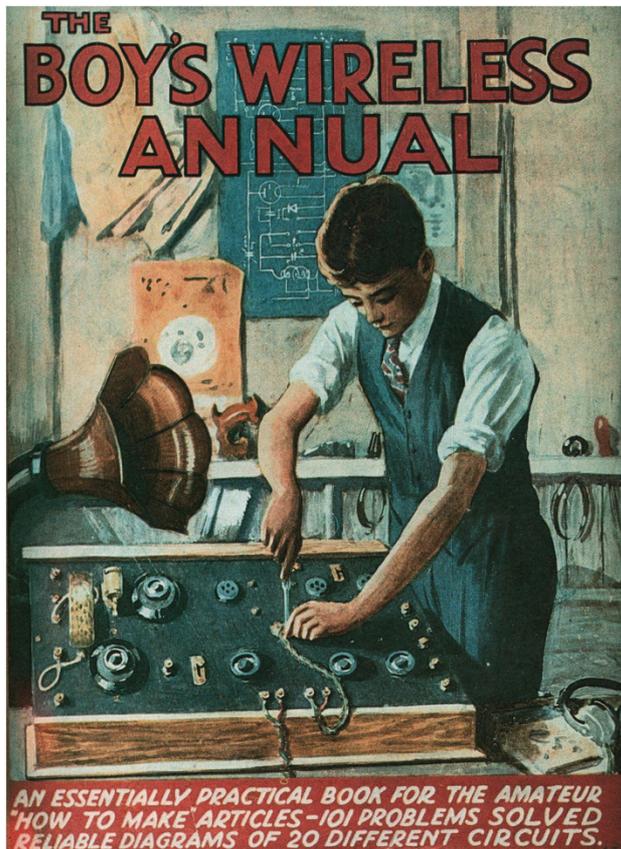


Fig. 3.2 *Boys Wireless Annual*, reproduced in Briggs, 1981, p.34.

Fig. 4.1 Circulation and Advertising Rates of Wireless Press

CIRCULATION AND ADVERTISING RATES OF WIRELESS PRESS

	<u>RATE</u> <u>per page</u>	<u>CIRCULATION.</u>	<u>RATE PER 1000</u> <u>of Circulation.</u>	<u>TOTAL GRO</u> <u>REVENUE</u>
AMATEUR WIRELESS	£40	100,000	8/-	£810
WIRELESS MAGAZINE	£40	90,000	8/10	£880
POPULAR WIRELESS	£40	125,000	6/5	£1120
MODERN WIRELESS	£50	100,000	10/-	£2970
WIRELESS WEEKLY	£15	30,000	10/-	£190
WIRELESS WORLD	£30	No figures given yet, but net sales will be published shortly [in pencil ?50,000]		£600
WIRELESS	£48	150,000	6/5	£864
WIRELESS CONSTRUCTOR	£80	250,000	6/6	£3585
	approx	<u>890,000</u>		<u>11,019</u>
JOHN BULL	£300	1,000,000	6/-	£5410
<hr/>				
RADIO TIMES				
General Ads	£200	1,000,000	4/-	£800
Wireless Ads.	£150		3/-	£2100

BBC WAC R43/151/Publications/Radio Times Advertisements 1923-38.

Chapter Five

Radio Times: The Profile of a Publishing Phenomenon

Radio changed, the *Radio Times* changed and I changed. But hardly a day passes without someone in the house shouting, “Anyone seen the *Radio Times*?” That hasn’t changed.⁸⁸

Introduction

The *Radio Times* was a phenomenally successful magazine from the first; its circulation rose steadily throughout the 1920s, attaining the figure of one million between 1928 and 1929, and reaching over 2.5 million by 1939 (Briggs, 1965, p.281). The magazine enjoyed an extraordinarily privileged position in having, as its core material, the BBC programme schedule, and access to all the behind-the-scenes material which the BBC chose to grant. However, the very fact of its unprecedented success turned it into a cause for apprehension for the BBC; it was something which needed to be nurtured and protected, so important was it as a link to the BBC’s listeners and for the revenue its success secured. The magazine went through many changes during the 1920s and 1930s; some were substantive, others were more subtle, but the changes were significant because they reflected how the BBC wished to present itself to its public. It transformed over this period, from an austere, newspaper-like journal, into a publication which was much livelier, with coloured covers, special numbers and famously “avant-garde” artwork (see fig. 5.1). The significance of these changes is measured, and the *Radio Times* is considered in physical and visual terms, to recapture the appearance and feel of it, and to assess how it engaged with its readership, in spite of its assured success.

The Launch of the *Radio Times*

The British Broadcasting Company was formed on 14th November 1922, and less than a year later, on 28th September 1923, the first issue of the *Radio Times* was published on the BBC’s behalf, by George Newnes Ltd; the BBC thereby entered the market as a publisher of magazines. At the beginning of its transmissions, the BBC had depended upon the national and local press to advertise its programmes, but such details as were considered necessary to relay information about the daily programmes were extremely limited: in 1923 *The Times*

⁸⁸ John Peel, December 2000 cited by Currie, 2001, p.viii.

newspaper was allowing just two inches of type for the purpose (Currie, 2001, p.3). In January 1923, the Newspapers Proprietors' Association staged a boycott after Reith refused to pay for "advertising" the BBC programmes. However, the daily press soon discovered that their circulation figures had been adversely affected by the absence of radio programme details, and after forty days the boycott was abandoned. The crisis had, however, given the BBC the idea of publishing the programme details itself.⁸⁹

Having realised the publicity potential of the BBC having its own magazine, Reith was impatient to see it launched and in the end it was "made up" in something of a hurry. Because of the short lead time given to the publishers, the *Radio Times*' first editor Leonard Crocombe, was also very hurriedly appointed.⁹⁰ Crocombe was not an employee of the BBC but was employed by the publisher George Newnes Ltd. and, although the BBC was not happy with it, the editorial control of the *Radio Times* was to lie with the publisher (Briggs, 1961, p.297). With no time to plan, Crocombe told the printer that the "make-up" and "types" were to follow the style of another Newnes publication *John O'London's Weekly* (Currie, 2001, p.9). In a way, both the *Radio Times* and the early wireless receiving sets themselves may be said to be something of a "Frankenstein's monster", put together out of borrowed bits and pieces. Also, like the radio sets, the *Radio Times* had a complex role to fulfill: the set had to detect the signal, tune in, to it, amplify it; with aerial and tuner (and later speakers) working in harmony. The magazine had to give background to the forthcoming programmes and, more generally, publicity about the company, list the new programmes and generally instruct the public about the new medium.

Crocombe was a very experienced editor, and was also the editor of Newnes' "*Tit-Bits*" which was a very successful "human interest" magazine. *Tit-Bits* was somewhat notorious, and as Carey points out it was "a regular butt of the intellectuals". Carey devotes some pages to the phenomenon of *Tit-Bits*, concluding that the magazine was "astute at gauging the needs of its suburban readership" (Carey, 1992, p.108). The type of games, jokes, conundrums and ghost stories which it purveyed were exactly the sort of "lowbrow" form of entertainment

⁸⁹ For an account of this episode see Briggs, 1961, p.142.

⁹⁰ Crocombe later revealed that after Arthur Burrows, who was then the Director of Programmes, had told him over lunch that the BBC intended to publish the new magazine, he had subsequently returned home from a month's holiday to be informed that he was to be the new editor and that "the first number of *The Radio Times* must be ready for press in seven days". (Crocombe, *Radio Times Tenth Anniversary Number*, 29th September 1933; also cited by Currie, 2001, p.8.)

which the intelligentsia despised. The association was therefore not entirely felicitous for the BBC. The BBC had, however, been unable to find another publisher to undertake the risk (Eckersley, 1997, p.86).

The problem for the editors of the *Radio Times* was, that at a time when magazine titles were optimising their sales through providing for specialist markets (as discussed in Chapter Four) the *Radio Times* had to have as broad appeal as possible. The very first number included a letter of complaint from a 'P.J.' of Birmingham, who took issue over the recent broadcast of a series of lectures on "the Decrease of Malaria in Great Britain" and "How to Become a Veterinary Surgeon". And this, he complained was at the expense of repeating the popular "Request Nights". He surmised that the BBC was "mainly catering for the "listeners" with expensive sets who pretend to appreciate only highbrow music and educational "sob stuff". He reminded the BBC that they should be governed in their choices by those programmes which appeal to the majority and pithily concluded "we must remember that it is the latter who provide the main bulk of their income" (Briggs, 1961, p.299). As Briggs sums up "Thus was the anti-BBC case expressed in the first number of its official journal" (Briggs, 1961, p.299.) The lowbrow versus highbrow discussion was the subject of constant complaint, and defence, from the BBC's earliest days. The publication of this letter does illustrate, however, that the BBC had exposed itself to a channel for feedback from the audience. This was specifically resisted in all other areas, but in the case of the *Radio Times*, the credibility of the magazine would be severely compromised had the BBC failed to give voice to the comments, criticisms and praise which any publication habitually invited in the obligatory readers' letters pages.

The BBC was anything but naïve about the usefulness publicity possibilities of its new publication, but there was another purpose for the magazine: although a superseded technology now that the world had wireless, the printed word could still fill in the gaps which were necessarily left by an ephemeral and aural medium. Briggs describes how Reith saw the magazine as "a medium of more detailed and familiar communication between the broadcaster and their audience than was possible or desirable by wireless itself" (Briggs, 1961, pp.296-297). In 1936, when the BBC had had been publishing magazines as an additional feature of its service for thirteen years, it was able to be very clear about the absolute necessity of the function of its magazines:

Without recourse to the printed word a good deal of important broadcast material would be largely waste; some would lose significance and value and some would be irretrievably lost. And so, starting from the ‘categorical imperative’ of *service*, the work of the Publications Department must be regarded more idealistically than commercially.⁹¹

By 1936, the BBC had its arguments justifying its profitable magazine operations well rehearsed; the insistence that the magazines should be seen “idealistically” rather than “commercially” was at curious variance with the fact that the BBC was operating in a market-driven environment in which its competitors did not enjoy the same advantages. As discussed in subsequent chapter, the BBC had frequent clashes and disputes with individual magazines and with the Newspaper Proprietors Association where magazine competitors cried foul because of the perceived unfairness of the BBC’s privileged position. It is interesting therefore that the BBC had not conceived the need for the “back-up” of the printed word from the very first. This was the principal reason for the creation of *The Listener*; Briggs describes how *The Listener* was “born in contention” in January 1929 with the idea that “a magazine ... would back up the then dubious authority of the spoken word with the sacred authority of the written word” (Briggs, 1965, p.286).⁹²

The overt function of the *Radio Times* was to carry programme details for all of the BBC’s broadcasting stations in the British Isles, throughout the week, and it owed its creation to the fulfillment of this obligation. The Station Directors were ordered by Reith to supply the editors of the *Radio Times* such material as was required.⁹³ During the 1920s there had been no concept of scheduling programmes to fit around the daily routine of the audience. It was Reith’s philosophy that the purpose of BBC broadcasting should be to provide a public service by offering instructional programmes which promoted a high moral tone, as articulated throughout his 1924 work. As Moores (2000), Scannell (1989) and Briggs (1961) discuss, the extension of this stance was that the “programme planners sought to discourage lazy, non-stop listening” (Scannell, 1989, p.149) and they pursued a policy designed to thwart such behaviour. Moores describes how, during the experimental era of broadcasting, any continuity or regular timing of programmes was deliberately avoided and that “Periods of

⁹¹ *BBC Handbook 1935*, 1935, p.82.

⁹² As with both the *Radio Times* and *World-Radio* the news that the BBC was planning to bring out another publication met with bitter opposition and accusations of unfair competition from the existing weekly magazines; so incensed were some of the owners of these magazines that they appealed directly to the Prime Minister. However, the BBC carried their point, on the condition that the greater part of *The Listener*’s content should be entirely comprised of broadcast material (Briggs, 1965, pp.286-287).

⁹³ Memorandum from Reith dated 27th October 1923 cited by Briggs, 1961, p.298.

silence were left in the gaps between individual programmes and the same feature might return at a different moment each week”. This was done with the express purpose of encouraging “intelligent listening” and selectivity in programme choice. It was intended to prevent listeners from adopting regular daily patterns of listening (Moores, 2000, p122). Scannell also refers to the “deliberate avoidance of continuity” in and between programmes, and observes that only news bulletins had a regular fixed point in the schedule (Scannell, 1989, p.149).

This was the primary purpose of printing the schedule in advance; the *Radio Times* permitted the careful selection of programmes and perhaps most significantly of all, allowed readers to turn their radios off, knowing they were missing only the programmes they did not actively wish to hear. British listeners were thereby enjoined to be “discriminating” in their listening and the *Radio Times* duly carried the slogan “Plan Your Listening in Advance” (Briggs, 1965, p.282). “Listeners were expected to try and overcome the inconvenient fact that they were listening at home with all its attendant distractions, and to behave as if they were at the theatre or concert hall, or at a public lecture” (Scannell, 1989, pp.149-150). Moreover, from 1929, the BBC had become involved in government schemes to tackle the “enforced leisure” of unemployment, which was endemic during the period, as Bailey observes “not least because equipping the public to make the ‘right use of leisure’ was at the very heart of the BBC’s wider civilising mission” (Bailey, 2007, pp.468-469). Bailey describes how, from 1929, the BBC took part in a scheme which loaned wireless sets to occupational centres for the unemployed. The idea was that selected broadcasts would be listened to in groups for the purpose of discussion: “In other words, listening groups were to be inculcated in regulatory practices that were concurrent with the art of self-government, that is, rational discussion, tolerance, restraint and impartiality” (Bailey, 2007, p.468).

The BBC carried a similar message to its wider audience; it was very clear in the *BBC Year-Book 1930*, that it was the responsibility of each listener “to be his own programme-builder” choosing from the programmes detailed in the *Radio Times* and making a selection “which will satisfy his own particular ideas about what a week’s programmes should give him”. The alternative was potentially actively harmful:

To leave a set switched on, in the hope that before the evening is out one will hear something that one wants to hear, invites mental indigestion, or a chaotic state of mind in which one hears a hundred programmes and understands none.⁹⁴

While undoubtedly these admonishments to the listener sprang primarily from a concept of providing a service, the advice *not* to leave the wireless playing all day may have reflected the BBC's awareness that its programmes could never hope to satisfy all tastes, and by encouraging discriminating listening, it might thereby escape some of the criticism being leveled at it constantly. This was plaintively expressed in the *BBC Year-Book 1930*: "If a man wants to go to a music hall, and walks down the street and enters the first big building he sees lit up, and finds himself listening to a Symphony Concert, he doesn't blame the management" (*BBC Year-Book 1930*, 1930, p.60.)

The choice of the title for the "Organ" of the BBC has a semiotic significance; within the name is the suggestion that this was not just a programme guide listing broadcasting details, but implicitly, that this was the *time* of radio, and this magazine was *the* guide for the public. The BBC partly explained the choice of the magazine's title in the *BBC Year-Book 1934*, but remained enigmatic about the decision to use the term "radio" over the more commonly used "wireless":

Speculation is perhaps permissible as to the title of *The Radio Times*. How did it come about that in a country which has always talked of "wireless" and "broadcasting" and has never taken kindly to the foreign word "radio" that the British Broadcasting Company adopted the name *Radio Times* and as a corollary *World-Radio*? Suppose that from the beginning it had been called "The B.B.C. Programmes" what would have been the effect? How many listeners do not realise that *The Radio Times* is the B.B.C.'s official programme? (*BBC Year-Book, 1934*, p.38).

It may also have been intentional that the name evokes *The Times* newspaper; another well established national institution. This was no doubt deliberate: as discussed in Chapter Four, when broadcasting first appeared, for some it was an unnerving experience, and seeing the programme details laid out in the familiar format of a British institution would have had a reassuring effect. When it first appeared, the *Radio Times* resembled *The Times* newspaper quite closely, much more so, in fact, than it resembled contemporary magazines. At a time when pictorial news magazines were using a variety of illustrated covers, including poster art

⁹⁴ *BBC Year-Book 1930*, 1930, p.60.

and etchings made from photographs (Grow, 2002, online), the *Radio Times* initially had no cover; and “a magazine's cover tells about its editor's and publisher's promotional attitude and style” (Massie & Perry, 2002, p.270). Designed covers with black and another colour were only introduced later, and then the guiding principle was to enable the reader to distinguish one week's issues from the next.⁹⁵

The *Radio Times* had an atypical purpose for a magazine, which perhaps explains why, in the first issue, the Director of Programmes, Arthur Burrows, compared it, not to a publication of entertainment or artistic character, but to Bradshaw's Railway Timetables. By employing this analogy, styling it “The Bradshaw of Broadcasting” the BBC was subliminally invoking another “National institution”, guiding the listening public.⁹⁶ However, the adoption of the term the Bradshaw of Broadcasting was disingenuous, since the BBC had no intention that their new publication should be merely a timetable of programmes; the *Radio Times* was an instrument of propaganda for a BBC, which was careful of its image and the projection of its ideals. Briggs saliently observes that Reith “chose to say relatively little in public about the immense value which the BBC attached to the *Radio Times* as its official organ” (Briggs, 1961, p.342). However, when Gladstone Murray was appointed Director of Publicity in 1923, his remit was to deal with propaganda, publicity, and the production of the *Radio Times* (Briggs, 1961, p.296).⁹⁷ Along with his general public relations remit, Gladstone Murray was also to “shape the public ‘image’” of the BBC through the *Radio Times* (Briggs, 1961, p.296). Briggs observes that the first article of each number of the *Radio Times* was usually used to carry a message the BBC wanted to convey and was “mildly propagandist in character”. Briggs cites several articles, such as “The Healing Power of Radio”, “Salute to the Microphone” and “Radio in the Changing Home” (Briggs, 1961, p.307).

For the first few years, the *Radio Times* had the aspect of a sententious paper, with few illustrations, and unsmiling photographs, set in traditional Times New Roman type font. It certainly did not present a “modern” appearance, which was at curious odds with the

⁹⁵ This was discussed in a memorandum to Reith and is examined in greater detail later in the Chapter. Assistant Controller, 1929. To Reith, J.C.W. (8th November). [Internal Circulating Memorandum.] BBC WAC R43/150/3/Publications *Radio Times* 1928-34.

⁹⁶ The comparison is the more pertinent since the publication of the *Radio Times* was driven forward personally by Reith himself, and the figure behind the Railway Timetables, George Bradshaw, was, like Reith, both an engineer by training and a man of deeply held religious conviction who extended his beliefs into a social context.

⁹⁷ Although the term propaganda gained stronger and more sinister connotations in the Second World War, the term during this period had the connotation of presenting something in a positive light.

pioneering aspect to broadcasting. As Reed (1997) observes: “Its division of the page into paragraphs on ‘personalities’, accompanied by their formal portraits, laid out in three columns, could have been lifted straight from pages out of the older titles” (Reed, 1997, p.177). However, the magazine was subject to regular “make-overs”. The *Radio Times* masthead alone went through a number of re-settings throughout the 1920s and 1930s.⁹⁸ In 1923 the focus was on the new technology of wireless broadcasting and the magazine’s masthead reflected this. It was a hand-drawn sketch, depicting a foreshortened map of the British Isles, with “The Radio Times” title appearing across the picture in a black serified font, with a shadow effect, and elongated tails to the “R” of Radio and the “S” of Times which almost met, and which gave the title the pleasing effect of balance. Below the title was the tag line “The Official Organ of the B.B.C.” and the BBC logo appeared in the top right corner (see fig. 6.1).⁹⁹ The map showed the locations of the BBC’s transmitters dotted around the country, however, this sketch had to be regularly redrawn as the number of transmitters constantly increased. Currie says of the masthead:

The growth of broadcasting had another more immediately obvious effect on The Radio Times. Its masthead sketch-map of Britain had at first shown just the six stations on air when the paper began – but in the Autumn of 1924 the map was redrafted to include all the stations whose programmes were annotated between its covers. A magnifying glass would have been a useful gift to readers ...¹⁰⁰

The masthead was flanked by what might have been mistaken by the uninitiated in 1923 for a washing-line, but which was, in fact, a representation of an aerial.¹⁰¹ In the summer of 1926 it was decided that the *Radio Times* should be completely overhauled and this time it was to be given a permanent cover.¹⁰² This made it feel less like a newspaper, and less ephemeral, and gave it a more modern appeal as a regular magazine. It would also have had the affect of giving the magazine a more widespread appeal, a feature noted earlier in Razlogova’s discussion of the covers of the “radio fan magazines”. Giving the magazine a more

⁹⁸ Lord Liddell, the Chairman of George Newnes Ltd, complained to Reith that the *Radio Times* was too often “dug up by the roots for examination, refreshment, pruning and reparation” Briggs, 1961, p.307.

⁹⁹ This was the logo which was to become a bone of contention in the BBC’s battle with The International Broadcasting Company.

¹⁰⁰ Currie, 2001, p.15.

¹⁰¹ The aerial was to become a feature of increasing urbanisation, as more and more households had “Heath Robinson” affairs draped around their gardens, and even “cats’ cradles” criss-crossing their living rooms Scannell & Cardiff, 1991, p.356.

¹⁰² The *Radio Times* always had a coloured cover at Christmas from December 23rd 1923, except for the years from 1940-43 when it was printed using just one colour (red), and from 1945-56 when it had black and white covers. In 1957 colour returned in an iconic cover depicting a red robin designed by James Hart.

substantial protective cover was also a logical development, in view's of the BBC's urging that the magazine should be consulted as a programme guide throughout the week to plan listening ahead. Therefore it necessarily had to be kept on hand, to be consulted as to timings and frequencies. Moreover, the General Editor of BBC Publications, Basil Nicholls, felt that the masthead needed to keep step with the technological developments:

I am now bringing forward an agreed recommendation for the above [Radio Times Permanent Cover]. ... The design, which is by Kauffer, is very simple and modern in feeling. It could be argued that it has nothing particularly symbolical of wireless about it, but one is more and more driven to the idea that little aerials and loudspeakers and things like that are out of place ...¹⁰³

The fact that the BBC was treading a very fine line between asserting its right to deliver the best service it could, and unfairly using its advantages to outstrip all competition is demonstrated by the fact that there was an immediate reaction to this proposed change from the other magazines proprietors, most notably from John Scott-Taggart, Editor-in-Chief Radio Press Ltd. Scott-Taggart was moved to protest to Gladstone Murray that an alteration such as a separate cover would be bound to result in unfavourable comparisons with those magazines published (such as his own *Wireless Weekly*) by private enterprise who did not receive "any of the advantages of a monopoly programme and extraordinary publicity through the microphone". He protested in strong terms:

I have heard that it is proposed to print the "Radio Times" with a separate coloured cover. I sincerely hope that there is no intention of doing this, at any rate during the present year. I believe you have some idea of improving the paper out of extra sums which you propose to get from advertising, but this seems to me rather illogical, because the paper sells very well now and there is surely no necessity to increase the advertising rate in order to spend the extra money on improving the paper.¹⁰⁴

Scott-Taggart's fear that potential advertisers would prefer to place their advertisements in a more attractive *Radio Times* was evidently his motivating influence for this intervention. The newspapers and wireless press and the radio manufacturing industry were deeply unhappy about the BBC's unwelcome incursion into the publication markets, to the extent that the

¹⁰³ Nicholls, B.E., 1926. To Assistant Controller and Director General. Radio Times Permanent Cover (8th November). [Internal Circulating Memorandum.] BBC WAC R43/150/3 Publications/Radio Times/1928-1934.

¹⁰⁴ Scott-Taggart, J., 1925. To Gladstone Murray, W.E. (3rd March). [Letter.] BBC WAC R43/150/1 Radio Times (1923-1925). [Marked Private.]

BBC found it politic to reassure them (some of whom were shareholders in the company) by agreeing that the *Radio Times* would neither carry advertisements for separate component wireless parts nor carry detailed technical articles which would compete with the technical wireless press (Currie, 2001, p.5, Briggs, 1961, p.297). As Harold Evans, former editor of *The Sunday Times* observed, “a newspaper can no more be designed in isolation from commercial influences on the press than it can from the demands of journalism” (Evans, 1976, p.42). So it was with *The Radio Times*, and the founding companies of the British Broadcasting Company had duly filled its pages with advertisements of their own products. The BBC was undeterred by Scott-Taggart’s opposition however, and continued with its plans. In 1930 it went on to make further improvements with another redesign of the masthead, to make it more authoritative, with the title (still with the definite pronoun at this point), “The Radio Times” in a narrow, black serifed font (see figs. 6.1 and 7.1). In 1930 the BBC announced that it had had a bespoke coat of arms created, and it unveiled this in the *BBC Year-Book 1930* (see fig. 7.2) with an explanation of what it called the “successful translation of the BBC's technical and artistic functions into heraldic language”:

Ancient symbols have been found for the electrical nature of broadcasting (the thunderbolt and lightning flash), the speed of it (eagles), its work of public proclamation (bugles), its scope and breadth (the world and universe), and its ultimate ideal (the motto “Nation Shall speak peace unto Nation”). The heraldic description of the Coat of Arms is as follows: "Azure a Terrestrial Globe proper encircled by an Amulet Or, and seven Estoiles in Orle Argent, and for the Crest, on a Wreath of the Colours, a Lion passant Or, grasping in the dexter fore-paw a Thunderbolt proper. Supporters on either side, an Eagle, wings addorsed proper collared Azure pendent therefrom a Bugle horn stringed Or.¹⁰⁵

This was an interesting development and provides an insight into how it wished to portray itself, because the BBC, by its own acknowledgement, had no right to use the royal arms, not being either a government department or an official body. So the decision to have a coat of arms created must have been an indication that the lack of official status was perceived by the BBC as an irksome omission. A coat of arms bestowed the organisation’s official documents with a degree of *gravitas*; it also endowed the BBC with an illusory pedigree, which it had not yet had the longevity to acquire. The timing may also indicate a response to the arrival of competitors, reflecting the BBC’s desire to remind the public of its dominance over

¹⁰⁵ *BBC Year-Book 1930*, 1930, p.44.

broadcasting; the adaptation of “ancient symbols” to represent broadcasting in the BBC’s own coat of arms is tantamount to a claim of ownership over the ether.

Gorham described how difficult it was to find out what the BBC motto should be when the masthead was to be redesigned yet again in 1937. The BBC had never formally abandoned the “Nation Shall Speak Peace Unto Nation” motto, but its use had discontinued. He found it “quite maddening trying to get an answer to such a query in Pre-War BBC” (Gorham, 1948, p.84). In the end the new masthead appeared with no motto; the definite article was now dropped and “Radio Times” appeared in a bold, square, serified font with a stylised graphic of the coat of arms and the similarly definite article-less “Journal of the British Broadcasting Corporation” replacing the sonorous “The Official Organ of the BBC”. The 1937 masthead was plainer, firmer and more modern with its modified graphic crest; it appeared generally more business-like, as befitted the mood of the times. Although there were constant discussions about the format and content of the *Radio Times*, its undeniable success encouraged the BBC to consider other possible magazines, one of these being the “Supplement” or *World-Radio* which was to assume such strategic importance for the BBC, as discussed in Chapter Six.

While George Newnes Ltd. held editorial control over the *Radio Times*, there were constant disagreements between the publishers and the BBC throughout 1924 and 1925 (Currie, 2001, p.16). It was felt that the *Radio Times* would never truly be the official organ of the BBC until it had full editorial control. This was eventually achieved in February 1926. The business arrangement whereby the profits were shared with the publisher George Newnes Ltd was terminated, and going forward the BBC paid the publishers a commission on the net receipts from sales and advertisements. Briggs notes how advantageous this was for the BBC: “The revised arrangement greatly benefited the BBC, which ... was able to put aside for general expenditure substantial sums raised as profits from the *Radio Times*” (Briggs, 1961, p.307). Briggs also records that the magazine dictated a new policy in planning programmes, since arrangements for printing and distribution required a greater lead-time (Briggs, 1965, p.32). This presents the *Radio Times* and its importance to the BBC in quite a different light; it may have begun as a “spin-off” which publicised the programmes, but it had taken on such an importance, both in terms of the platform it gave the BBC and the revenue it raised, that its printing schedule actually influenced the planning of programmes. Walter Fuller, who had experience as the former Managing Editor of the *Weekly Westminster*

became the first *Radio Times*' editor to be employed by the BBC (Briggs, 1961, p.306). However, he was only editor from 1926 to 1927, as he died unexpectedly, and was replaced by Eric Maschwitz, who was editor from 1927 to 1933.

In spite of the *Radio Times*' immediate success as a magazine, the BBC struggled with its image during the first few years, as the comments of Maschwitz indicate. Four years after the birth of the magazine, he was still complaining of a prevalent tendency for broadcasting to be seen "not as an Art but as a bastard form of the other Arts". He was precise about the type of article which would hit the correct tone of *gravitas*:

"The Radio Times" should publish, if and when it can, such articles as will, by taking it seriously, raise broadcasting to the position which, as an Art, it should hold. Examples of articles which serve this purpose are those by Raymond Swing (October 28th, 1927 and December 2nd, 1927). Val Gielgud (December 9th, 1927 and January 13th, 1928), Andrew Soutar (December 16th 1927) and Cecil Lewis (December 30th, 1927). That any of these are 'ideal' I do not claim but they are a big step in the right direction and have drawn a more intelligent and lively correspondence and controversy from listeners than any articles I can recall during the past year.¹⁰⁶

It is clear from this that Maschwitz felt that the *Radio Times* could assist in the reassignment of broadcasting from a hybrid of other media into a new form with a higher purpose. He envisaged this as being achieved by attracting an intelligent readership and stimulating a lively debate through its readers' correspondence.

***Radio Times* Content**

In addition to his aspiration for the *Radio Times* to be a vehicle for intelligent debate about broadcasting, during his time as editor, Maschwitz was guided by three principle objectives: the first was to support and annotate the BBC's programmes, the second was to serve the listener by providing general or leading articles which contributed towards the listener's critical appreciation of programmes and the third was to convey the BBC messages about changes in the BBC policy or service (Briggs, 1965, pp.282-283). Some elements of the content of the *Radio Times* were more varied than was usual with magazines. As previously noted, while the most successful strategy adopted by magazine publishers was to specialise and cater for a niche market, the *Radio Times* was forced into the very opposite editorial

¹⁰⁶ Maschwitz E., 1928. To Nicholls, B.E. Radio Times Editorial Policy, (16th January). [Internal Circulating Memorandum.] BBC Written Archive, BBC WAC R43/150/3 Publications/Radio Times/1928-1934.

policy and to be as inclusive as possible. It cannot be assessed how popular the *Radio Times* would have been had its success depended on the merit of its editorial content, as it sold on the strength of providing programme details alone. As with the BBC programmes planners, the *Radio Times*' editors tried to appeal to a varied taste. Features included many pieces about classical music, but also a regular column entitled "Tempo Di Jazz" written by Leonard G. Feather, which dealt with dance music and jazz; it was much shorter than the classical music articles.

Gorham's appointment as editor in 1933 marked a step-change in the artistic style of *Radio Times*, and one which saw it transformed into one of the UK's leading patrons of graphic art (Currie, 2001, p.23). Gorham did not initially find the BBC receptive to the idea that the *Radio Times* needed to invest in developing its art work. He had previously been Assistant Editor on the *Radio Times*, and suggested that the paper needed an Art Editor. He proposed himself for the job, requesting the title and an increase in pay. What followed was extraordinary:

I was told I had better do the job without being called Art Editor and without any more pay, and see how it turned out. So I replied that in that case I would go on with my own work and somebody else could look after the illustrations. I was afterwards told that this reply of mine was considered so irregular that my memo was burnt rather than being put on file.¹⁰⁷

By his own assertion, Gorham frequently clashed with the personnel of other BBC departments, in particular the General Editor of BBC Publications, Basil Nicholls, who had not previously worked in a publishing job.¹⁰⁸ In spite of this, Gorham was very loyal to the *Radio Times* and stayed on to do his best to make it "the most catholic illustrated paper in the country". Gorham recalled:

I must confess that we published plenty of drawings that rather horrify me now, and in fact, as soon as I myself became editor there was a considerable narrowing-down of our style. It was not so much in the direction of modernity that we exceeded, because that was catching up with us all the time. You can shock in other ways than that.¹⁰⁹

¹⁰⁷ Gorham, 1948, p.28.

¹⁰⁸ Basil Nicholls had previously been Station Director in Manchester and was considered one of the "coming men" of the BBC; he went on to become Director of Internal Administration (Gorham, 1948, p.28; Briggs, 1965, p.16).

¹⁰⁹ Gorham, 1948, p.35.

In addition to the problem over ascertaining what the BBC wished to use as its official motto, discussed above, Gorham had other difficulties with the BBC's indecisive policies, which had an effect on what he could print, including Reith's policy of avoiding the BBC's announcers being accorded "star" or celebrity status by the public by insisting that they remain anonymous (Gorham, 1948, p.58.) As discussed in Chapter Eight this was to have unfortunate consequences when in the latter part of the 1930s when the fan magazine *Radio Pictorial* capitalised on this policy by making stories of BBC announcers a regular feature.

There were several regular features in the *Radio Times* in the mid-1930s, including some which were self-explanatory such as "What the Regions are Planning" and "What is your choice this week?" which looked at highlights for the programming in the week ahead. Another was "Both Sides of the Microphone" which was written by Gorham himself. Gorham reflected that he felt particularly proud of this page, and tried to make sure that each week it included something fresh to enjoy. The purpose of the feature was to update the audience with news about interesting items in forthcoming programmes, but, as Gorham recalled it was also the BBC's "only vehicle for general gossip, follow-ups, and all the trivia of broadcasting that were not related to the programmes of that particular week" (Gorham, 1948, p.67). As with much of the BBC's output, there is little available extant information on the reception of Gorham's page, but this readers' letter printed in a number from March 1934 testifies to its popularity:

To me, the greatest marvel of The Radio Times' production is its apt compromise between 'blue bookish' officiousness and Fleet Street 'magazinishness'. Perhaps this marvel may be in part explained by The Radio Times always commencing with 'Both Sides of the Microphone', a hearty meal of entertaining and inoffensively gossipy information, and illustrated but Arthur Watts, too, that adorable draughtsman who could sneeze felicitous humour out of a Royal Society thesis. What glutton could want more? *George Kerley, Fulham, London.*¹¹⁰

At the time, Gorham's only real guide to what the public wanted him to pursue on these pages was also the correspondence the *Radio Times* received in any given week about a particular broadcast; an indication of the importance of readers' letters to the BBC in gauging the direction of the public's interest.

¹¹⁰ *Radio Times*, 16th March 1934.

The readers' letters pages themselves were published under the feature "What the Other Listener Thinks" (see fig. 8.1). During this period this feature covered one and a half pages, or up to 27 letters per number. Razlogova had found that "Letter columns usually included from three to eleven letters per issue, or from forty to a hundred letters a year for a given monthly or weekly magazine" which indicates a more than averagely generous space was allotted to readers' letters in the *Radio Times* (Razlogova, 2011, p.69). The *Radio Times'* editorial staff and the Controllers at the BBC had an expectation that the letters page was one of the readers' favourite sections because when a survey of reader's opinion was finally sought, this question was specifically asked in the section of the investigation aimed directly at housewives (see Appendix II). The letters received by the BBC and their reaction to them is discussed in detail in Chapter Ten. One of the special numbers of *Radio Times* which were occasionally run was called the *Radio Times Humour Number*, and on its cover was depicted Gilroy's now iconic picture of a laughing cat (see fig. 8.2). However, a reader subsequently wrote in to complain that the number had been very amusing, but that the funniest page of all had been missing from the issue, which had caused great disappointment. The letter writer explained that she skipped through all the comedian's jokes:

I passed these gentry by to read at greater leisure
And thumbed these pages quickly in search of hidden treasure.
For the Listeners' Letter page contains humour of the best
(Whether consciously or not) and I devour this page with zest ...
I was doomed to disappointment and really felt quite flat –
Not a single listener's letter praising this or damning that!
This omission (may one hope?) is a temporary measure,
For I'm sure I'm not the only one
To whom this page gives pleasure.¹¹¹

Other regular features from this period, during the 1930s, included "The World We Listen In", which during the mid-1930s was written by the BBC critic Filson Young, and later was written by a variety of guest names. This was supposed to be a forum for the raising of intelligent debate about radio, which the BBC was desperate to encourage. Gorham describes how he spent a lot of his time trying to get copy for the *Radio Times* from people who might give the discussion a "new angle". He was not always successful however: "I got some good articles out of it but many disappointments too. In those days few intelligent people thought

¹¹¹ *Radio Times*, 30th October 1935.

much about the radio. If they did turn it on it was only for music and news” (Gorham, 1948, p.67). The absence of discussion about the wider issues and concepts of broadcasting were a source of great frustration to Gorham as he sought material which contained progressive thought and argument for the magazine. It was a problem which was endemic throughout the programme sections too:

In programme-planning circles they talked easily about contracts and alternatives, this kind of audience and that kind, successes and failures, good programmes and bad; and it was all based on what the BBC officials themselves thought, plus various odd impressions gathered from correspondence (which is a notoriously unreliable guide), Press comment that nobody in the BBC was supposed to read or at least take seriously, and occasional *obiter dicta* from friends, charwomen, and people met in the train.¹¹²

As discussed, broadcasting contained an inherent flaw for the audience that its views and feelings about what was being communicated had no natural or immediate channel for response. This was compounded by the fact that BBC officials planned the programmes without recourse to the wishes of the audience. As Gorham says, as a guide to public opinion the correspondence may have been notoriously unreliable (discussed in Chapter Ten), but it was the only source for information anyone in the BBC had, and it was also the only means of responding left open to the audience, who could either to write directly to the BBC or to a broadcasting magazine.

The *Radio Times* in the 1930s was comprised of many other incidental features and articles, and as Murphy identifies, the magazine’s staple fare was the BBC’s programmes. Murphy cites the column by Isa Benzie, who as Foreign Director in October 1937 described her plans for ‘Autumn Broadcasts from Abroad’ (Murphy, 2011, p.26). Generally, in the 1930s, as in the 1920s, the BBC continued to project its image through the vehicle of the *Radio Times* as essentially serious in tone, as Murphy observes, the “seriousness and decorum appropriate for an organisation committed to public service” (Murphy, 2011, p.65). Those features which were humorous in nature, such as the “Samuel Pepys, Listener” by R.M. Freeman maintained a gentle and rather stately tone. This feature was a fictitious diary with a wireless-focus written in the quasi-language Seventeenth-Century language of Pepys, complete with archaic spelling. This extract gives a flavour of the column:

¹¹² Gorham, 1948, p.59.

Great joy I had this night in listening to the Wireless Male Chorus ... and I never heard them better sung. Such a feeling, moreover, imparted into the 'Land o' the Leal' as did give me the creepy dithers down my back almost, and my wife feigning an onset of the sneazes in the last verse to explain her runny eyes.¹¹³

The *Radio Times Fiftieth Anniversary Souvenir 1923-1973* number says of this feature "It might seem bizarre today, but in the 20s it rated a weekly splash in the magazine". It was often accompanied by illustrations of Mr and Mrs Pepys at home (*Radio Times Fiftieth Anniversary Souvenir 1923-1973*, 1973).

Women's Pages in the *Radio Times*

In spite of the lack of listener research, there were occasions on which BBC officials had a strong intuition that a specific direction was necessary; Murphy identifies Elsie Spratt as being a champion of "domesticity" who in addition to gathering material for a compilation BBC book of the most popular *Household Talks*, which sold more than 15,000 copies in three months, was also instrumental in a new feature for women being added to the *Radio Times* from 1928 (Murphy, 2011, p.218). Women's 'homepages' did not become a regular feature until March 1934. However, in the J. Walter Thompson's report on the *Results of the Investigation Amongst Readers of the "Radio Times" and "Listener"* the BBC questioned housewives whether they liked "The Women's Page" but during the period the column for women was called "I Saw Yesterday" and it was written by Irene Veal.¹¹⁴ Veal invited readers to write to her with their questions: "If you want to ask me any questions about home, fashions, shopping, or beauty, or would like suggestions for your summer outfits, please write to me ..." (*Radio Times*, 3rd May 1935). These pages often supplemented the household talks broadcast in the day, and addressed the woman as the guardian of all matters familial and domestic. Although articles varied and included a diversity of subjects, perhaps the most interesting regular feature, in terms of the way it exhorted women readers/listeners to be disciplined, was a column by the home economist Elizabeth Craig. In her first article (*Radio Times*, 30th March 1934) she instructed housewives how to plan their working day by breaking it down into an ordered succession of prescribed domestic responsibilities. This recalls Bailey and Greenfield & Reid's observations, discussed in Chapter Four, that there

¹¹³ *Radio Times*, 3rd May 1935.

¹¹⁴ Results of the Investigation Amongst Readers of the "Radio Times" and "Listener" 1937. [Report.] BBC WAC R43/205 Publications, Readership Investigation Amongst Readers of the "Radio Times" and "Listener".

was a prevailing theory during this period that it was the woman's duty to carry out her household tasks in an orderly and disciplined manner.

In addition to seeing the reintroduction of pages for women, 1934 also saw the publication of a *Radio Times* special number devoted to "Woman's Broadcasting", which included an assertion that women listener's had *always* been valued by the BBC (see fig. 9.1). The timing is significant, since it came later in the same year that the women-orientated *Radio Pictorial* had been launched, as discussed at length in Chapter Eight. In this number, Mary Agnes Hamilton, a Governor of the BBC from 1932-1937 (Murphy, 2011, pp.30-31) remarked:

So far as broadcasting is concerned, and from its beginning, women have been enfranchised, and by full and free admission, interested over the entire range of human and humane concern, and capable of making a contribution to it. ... Broadcasting, here, has the advantage of its youth. It has grown up quite outside the old narrow and narrowing prejudices, and, from the first, has seen women as people, on whichever side of the microphone they are placed. ... There are persons, I know, who do not like women's voices, either in the house of Commons or at the microphone, but they are getting over that.¹¹⁵

This is an interesting reframing of the part that women were able to play in broadcasting outside of the role of performers, since the BBC's first national female announcer (Mrs Sheila Borrett) was dismissed because her voice had been unpopular with listeners.¹¹⁶ Another *Radio Times* special number was "The *Radio Times* Fireside Number" published on November 15th 1935 and this was devoted to depicting an image of the cosy and domestically harmonious home life of the nation. The "Fireside Pages" feature explained:

For this Fireside Number of THE RADIO TIMES we have thought it appropriate to increase the usual number of Homes Pages, and to invite Irene Veal, whose weekly column 'I saw Yesterday ...' has proved such a popular feature of this journal, to take over the Editorship of the pages for this week only...¹¹⁷

The rest of this particular column contained tips all about Christmas Shopping. Other items on the page included "Is the 'helpless' woman really helpless?" by the actress Marion Lorne (the conclusion was that she was not really helpless, but that she was still most useful to society because she "gets the best out of everyone" and "makes them happy" (*Radio Times*

¹¹⁵ *Radio Times Woman's Broadcasting Number*, 30th March 1934.

¹¹⁶ Her place at the microphone was cut-short as a result of the "countless complaints, mainly from women listeners, as she told readers of *Radio Pictorial* in 9th March 1934.

¹¹⁷ *Radio Times*, 15th November 1935.

Fireside Number, November 15th 1935)). There was another feature on Rose Rosenberg, who, as private secretary to Ramsay MacDonald presented the experience of a successful and professional woman. This particular column by Veal contained advice about domestic issues, clothing advice, flattering stockings for “plump legs”, etc. Her page was generally very similar to the advice pages in women’s magazines, although it was more low-key than others, certainly than *Radio Pictorial*’s, having many less glamorous photographs. The illustrations were called “Practical Pictures” and often depicted tips for the kitchen, or a flower arrangement. There were occasionally photographs of smartly dressed women modeling hats and fashion accessories, for example, but there were many fewer photographs and pictures than adorned the pages of “The Women Listener” pages in *Radio Pictorial*. Veal’s advice column was often accompanied by recipes and articles written by authors who addressed such issues which might be expected to appeal to women; children’s schooling and “Have you a Home Medicine Chest” which was about the importance of looking after the family’s diet, and was written by a state registered nurse, again, recalling Bailey’s remarks about broadcasting assigning women with the responsibility for family, and therefore public, health (Bailey, 2009, p.63).

As with other women’s magazines “A Page for Children” was a regular feature; this included interesting facts which might appeal to young people; for example where strange place names came from, or facts about “Clever Caterpillars” and occasionally a very short story. There was also a section advising on forthcoming programmes which might be interesting for children, such as “Living in an Arab Village” or a particular concert. The tone of the page was educational and informative, rather than lively and amusing.

A Note on Advertisements

Radio Times was three times the length of *Radio Pictorial*; *Radio Pictorial* averaging 32 pages, and *Radio Times* averaging 96 pages. Much of the difference in page length was taken up with advertisements in the *Radio Times*, which appeared interspersed throughout the editorials and programmes listings, sometimes occurring on every other page. The advertisements were very similar in nature to those appearing in *Radio Pictorial*, although there were many more – many were identical – and tended to be either for wireless sets or component parts, or household and personal products, including pills and remedies, many for nervous complaints or some perceived bodily weakness. (For a list of the advertisements in

Radio Pictorial for 1934 see Appendix III. This exercise was not repeated for *Radio Times* because of the identical nature of the advertisements).

Conclusion

The *Radio Times* had a difficult remit; its function was primarily to provide details and publicity for forthcoming BBC programmes, but once the idea for it had been born in Reith's mind, he saw its potential as an almost limitless vehicle for the BBC to connect to its readers. Still the *Radio Times* had a problem which was similar to that faced by the BBC's programme schedulers; it had to have mass appeal. Where other magazines could specialise and develop their material to attract a niche audience, the *Radio Times* had to reach readers across age, gender and class. The solution which the editors of the *Radio Times* appear to have adopted for this conundrum was for each individual item or feature to be a self-contained in-depth piece, which the interested could read and find informative, and which, those for whom it had no appeal, could ignore. This was, after all, consistent with the BBC's exhortations to its listening public to plan its listening, making a selection of only those programmes which attracted the listeners' interest.

It was not until 1937 when the BBC commissioned an *Investigation Amongst Readers of the "Radio Times" and "Listener"* that the BBC knew which of its magazines sections appealed most to its readers, but this survey was aimed mainly at the housewife. It was clear that while ensuring that it appealed to a wide readership, the editors of the *Radio Times* had, by 1934, understood the importance of the female market, and provided pages specifically aimed at women, and children too. The fact that so many of the advertisements that the *Radio Times* carried were directed towards female consumers also provides a strong indication that advertisers envisaged the magazine as reaching a female readership; the *Radio Times* clearly had no difficulty in attracting advertisers of female-orientated products.

Chapter Six

Unintended Consequences: *World-Radio's* Inadvertent Assistance to Foreign Competition

This week I am going to suggest an entirely new pastime to lovers of long-distance searching, for nights when conditions on the normal broadcast band and the higher wave-lengths are not too good. This is the deliberate reception of distant stations by means of their harmonics.¹¹⁸

Introduction

After briefly examining the nature of the BBC's broadcasting monopoly, the focus of this Chapter shifts to the events surrounding the launch of another BBC magazine: the foreign programmes listing magazine *World-Radio*. Although not a particularly successful magazine financially, *World-Radio* had a significant part to play in educating the public in tuning-in to foreign programmes, thereby creating a situation which would lead to the unforeseen consequence of competition from foreign stations. Its strategic importance to the BBC is assessed, and also the BBC's reaction when the interests of the magazine were threatened. Captain Plugge's role in this is also examined; his companies, the Radio International Publicity Services and the subsequently formed International Broadcasting Company, were central to the events in the 1920s which led to the situation in the 1930s by which the door to commercial competition was opened. In this respect, Wallis' (2008) biography of Plugge has filled in many gaps in both his and his company's contribution to this era of broadcasting. The primary sources for explicating the BBC's response to the threat to its dominance are the memoranda and letters held in the BBC Written Archives at Caversham.

Establishing a Monopoly

The Crawford Committee, like the Sykes Committee before it, was convened to debate the future of broadcasting.¹¹⁹ The report of the Crawford Committee, chaired by the Earl of Crawford and Balcarres, was published on 5th March 1926, and its chief recommendation was

¹¹⁸ *World-Radio*, 15th July 1927.

¹¹⁹ The findings of the Sykes Committee (named after its Chairman Sir Frederick Sykes) were published in a report released on 1st October 1923, and made a significant contribution towards defining the "nature" of British Broadcasting (Street, 2002, p.30).

that, in opposition to the system prevailing in the United States, in the UK there should be a broadcasting monopoly “controlled by a single authority” (Briggs, 1961, p.9).

Two of the main considerations behind the decision to organise UK broadcasting along the lines of a single authority were that this was considered to be an efficient and controllable arrangement and also, it guarded against the perceived alternative of commercial broadcasting which operated in the United States “a horror against which the monopoly was a shield” (Coase, 1950, p.195). There was a persistent association between independent broadcasting companies and commercial advertising; as it was, the newspaper and magazine press were concerned that broadcasting was a competitor for their revenues from advertising. However, on 14th July 1926, it was announced that the Government intended to accept the majority of the Crawford Committee’s recommendations. As a direct consequence, on 31st December 1926, the broadcasting service was to be handed over to a single authority which would not be “a creature of Parliament and connected with political activity”, but rather a body which derived its power from a Royal Charter (Street, 2002, pp.34-35). The British Broadcasting Company was to become the British Broadcasting Corporation, with Reith as the Director-General.

The main features of the monopoly were that the BBC was to run broadcasting as a *public service* Corporation; it would not be controlled directly by Parliament; it would be funded from the licence fee (which was determined by the Post-Office, and the Post-Office also took a proportion of this). It also had to provide a certain percentage of educational programmes. While the BBC was pleased to accept the tasks laid upon it, (and, as it transpired, was equally ready to defend them), the question of how they were to be enforced was not considered at this stage. As it turned out, the establishment of the monopoly was not the end to all challenge to the authority of the BBC, but rather it was the beginning.

One of the first difficulties with giving one organisation the monopoly of the airwaves was that it was largely conceptual. The BBC’s first Chief Engineer Captain Peter Eckersley had observed that “no chain of stations has a monopoly of the air” (Eckersley, 1942, p.139). This was well understood by the BBC; in the same memorandum from Gladstone Murray to Reith quoted in Chapter Four in which the Director of Publicity, Gladstone Murray, fulminated over the machinations of the Newspaper Proprietors Association (NPA), Gladstone Murray also commented “It stands to reason that as broadcasting enlarges its domain the established

interests will do all they can to resist its progress”.¹²⁰ His words were prophetic; as a consequence of ‘cause and effect’ Browne (1985) suggests that the holder of such a monopoly must inevitably take steps to maintain its position:

When monopolies are created, their creators quickly acquire a vested interest in their perpetuation. Where monopolies in broadcasting are concerned, ‘creators’ would include not only the broadcasting organisation, but also the national government, which in almost every instance would have sanctioned and even promoted the monopoly in the first place.¹²¹

Through the Postmaster-General, the Government did have certain powers which would enable it to control the BBC, according to a clause in its licence, but these powers were never actually invoked and in effect, the BBC was allowed to assume independence in its governance (Cawte, 1996, p.7). The confirmation that UK broadcasting would be run as a monopoly was seen as the answer to the problem of how to protect the UK from the commercial disarray which United States model had resulted in (Street, 2006, p.79). However, Continental Europe had similar models in operation and the cooperation of private companies across Europe was to be a crucial factor in the rise of commercial broadcasting in the 1930s. As Street says, “There is no doubt that the greatest level of European participation with the British companies at this time came from French stations” (Street, 2006, p. 266).

There were two problems with the establishment of the broadcasting monopoly: the first was, as Browne observes, that “monopolies tend to attract challengers” (Browne, 1985, p.3). There was a course open to the challenger of a broadcasting monopoly who could find a location outside the target country from which to broadcast (Browne, 1985, p.3). This prefigures what happened in the 1930s, the critical point being that the International Broadcasting Company (IBC), a legitimate business concern, had found a loophole which, while not exactly legal, could not easily be prevented under UK Law. The second problem was that, clearly, it was a particular feature of wireless broadcasting that the medium carrying the content, the radio waves, could not be confined to national borders. Or as Captain Eckersley phrased it “wireless waves flip across frontiers with persistent disregard for regulation” (Eckersley, 1942, p.143). The result, as described by Gorman was a “state of frequency chaos” (Gorman, 2009, p.145). This problem was not only that broadcasts travelled over borders, but

¹²⁰ Gladstone Murray, W.E, 1926. To Reith, J.C.W. (23rd January). [Internal Circulating Memorandum.] BBC WAC R43/150/2 Publications/Radio Times/1926-1927.

¹²¹ Browne, 1985, p.3.

broadcasts could also be very far-reaching. As Cawte describes a “fog of war” had developed where “foreign language broadcasts and counter broadcasts aiming to ‘jam’ them, all transmitted from long- and medium-wave stations of ever increasing power” (Cawte, 1996, p.9).

The airwaves were becoming over-crowded and the BBC had a vested interest in bringing some order to this chaos so that it could broadcast uninterrupted and unimpeded. Under pressure from the BBC, the Union Internationale de Radiophonie (UIR) formed in April 1925 and was based in Geneva, with delegates from ten European countries. The President was Vice-Admiral Charles Carpendale, then the Deputy Manager of the British Broadcasting Company and a close colleague of Reith’s. A Technical Committee was duly set up to investigate how the airwaves might be fairly allocated, and this was under the leadership of Captain Eckersley, the BBC’s Chief Engineer (*BBC Handbook 1928*, 1928, p.285). The result was the “Plan de Genève” which allocated a certain number of exclusive wavebands to all countries, providing guidance “into a sane conception of National Broadcasting” as described by Captain Eckersley (quoted in *BBC Handbook 1928*, 1928, p.287). The success of this plan is subjective but what is indisputable is the extent to which the BBC succeeded in holding the key positions on the Committee which then made it very well placed to persuade the Committee to act in a way which protected the BBC’s interest.

The BBC was the state State-sanctioned monopolist, and was therefore able to raise the revenue to pay for its expenses from a licence. But as Browne observes:

If a challenger can interest advertisers in having their messages broadcast to a country where the domestic system allows few or none of them to be aired, the challenge may be worth mounting seriously.¹²²

In other words, the broadcasting monopoly system contained an inherent flaw, which once spotted, could be exploited to great effect by an audacious opportunist. The airwaves themselves could not actually be monopolised by any one concern, and if the transmission did not come from this country, it was very difficult to stop. Plugge had recognised the importance to the UK of foreign radio broadcasts from the first.

¹²² Browne, 1985, p.3.

The BBC's *World-Radio Magazine*

World-Radio, which had started life as the *Radio Supplement*, was the BBC's foreign programme listing magazine; when the idea for it had first been mooted in 1925, a couple of years after the *Radio Times* had been launched, it was largely in recognition of the fact that foreign broadcasts had attracted the public's attention and "distance listening" had become very popular. This was not the programmes broadcast in English and sponsored by commercial ventures but rather "listening in" to foreign national broadcasts, and it had become a widespread, and mildly competitive, hobby (see fig. 9.2). *World-Radio* represented the BBC's stake in the foreign programme listening phenomenon, seeing it as a harmless pastime, with no commercial angle. The *Radio Times* had been carrying a feature page giving foreign programmes for a number of months in a "very much condensed form" (*BBC Handbook 1928*, 1928, p.389). In 1925 it was decided that it should recognise the interest in foreign radio stations by producing a *Radio Supplement*, which published details of the foreign programmes which listeners could tune into. It was first published on 17th July 1925 (*BBC Handbook 1928*, 1928, p.339). Its first issue carried the statement:

It is the duty no less than the privilege of the British Broadcasting Company to bear its part in the development of this new instrument of international comity. It is a truism to say that nothing is calculated to remove misunderstandings and re-establish friendship more than a personal exchange of ideas. If this is true of individual relationships it is no less so of international intercourse; and surely, when this intercourse is of the informal and recreative character of Broadcast programmes, the effect – first socially, then politically – is likely to be far-reaching.¹²³

This statement in the *BBC Handbook 1928*, recalling the decision to launch *World-Radio*, was, in part, a reframing of the true situation, which was that the BBC was inevitably aware of the nation's interest in distance listening and felt that if it did not produce a magazine which focused on foreign radio stations, a competitor would (as mentioned in Gladstone Murray's memorandum, quoted in Chapter Four).

When the BBC had first entered the magazine market with the *Radio Times*, it had crossed into a new territory where it did not have absolute control. It had had to find a publisher and printer for its magazine ventures. As *Radio Supplement*, *World-Radio* was initially

¹²³ *The Radio Supplement*, 17th July 1925; *BBC Handbook 1928*, 1928, p.3.

considered as an add-on to the *Radio Times* because this simplified the arrangements with the publisher George Newnes Ltd., who published the *Radio Times*. Internal memoranda reveal that the BBC was unhappy with its relationship with the publishers, and giving them the additional title to publish formed part of the negotiations with them; the BBC hoped it would provide a degree of protection from further interference. The “production of the paper, handling of advertisements and the publishing and publicity is to be done by Newnes on the same terms as exist for R.T.” as laid down in an agreement with Newnes dated 23rd June 1925.¹²⁴ The agreement for the publication of *Radio Supplement* with Newnes stated “The contract with the Radio International Publicity Service to supply and edit foreign programme material to be approved by Newnes, and the payments made under contract to be a charge against the new periodical”.¹²⁵ Briggs describes the BBC’s contact with Radio International Publicity Services as “curious” because two of directors were also directors of the International Broadcasting Company, one of these being Plugge: “in this capacity they had been under contract to the BBC since 1927 to translate and sub-edit foreign wireless programmes for *World Radio*” (Briggs, 1965, p.352). In fact, as discussed below, the BBC had been dealing with Plugge since 1925.

At the time when the BBC was considering the launching of a foreign programmes magazine, Plugge was not regarded as a competitor. Instead, Gladstone Murray was in April 1925 writing to Reith to urge a decision regarding how the BBC intended to handle foreign programmes. This was now urgent because one of the technical wireless magazines, *Wireless Weekly*, which was published by John Scott-Taggart’s publishing company Radio Press, (and who was most definitely perceived as a rival), had begun printing details of foreign programmes on a weekly basis.¹²⁶

Relations between Scott-Taggart and the BBC became increasingly antagonistic over the issue of *Wireless Weekly*’s intentions to pre-empt the BBC printing foreign programme listings in *World-Radio* to the point where Scott-Taggart wrote directly to Reith, copying in

¹²⁴ (Unattributed. [Memorandum], BBC WAC R43/277/1 World Radio/1925-39.

¹²⁵ Gladstone Murray, W.E., 1925. To Reith, J.C.W. (16th April). [Internal Circulating Memorandum.] BBC WAC R43/277/1 World Radio (1925-1939).

¹²⁶ Scott-Taggart was a formidable force in the wireless world; he had built a transmitter while still a teenager, and declared himself to be “obsessed with the dream of getting people interested in the technicalities of radio as a hobby” (Scott-Taggart, cited by Hennessy, 2005, p.120). He had also been responsible for a series of highly successful booklets on wireless construction back in 1922, and was recognised as an authority on radio valves, having learnt his skills while posted with the Army Research Station during the First World War; he was also awarded the MC at the Battle of Lys (Hennessy, 2005, pp.129-130).

the Directors of the BBC company to accuse the BBC of using its privileged position to create a situation which was “unfair in the extreme”.¹²⁷ This was, in reality, a highly contentious issue which many of the technical and wireless press had had ever since the BBC had entered the magazine market with the publication of the *Radio Times*. The question was not just over circulation sales, but also over the more lucrative advertising opportunities which would come with printing the details for foreign programmes, just at the point when it was becoming a fashion which had spread far beyond the enthusiast band and into the general public.

Scott-Taggart objected to the fact that the BBC intended to use the “exclusive publicity” which they alone could command and listed the BBC’s advantages to exploit their powers. He complained that they had several unfair advantages on their side, including:

1. Extraordinary microphone publicity.
2. State aided revenue. In other words the British amateurs and listening public providing you with money to enable you to compete with ourselves.
3. The publishing of a programme paper is, from a profit earning point of view, at any rate, a justifiable side line to your business, whereas we, in an unprotected position, have to produce publications which pay their way. You are already taking, I suppose, nearly £100,000 a year out of the industry in advertising by virtue of a competition which we have all considered grossly unfair from the start.¹²⁸

Scott-Taggart also declared that he was “prepared to join any movement to break down a monopoly if it exceeds its right sphere” and furthermore pointed out that the BBC was acting in direct opposition to its own avowed policy of being a public utility concern.¹²⁹ Here again, Scott-Taggart was attacking the BBC on its weak side, because, as was well understood, the British Broadcasting Company had not been set up as a lucrative magazine publisher, but rather as a monopoly broadcaster with a public service remit, even in the days before it had been awarded its Charter (Street, 2006, p.8).

It is apparent that Reith was sufficiently disturbed by this letter to demand of Gladstone Murray an overview of this situation and his part in it, because, although the actual request is

¹²⁷ Scott-Taggart, J., 1925. To Reith, J.C.W. (28th May.) [Letter.] BBC WAC R43/287/3 Publications World Radio – Relations with Technical Press 1934-1937.

¹²⁸ Scott-Taggart, J., 1925. To Reith, J.C.W. (4th June). [Letter.] BBC WAC R43/287/1 Publications World-Radio Relations with Technical Wireless Press 1925-1928.

¹²⁹ Scott-Taggart, J. 1925. To Reith, J.C.W. (4th June). [Letter.] BBC WAC R43/287/1 Publications World-Radio Relations with Technical Wireless Press 1925-1928.

missing from the file, Gladstone's Murray's response makes it clear that Reith was asking questions. The whole correspondence, both the internal discussion, and the exchange of letters with Scott-Taggart, provide an interesting insight into the BBC's business tactics; Scott-Taggart was told that his proposal was pointless because the BBC intended to publish anyway; his requests for compensation were actually derided, and moreover he was threatened with legal action if he continued to use the title "Which Station Was That?" for one of his features, on the basis it was a title used in the *Radio Supplement*.

These aggressive tactics were compounded by the fact that the BBC then set about deliberately "detaching" Plugge's business partner Albert E. Leonard of the Radio International Publicity Services (RIPS), which had the contract to edit foreign programme material, from further negotiations with Scott-Taggart, and continued to negotiate with the RIPS on an exclusive basis. It was left to Leonard to plead that the BBC "deal tenderly with [Scott-Taggart], if only because he has a bitter tongue and the B.B.C. has nothing to gain by antagonising 400,000 readers of 'Wireless Weekly'".¹³⁰

In addition to revealing that the BBC's strategy with commercial competitors which threatened *World-Radio's* interests was ruthless, it is apparent from these exchanges that the BBC had not even been aware that Scott-Taggart was "in association with Leonard and Plugge".¹³¹ In fact, it is likely that Plugge and the RIPS had already been selling material to both the BBC and Scott-Taggart's *Wireless Weekly*, since according to Wallis (2008), the lead article in the second issue of the *Radio Supplement* published in July 1925 and entitled "Which Station Was That", though unaccredited, was likely to have been written by Plugge, since it was identical to an article of his in the *Wireless Weekly* supplement in March 1925 entitled *The Foreign Radio Times*. Wallis continues:

The first issue also included Plugge's article 'A Clear Band of Ether: A Plea' credited to him. Most of the first issue was Plugge's work, so perhaps the BBC felt it was not politic to put his name on everything. The *Radio Supplement* continued to publish his articles as well as his programme listings.¹³²

¹³⁰ Unattributed and Undated. [Internal Circulating Memorandum.] BBC WAC R43/287/1 Publications World-Radio Relations with Technical Wireless Press 1925-1928.

¹³¹ Unattributed and Undated. [Internal Circulating Memorandum.] BBC WAC R43/287/1 Publications World-Radio Relations with Technical Wireless Press 1925-1928.

¹³² Wallis, 2008, pp.28-29.

At this point in time, the relationship between the BBC and Plugge and his RIPS was a mutually useful business arrangement, and discussion of “the negotiations with Plugge’s fellow RIPS director Leonard” occurs in a subsequent review of the *Radio Supplement*’s performance.¹³³ This memorandum also mentioned the reasoning behind the decision to launch a foreign programme listings supplement:

For us the question of profit and loss is not the only question – perhaps not even the principal question. The BBC did not enter upon the publication of the Supplement as a profit-making concern, but as a logical extension of the programme Service of the Radio Times necessitated by ... the probability of some firm acquiring exclusive British rights to foreign programmes and bringing out a journal which would ... limit the future potentialities of the Radio Times.¹³⁴

It is clear from this, and other memoranda, that the *Radio Supplement* did not make a profit. However, what is also apparent is that the BBC was prepared to underwrite it because of the magazine’s strategic importance in asserting the BBC’s position with regards to foreign broadcasting, and protecting future developments for the *Radio Times*. Although it had a much smaller circulation, *World-Radio* protected the commercial interest of the *Radio Times* by preventing other publishers from producing a rival listing magazine under the guise of being a foreign programmes guide. The extract above was also prophetic and explains why, when *Radio Pictorial* was launched nine years later, the BBC only regarded it as serious competition to its own magazines when it started publishing the foreign programmes guide (this is discussed in detail in subsequent chapters). It illustrates that the BBC was able to operate with different commercial constraints than a regular magazine publisher could, because of the symbiotic relationship between its broadcasting arm and its magazine arm. In the magazine market however, the BBC needed partners, and the incident reveals how uneasy the BBC became when it had to concede a degree of control to other agencies.

The argument with Scott-Taggart was the prelude to further problems for the BBC in this area, and the birth of *World-Radio* continued to be troubled; Scott-Taggart was not alone in realising that the BBC was moving into new territory. When the intention of the BBC to

¹³³ Unattributed and Undated. [Internal Circulating Memorandum.] BBC WAC R43/277/1 World Radio/1925-1939. The content indicates it was written after eight numbers of *Radio Supplement* had been published which would date it at late September/early October 1925.

¹³⁴ Unattributed and Undated. [Internal Circulating Memorandum.] BBC WAC R43/277/1 World Radio/1925-1939.

publish a foreign radio stations listings magazine became known, questions were asked in the House of Commons, as recorded in *Hansard*. The Liberal MP for Hackney South, Captain Garro-Jones, asked whether the Postmaster-General was aware that the BBC proposed to produce a “journal known as the Continental Radio Times”. Garro-Jones’ purpose was to discover:

Whether the terms of the agreement between the British Broadcasting Company and [the Postmaster-General] admit of the carrying on of a newspaper and publishing business; and what it is proposed should be done with the profits from this journal?¹³⁵

It was Viscount Wolmer, the Deputy Postmaster-General, who answered and, conceding that the British Broadcasting Company would indeed be publishing a journal which he said would be known as “The Radio Supplement”, he was nevertheless firm in his assertion that “The issue of such a periodical will not be contrary to the terms of the agreement between the company and the General Post Office”. He would not be drawn on the question of the accruing profits, saying this was being discussed with the broadcasting organisations. It seems that Captain Garro-Jones had very good information from his source, because the original intention had indeed been to call the supplement the “Continental Radio Times”.¹³⁶

It is symbolic of the controversies which surrounded the magazine that nobody could even agree on a fitting title for it. In a letter from Guy V. Rice, who was at this time the Secretary of the BBC, the publishers George Newnes Ltd. complained:

You use two titles in your memorandum – “World Radio Times” and in another clause, “The Foreign Radio Times.” We do not like either of these. “The World Radio Times” is misleading as the paper will not contain the most important of the world programmes, namely, the British. The title, I think, should be as follows: - THE RADIO SUPPLEMENT: Foreign Programmes.¹³⁷

In fact, after less than a year the magazine changed its name in June 1926 to the curiously hyphenated *World-Radio: Dominion and Foreign Programmes*. The file on *World-Radio* in the BBC Written Archives at Caversham is full of letters and memoranda discussing the magazine’s circulation, fluctuating revenue, and even its *raison d’être* (and the hyphen is

¹³⁵ *Hansard*, 14th July, 1925, 1076-1077 BBC WAC R43/277/1 World-Radio/1925-1939.

¹³⁶ This is described in a letter from F.W. Phillips of the General Post Office to Reith in Phillips, F.W. 1925. To Reith, J.C.W. (9th July). [Letter.] BBC WAC R43/277/1 World Radio/1925-39

¹³⁷ Newnes, George (1925) To Rice, G.V. (23rd June). [Letter.] BBC WAC R43/277/1 World Radio/1925-39.

almost never used). There was one aspect of the magazine which infuriated the Chief Engineer Captain Eckersley into writing a very direct note to Gladstone Murray:

The activities of “World Radio” are somewhat embarrassing to my policy. I have consistently preached: “Listen to your local station;” “Have a set with a proper factor of safety;” “Reaching out is a hobby, but it isn’t wireless;” “The real value of broadcasting lies in the interest people take in what is received, not in the means of receiving it.” “World Radio” encourages people to forget all these maxims, and as coming from the B.B.C. it is difficult for me. Now it has taken to publishing - or I should say attempting to publish - circuits which smack of Scott-Taggart at his worst. I cannot subscribe to this last intrusion upon what is fairly my province, and while I have had to wink a fairly bleary eye at “World Radio,” I cannot shut both eyes forever!¹³⁸

This is a key aspect to the developing situation, of which the BBC was still unaware: in its determination to prevent a competitor from gaining the strategic position of a foreign programmes competitor to the *Radio Times*, the BBC was directing its home listeners away their local station, away even from national BBC programmes and towards international broadcasts. The BBC had got its messages to its public confused, and while there was no commercial threat from international broadcasters, this was not a serious issue. But that was soon to change, and the BBC had been complicit in creating a situation whereby foreign broadcasts could even become a threat.¹³⁹

Meanwhile, blind to the gathering threat, the BBC was defending *World-Radio* even against poor circulation figures. In 1931, the figures were causing disquiet, although the BBC was unable to identify any one definite reason for the magazine’s uncertain reception from the public. Unlike the instant success of the hugely popular *Radio Times*, and the subsequent niche market for the BBC publication *The Listener*, *World-Radio* did not settle easily into its market. In an internal memorandum dated 9th November 1931, Edward Lynch Odhams, the editor of *World-Radio*, wrote to the General Editor of BBC Publications, Basil Nicholls, to say that he did “not regard the present position and immediate prospects of “World-Radio” as at all satisfactory” and this was in spite of the fact that the magazine did its best to “explain

¹³⁸ Eckersley, P.E. 1926. To Murray, G.E., (5th August). [Internal Circulating Memorandum.] BBC WAC R43/277/2 World Radio/1925-39.

¹³⁹ At the bottom of the letter is a handwritten note added by Gladstone Murray saying that the C.E. (that is to say the Chief Engineer, Captain Peter Eckersley) “is prepared to write a series of special articles”. Eckersley was held to this promise and in the *BBC Handbook 1928*, the BBC congratulated itself on the success of Captain Eckersley’s series of articles entitled “Technical Considerations”. In the same passage the BBC also drew attention to its regular feature of “Which Station Was That” feature, although it did not attribute this series to its author Plugge (*BBC Handbook 1928*, 1928, p.349).

Europe” to its readers.¹⁴⁰ One of the problem areas which were considered was the competition:

A number of features which we initiated in “World Radio” have appealed so strongly to other journals that they are copying them, our “Identification Panels” and the “Which Station Was That?” service, to name two. But, perhaps the most dangerous is the growth of space given in the daily press to foreign programme items. This is a feature which is so peculiarly our own that it seems to me that without unduly stressing our monopoly privilege, we might exercise a considerable amount of control.¹⁴¹

At this point, the BBC was still only concerned with the competition being offered to *World-Radio* by the daily press printing foreign programme listings; the BBC had not yet seen that it was threatening its own monopoly by directing its listeners to tune to international broadcasts. It is also interesting to note that in 1931 the BBC considered Plugge’s column “Which Station Was that?” to be “peculiarly” its own in view of the fact that, as Plugge was to demonstrate in three years’ time, its monopoly extended only within the UK and only to broadcasting. It had no privilege to assert over either the broadcasting of foreign programme or the publication of details concerning them; these belonged to Plugge, who held the UK publication rights to foreign broadcast programme details, gathered station by station, with immense prescience on each of the European tours he had undertaken in the early 1920s. Street remarks how lucrative this move was on Plugge’s part:

In the mid 1920s he developed a profitable business by obtaining publishing rights in Britain for continental stations’ programme schedules (rights which were gladly given for publicity purposes) and then reselling the details to the British press, at that time anxious to satisfy the public curiosity for overseas listening.¹⁴²

Plugge and the Wireless Press

Street (2006) describes Plugge as “the true founding father of British Commercial Radio” (Street, 2006, p.53). Plugge also, indirectly, had an influence on the broadcasting magazines of the period, and it is therefore important to understand how he came to be such a significant

¹⁴⁰ The world of the wireless press was actually very small, with many interlinking relationships. As an illustration of these complexities, Reith’s wife Muriel (née Odhams) was the daughter of John Lynch Odhams of Odhams Press Ltd, which was a publisher of *The Broadcaster* – one of the magazines mentioned above in Gladstone Murray’s memorandum as being a competitor to *World-Radio*. In addition *World-Radio* was edited by Muriel’s brother Edward Lynch Odhams.

¹⁴¹ Odhams, E.L., 1931. To Nicholls, B.E. World Radio. (9th November). [Internal Circulating Memorandum.] BBC WAC R44/277/3 Publications/World Radio /1931-1934.

¹⁴² Street, 2006, p.52.

figure. Plugge was fascinated with wireless from the first and spent hours “exploring the airwaves”. He was particularly interested in the variety of the international stations he could pick up. At this point there was very little information available about these foreign broadcasts in the wireless press, so Plugge began compiling his own lists; the same lists which Scott-Taggart later wanted to publish in *Wireless Weekly* (Wallis, 2008, p.25). He also wrote articles on the subject such as one entitled “The Fascination of Continental Reception” in which he describes:

the fascination of listening to someone speaking to you across the sea that makes us an island, speaking from the other side of the water, hundreds of miles away. Many such people are at your disposal for the turning of a dial, and if you are an enthusiast you will not be discouraged by failures and difficulties, but by perseverance will endeavour to achieve better results.¹⁴³

Plugge articulates a very important point here, which was the UK had always had an island mentality, and by crossing the airwaves without restriction, radio broadcasting effectively connected the UK with Continental Europe for the first time, bringing foreign voices directly into the British home. As already mentioned, the magazines were responsive to this interest in foreign radio stations, and readers were able to write into the *World-Radio* to request the magazine’s assistance (or actually Plugge’s) in tracking down the details of any station which they had picked up, but could not positively identify. The answers were printed in “Which Radio Station was that?” which was such a popular feature, which, as discussed above, the daily press attempted to copy it. The column was a regular feature in *World-Radio*; only Plugge’s replies appeared, sometimes in a rather peremptory tone, such as this response to a correspondent:

Ailing Night: You must give your name and address, with a *nom-de-plume*. Your enquiry is not clear. Were the Tennis Notes broadcast in English? We can trace no transmission at that time of this nature from any European station. The chimes followed by dance music would *indicate* Langenberg but in that case your wavelength is wrong.¹⁴⁴

In every number of *World-Radio*, there was an entire, densely printed column of such responses to individual queries, and also the offer of a postal service whereby readers could

¹⁴³ Plugge, *Wireless Weekly*, July 1925 cited by Wallis, 2008, p.25.

¹⁴⁴ *World-Radio*, 15th July 1927.

write to *World-Radio* and, for a charge of sixpence, receive a personal reply within forty-eight hours. The offer stated:

We are convinced that this alternative postal service will be found of considerable interest to many readers who desire an earlier reply than can possibly be given by publication in a weekly journal *World-Radio*.¹⁴⁵

The importance of this is that it demonstrates the high level of interest in foreign radio stations which the British public was evincing, and also the fact that by the latter half of the 1920s, the British public was becoming increasingly well versed in the art of picking up foreign stations; an ability which would later prove extremely useful for the commercial advertisers in the 1930s. It should be noted that in the 1920s, tuning the wireless set was delicate and complicated; the tuning stages were interactive, in other words, setting them at the same position where the station had been found previously did not necessarily bring that station back again (Volek, 1993, p.103). It also demonstrates the dedication, and moreover the sheer amount of knowledge which Plugge and his fellow wireless editors brought to the subject, and more significantly, their attention to the needs and interests of the listeners, which, in contrast to the BBC's notion of serving its listeners, was to become such an element of their subsequent success.

The other wireless press magazines printed charts and maps to enable people to locate where the broadcasts were coming from. There were pamphlets produced which provided lists of the stations broadcasting concerts, and in addition to supplying the name of the station, the host country, with a map reference and wavelength in metres, these also included some "Station Information" to assist in the correct identification of the radio station. These gave as much assistance to the listener trying to identify a station as possible, and included the following comments:

Cracow: Announces "Hallo! Polskie Radio, Krakov" Sleigh Bells sometimes used as interval signal.

Oslo: Deep-voiced man announcer says "Oslo Her" before most of the items.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁵ *World-Radio*, 15th July 1927.

¹⁴⁶ *Answers World Radio Atlas, Gazetteer and Log Book*, 1933, pp.2,5.

Thus a tiny “sound bite” is recaptured from the lost transmissions of the 1930s. This particular pamphlet also included a list of the principal stations outside Europe and provided a column for readers to add their own “Dial Readings”, demonstrating an expectation in the active participation and enthusiasm of the listeners.

The First Signs of Challenge to the BBC’s Broadcasting Monopoly

The model of monopoly broadcasting which operated in the UK was not replicated in France, where, as in America, independent and mostly privately owned broadcasting stations financed themselves through an income derived from advertising. With sufficiently powerful transmitters, it was technically possible for companies to base themselves outside England and transmit programmes into English airspace. However, funding the equipment to exploit this possibility would be require a great deal of capital, or would require the alliance of a “friendly” station owner, and even so, such transmitters were few and far between. They required considerable investment to be set up, they were even expensive to hire, and this still depended on the government of the host country not objecting to the arrangement. However, the determined entrepreneur would not be deterred easily, and the first Continental broadcast aimed at an English audience took place in 1925, described retrospectively in a piece of IBC promotional literature from 1939:

One evening in 1925 a few listeners trying to “get” a foreign station on their primitive receiving sets picked up the Eiffel Tower station from Paris and heard what proved to be the first commercial broadcast to Great Britain – a fashion talk sponsored by Selfridges. Three of them actually took the trouble to write and say so! Not a very useful experiment, you would think, for the sponsor of the broadcast – not a very encouraging start for the young radio pioneer who organised the transmission. Yet, Captain Leonard F. Plugge, now Parliamentary Member for the Chatham Division of Rochester¹⁴⁷, retained his belief that listening to overseas stations would eventually become a regular habit. Not the least discouraged by this initial experiment, he founded the International Broadcasting Company Ltd.¹⁴⁸

There are several points to note from this extract; firstly the self-publicity was typical of Plugge, although he was indeed, as self-proclaimed, a pioneer of broadcasting. Secondly Plugge was certainly not discouraged by the apparently small number of listeners who heard his broadcast and indeed, he went on to invest a considerable amount of his time and money

¹⁴⁷ Plugge had become an MP in 1935, although he does not appear to have had much influence in this position, and there is no record of him influencing any debates on the nature of British broadcasting.

¹⁴⁸ *This is the I.B.C.*, 1939, p.3.

on the risk that listening to Continental radio stations would become a pass time of the British public which would be lucrative for him. During this time, as there was no monopoly of broadcasting in France, there was therefore no system of levying licence fees. As with other countries in Europe, there were many privately owned stations. In 1925, the Eiffel Tower aerial was still being controlled by the military, however, the studio was loaned for one hour a day to the prosaically named Société des Amis des Concert Artistiques de la Tour Eiffel (Wallis, 1008, p.31). Stations had to provide their own finances, and so revenue was raised by members of the Société taking out subscriptions which supported the cost of the transmissions. The performers were all volunteers, who did not get paid.

As an additional source of raising funds, another association was set up which sold wireless sets and parts at a discounted rate to members of the Société which resulted in periodic advertisements during the afternoon concerts for wireless components; Radio Paris had a similar arrangement (Wallis, 1008, p.31). The director of the Société, Monsieur Privat, was a friend of Plugge's, whom he had met during one of the tours he made around Europe between 1925 and 1930, visiting radio stations, assessing their potential and testing the strength of their signals. Plugge found a sponsor for his idea for an experimental broadcast to a UK audience in the shape of Selfridges and on 29th August 1925, "an English voice gave the first commercial broadcast aimed at a British audience: Captain Plugge extolled the virtues of fashions available at the Selfridges store in Oxford Street" (Wallis, 2008, p.37).¹⁴⁹

Although it caused no particular alarm at the BBC at the time, Plugge had discovered a model in his Eiffel Tower broadcast which he would later exploit. However, he was not the only entrepreneur to have identified the commercial potential of broadcasting, and from 1928 to 1930, a fortnightly series of concerts featuring light music played by de Groot's Orchestra were broadcast from Radio Hilversum on Sundays. These concerts were overtly sponsored by a firm of radio manufacturers (Briggs, 1965, pp.351-352).

The BBC's Sunday Policy

The Radio Hilversum broadcasts were the first sign of the situation which would eventually present a challenge to the BBC's broadcasting monopoly. All the ingredients were there; an

¹⁴⁹ A comprehensive account of Plugge's Continental trips can be found in Wallis' 2008 biography, pp.33-66.

alternative to the BBC's deliberately sedate Sunday offering, the sponsoring of programmes, the reaching into England from a Continental station. Street describes the BBC's attitude to broadcasting on Sundays as "a major factor in the radio crisis of the 1930s" (Street, 2006, p.137).¹⁵⁰ As Briggs remarks: "The controversy was sharpened by the fact that it was publicly known that Reith himself was personally behind the policy, that he had initiated it, and that he defended it against all inside as well as outside" (Briggs, 1965, p.227). Many others could see the nature of the problem more clearly than the BBC could, as Moseley observed at the time:

The irony of it! There was the B.B.C. determined to "uplift" its listeners at all costs, and yet simply driving them, out of their boredom, to listen on Sundays to jazz and crooning and racing commentaries and heaven knows how many other foreign programme items which were, and still are, anathema to the Director-General as Sunday entertainment!¹⁵¹

Moseley was by no means alone in his view that Reith's policy was having a diametrically opposite effect to that which he desired. In his reflections on the influence that the BBC policies had on the direction of broadcasting, the BBC's first Chief Engineer Captain Eckersley also concluded that Reith's strict Sabbatarianism was behind the "restricted quantity" and the "character" of the programmes broadcast on Sundays. The "ordinary listener" Eckersley explained, did not feel that they were committing a sin by turning from "dreary local broadcasting" to "amusing foreign programmes" but rather "the listener simply thanked whatever gods there be for his good fortune and so assured a large and enthusiastic audience for the Sunday commercial broadcasts" (Eckersley, 1942, p.146). Reith was unable to assimilate the fact that by starving the nation of any but the mildest of entertainment, he was actually driving them towards the unholy fare offered by the foreign stations who broadcast in English, thereby positively opening the door to direct competition for the BBC's audience. What Reith failed to grasp was that an attempt to impose pious observance on a nation with a history demonstrating centuries of resistance to religious dominance, was not going to be successful.

Reith, however, made the acuity of his own feelings plain in his work *Broadcast Over Britain* when he declared of "the Sabbath" that the "secularising of the day is one of the most

¹⁵⁰ See Street (2006) pp.136-138 for a discussion of the extent to which Reith's Sunday policy allowed commercial competition.

¹⁵¹ Moseley, 1935, p.162.

significant and unfortunate trends of modern life” (Reith, 1924, p.195). Reith’s determination to oppose this tendency resulted in the BBC’s Sunday broadcasting output observing a strict Sabbatarianism by excluding any form of popular entertainment (Street, 2002, p.41). Street continues:

The commercial enterprises transmitting their wares from the continent did not share Reith’s principles, with the consequence that throughout the 1930s the BBC suffered at the hands of its competitors whilst striving to demonstrate to its audience in Britain that it was indeed a monopoly.¹⁵²

By 1932 there were around 21 British firms sponsoring programmes from foreign radio stations.¹⁵³ The BBC was focused on internal threats; the hostility of the Newspaper Proprietors Association and the suspicion of the magazine press. It knew itself to be protected from competition, by its Charter, with the support of the Post-Office and government, and it failed to perceive that anything which genuinely threatened it would therefore inevitably come over the airwaves, over the sea.

Conclusion

By 1927, the BBC Monopoly had been sanctioned and the Charter awarded. However, awarding an organisation the monopoly of the airwaves was in a sense a paradox, since even Reith acknowledged broadcasting to be universal in nature, and maintaining this right to a monopoly was going to become a struggle in itself. It was, to an extent, inevitable that the very act of setting up a monopoly would create a situation whereby the monopolist would eventually be required to defend its position. Plugge was himself a genuine pioneer of wireless, with a profound understanding of his subject, which when linked to a commercial inclination made him a formidable adversary. Plugge and Reith were in many ways antithetical figures, two men with opposing motivations: Plugge’s interest in broadcasting was driven by applying his technical understanding to commercial success; Reith’s impetus was the setting up of an efficient administration which would steer broadcasting in its service of the public.

¹⁵² Street, 2002, p.42.

¹⁵³ *Shelf Appeal*, October 1935; the *Economist* 8th February 1936 cited by Coase, 1950, p.101.

Ironically, in view of subsequent events, in launching *World-Radio* the BBC sought to contain the threat of other programme listing magazines. The memoranda and letters held in the files in the BBC Written Archives at Caversham testify to the troubled existence of *World-Radio*, but for the BBC it had strategic importance, both to its broadcasting and also to the highly commercially successful *Radio Times*. Precisely *because* it was a competitively weak publication, the BBC was compelled to guard its interest closely, thereby revealing much about its true response to threats to its dominance and its sources of independent income.

The consequence of the BBC encouraging the public to tune in to foreign programmes was unfortunate in view of the way that this activity altered its character from the 1920s to the 1930s. Effectively, the BBC had inadvertently undermined its own position by coaching the listening public on how to tune in to foreign programmes. By the time programmes in English were being sponsored by companies with the express purpose of targeting products at a UK market, a situation had unluckily already been created whereby the English audience was ready and available to be exploited by the enterprising commercial broadcasters.

Chapter Seven

“Ordinary Business”: the BBC’s Commercial Tactics

At the radio station one night we were told we had broken down, ‘en panne’ they called it and would we please play a record continuously to give the engineer something to test on. An hour went by and the phone rang again. This time it was London. “Are you drunk out there?” demanded Captain Plugge. “You have played the same record seventeen times with no announcements to explain why.” “I excuse myself,” came the reply. “The loudspeaker became unplugged. I must have tripped over the leads.”¹⁵⁴

Introduction

Captain Plugge’s part in the rise of commercial broadcasts which took place in the UK during the 1930s has been documented and explained by Street (2006) and a more personal view of the man himself has been provided by Wallis (2008). However, Plugge’s activities also had a considerable effect on a number of key broadcasting magazines during this period, not least the BBC’s *World-Radio* and *Radio Times*. The BBC’s position over its magazines was problematical, because, in principle, it had no commercial interest in broadcasting and the fact that it made a profit from its magazines and the advertisements they carried, off the back of its Charter to broadcast, was an uneasy subject for it. The BBC’s attitude to competition was similarly complex, because, in theory, it had no competitor to its public service broadcasts, but yet its listeners could still be poached by commercial companies broadcasting sponsored programmes and advertising products in between. With regard to its magazine publications however, the BBC was itself a commercial competitor, and it is therefore in its behaviour towards the publishers of magazines that its true attitude is revealed.

This Chapter considers the impact that the commercial developments of broadcasting in the 1930s had on the magazine industry, with particular reference to the protective measures taken by the BBC to ward off competition from *World-Radio*, and indirectly the *Radio Times*. The magazines necessarily followed where broadcasting led, and therefore, in order to understand the environment for the magazine market, it is first necessary to leave the magazines briefly and examine instead the rise of commercial broadcasting, which was becoming a feature of this period.

¹⁵⁴ Stephen Williams cited by Wallis, 2008, p.84.

The Activities of the IBC

Plugge's relationship with the BBC had started out on a mutually beneficial basis; under contract with the Radio International Publicity Services (RIPS), Plugge provided the BBC with the information of about the foreign programmes, mostly classical concerts, symphonies and orchestral pieces which were broadcast by European radio stations for their own national audience. The BBC needed this information to keep *World-Radio* in circulation. As the 1930s progressed, however, Plugge's activities through his other company, the International Broadcasting Company (IBC), became increasingly annoying to the BBC's interest, as the IBC recreated the Selfridges Eiffel Tower experiment and began to broadcast programmes from Continental Europe with a commercial sponsor, which were aimed at the English audience.

While touring Europe in the 1920s, Plugge had been conducting experiments on the reception of British transmissions abroad, visiting radio stations in France, Austria, Italy and Switzerland, making detailed notes about the technical capabilities of the station and the resulting reception quality, noting the transmitter strength and the wavelength of the broadcasts. This gave him the extensive knowledge of the technical details of the chief broadcasting stations in Continental Europe, and, as discussed, also provided him with the strategically important opportunity to collect the programme listings rights (Wallis, 2008, p.27). Plugge had come upon a privately owned station located near Fécamp station by chance and struck a deal with the station's owner Fernand Le Grand which would allow him to hire the transmitter to broadcast in English at certain times of the day (Williams, 1987 p.8). The proximity of the station to the English coast meant that broadcasts could be picked up along the whole of the south coast of Britain, and even in London. An American firm of wireless manufacturers was Plugge's International Broadcasting Company (IBC's) first client, and the broadcast, which consisted of a programme of gramophone "hit records", began after the BBC had closed down (Briggs, 1965, p.353).

The BBC kept two files on the International Broadcasting Company, dating from the Spring of 1930, opened when it had first become aware that a new company had been registered, the purpose of which was:

to buy and sell hours and time for broadcasting advertisements or sponsored programmes or any other form of broadcast publicity ... The main business of the company however is to sell “time” and in this connection, they have arrangements with Radio Paris, Toulouse, and a Polish station.¹⁵⁵

The earliest memoranda in the files reveal that at first the BBC staff were not sure who was responsible for the broadcasts. Street identifies an anonymous reference to the IBC in the BBC archives saying: “If it is Plugge, then we have some control over him” (Street, 2006, p.147). The belief that the BBC could exert any control over him proved to be over-optimistic, however. It was soon confirmed that the IBC was indeed run by “Mr Plugge of R.I.P.S” and in a memorandum dated 16th July arrangements were made for future broadcasts to be monitored. The fact that the BBC was immediately considering its options is clear from the hand written note added by the BBC Foreign Director Major C.F. Atkinson which reads “I don’t think action by way of squeeze on Captain Plugge is worthwhile, do you – at any rate at present”.¹⁵⁶ Also included in this file is a letter dated 12th May 1930 addressed to the International Broadcasting Company complimenting them on a broadcast the night before from Turin for “British Listeners” and asking for a prospectus on further programmes to be broadcast from “Various Continental Stations”. The consternation of the BBC in mistakenly receiving a “fan” letter intended for the IBC is evidenced by the fact that the letter was kept on file.¹⁵⁷

The BBC continued to monitor the broadcasts from the IBC, keeping a record of each station they made their broadcasts from, the type of music they played and later which companies were advertising through them. The frequency of the broadcasts from Radio Normandy had increased to the extent that by February 1932 programmes were broadcast every day of the week for an hour and on Saturdays and Sundays from 10pm to 3am (Browne, 1985, p.5).¹⁵⁸ The impact of the IBC programmes on the British public should not be underestimated; they offered not only an alternative, but also one that was completely different fare from the BBC programmes. The presentation style of the IBC presenters and the music played was much

¹⁵⁵ Unattributed and Undated. BBC WAC E2/365/1 Foreign Gen.: International Broadcasting Company File 1 1930-1933.

¹⁵⁶ A.C.E., 1930. To Mr Hayes (16th July). International Broadcasting Co. [Internal Circulating Memorandum]. BBC WAC E2/365/1 Foreign Gen.: International Broadcasting Company File 1 1930-1933.

¹⁵⁷ Letter. 1930. International Broadcasting Co. (12th May). BBC WAC E2/365/1 Foreign Gen.: International Broadcasting Company File 1 1930-1933.

¹⁵⁸ The name of Radio Normandie was Anglicised to Radio Normandy for the British audience, but the French spelling was retained within France, and the IBC staff who were stationed out there continued to call it Fécamp (Wallis, 2008, p.75).

less formal than that of the BBC, consisting mainly of “light” popular music and shows comprised of “hit” gramophone records. The IBC deliberately embraced the American style, and announcers were known by name. The opposite policy had operated from the BBC from the first, as Marquis (1984) notes: “Reith ordered that announcers should remain strictly anonymous, do no outside writing without his permission and, on their weekly pay of £5, wear evening-dress after 6 p.m.” (Marquis, 1984, p.389). This is particularly pertinent because, when *Radio Pictorial* was launched in 1934, its staple fare was to supply the public with all the information about BBC announcers that it could. Reith’s intention was to prevent what he regarded as an inappropriate view of the announcers, as being perceived in any way as “stars” or celebrities, as they would now be termed, even though he felt they were “personages of much importance in the land”. This determination to keep the broadcasters as “aloof and mysterious” was rooted in belief that fame would have a corrupting influence. For Reith “The desire for notoriety and recognition sterilizes the deeds from which greatness might spring. A place in the stars is of more importance than a place in the sun” (Reith, 1924, pp.51-52).

The ban on publicity sometimes extended to other programme staff, and the policy caused the editors of the *Radio Times* considerable difficulty, as the one-time editor Gorham recalled:

The situation varied from year to year: the announcers, about whom there was the most public curiosity, were usually kept completely anonymous, and odd attempts were made to extend this ban to other categories of staff. At one time we could not print the name of the producer of a programme, nor of a conductor, nor even a performer, if he was on the staff. An outside performer who joined the BBC vanished completely so far as the public could know.¹⁵⁹

The point about keeping the staff anonymous was more than just a determination not to create stars, but also to steer clear of any suggestion of the “American style of “highly individualized announcing”. Instead the BBC announcers were to “build up in the public mind a sense of the BBC’s collective personality” (Briggs, 1961, p.292). In reality, as with the Sunday broadcasting situation, the effect of Reith’s policy was exactly the opposite from that which he intended. His insistence on the announcers remaining anonymous only accorded them a mystique for the listeners, and the final ingredient of evening dress ensured an aura of glamour. Starved of the personal details behind the voices they listened to every

¹⁵⁹ Gorham, 1948, p.58.

day, it was therefore inevitable that the British public would be only too eager to read about personal details and “tit-bits” of gossip revealed in the populist *Radio Pictorial*.

In supplying the British public with popular music, delivered in an informal style, Plugge and his IBC had found a winning formula; the British public were made aware of the transmissions through the details of the programmes published in the *Sunday Referee*, the only paper willing to give the IBC programmes publicity in the face of formal disapproval of the Newspaper Proprietors Association (NPA), as discussed later in the Chapter. In comparison to the BBC, the IBC was comparatively free to use whatever commercial tactics it chose, and it used a variety to encourage their listeners to write to them. One such tactic was to set up the ‘International Broadcasting Club’ in the summer of 1932 with the alleged object of ‘bringing into closer relationship all listeners of IBC transmissions’” (Briggs, 1965, p.361). The Club was a means of allowing the IBC to assess the listening figures its broadcasts from Radio Normandy were attracting were attracting. The BBC could afford to remain vague on the subject of its audience figures, but the whole point of the IBC activity was really to attract advertisers and being able to point to the number of listeners was absolutely crucial.

The self-aggrandising tendency of the IBC did not escape the BBC’s notice, and neither did the resemblance of the name of the company and even the proximity of the London Offices to Broadcasting House. There is a handwritten note on a copy of a letter to Plugge from Carpendale (declining his invitation for the BBC to join the IBC Club) in which the BBC’s lawyer R. Jardine Brown advised the Assistant Controller Val Goldsmith:

I am a little troubled about the imitation of our BBC letters and fear some confusion may be caused. Our style of lettering has been carefully copied. I would be inclined to keep the position open in case later we want to object.¹⁶⁰

From this response it is apparent that the BBC was keeping a wary eye on the activities of the IBC but was proceeding with caution; the contract with Plugge’s RIPS for material for *World-Radio* had, after all, considerable strategic value.

¹⁶⁰ Carpendale, C., 1933. To Plugge, L.F. (20th June). [Letter.] BBC WAC RE2/365/1 Foreign Gen.: International Broadcasting Company, File 1, 1930-1933. The IBC logo was very similar to that of the BBC, with the initials encircled in an almost identical fashion. The logo was displayed on the IBC’s correspondence to the BBC; indeed Captain Plugge had even sent Carpendale an IBC Club badge bearing the IBC initials.

Plugge was similarly cautious not to overtly antagonise the BBC, and even went as far as to broadcast a message himself in July 1933 in which he declared that “far from being an advertising concern, the I.B.C. primarily concentrated on providing entertainment for British listeners”.¹⁶¹ If his objective was to send this message to the BBC, then he succeeded, because Isa Benzie, Assistant in the Foreign Department from 1930-1933,¹⁶² reported the incident, noting that he had appealed for more people to join the IBC club, if the English language services of IBC were to survive and also that “He referred to the obstacles in the Club’s way and to the attempts that had been made to hamper its activities”.¹⁶³ Since Captain Plugge had received a letter a few days before about the lettering in the IBC’s logo, warning him that it was too similar and therefore becoming “confused” with the BBC’s own, it seems he had decided to take to the airwaves as a response (see fig. 10.1).¹⁶⁴

The simplicity of Plugge’s commercial broadcast plan, and the fact that the UK’s monopoly system could not prevent it, was noticed by the United States magazine *Time*. This carried a feature on him under the title “Pioneers” in which it admonished “the able mossbacks of His Majesty’s Government” who did not choose to allow any station in the UK to broadcast advertising, which, the article pointed out “creates a facile opportunity”:

Some smart pioneer could sign up a string of small Spanish, French and other European stations, put on attractive programs in English, bombard the Islands with advertisements. Exactly that has now been done by one Captain Leonard F. Plugge who calls his lively chain International Broadcasting Co., in limpet-like approximation to the name of His Majesty’s Government’s stuffy British Broadcasting Co.¹⁶⁵

It is unlikely that either the BBC or the IBC would be entirely flattered by such a description, but the article had neatly summed up the situation, and the activities of Plugge and his IBC were becoming a presence which the BBC could not ignore, especially since, in spite of Plugge’s broadcast protests to the contrary, the IBC’s commercial objective was so undisguised, with more sponsored programmes appearing by the week (Gifford, 1985, p.126).

¹⁶¹ Mr James, 1933. To Mr Odhams, (5th July). [Internal Circulating Memorandum.] BBC WAC E2/365/1 Foreign Gen.: International Broadcasting Company, File 1, 1930-1933.

¹⁶² Isa Benzie was Foreign Director from 1933-1938, and one of three women who rose to this position during this period, prior to the Second World War (Murphy, 2011, p.12).

¹⁶³ Record of Conversation with Odhams, 1933. Benzie, I., International Broadcasting Company (3rd July). BBC WAC R E2/365/1 Foreign Gen.: International Broadcasting Company, File 1, 1930-1933.

¹⁶⁴ Goldsmith, V.H., 1933. To IBC (23rd June). [Letter.] BBC WAC E2/365/1 Foreign Gen.: International Broadcasting Company, File 1, 1930-1933.

¹⁶⁵ *Time*, 25, 21st January 1935.

Although the BBC had no official power to stop the IBC broadcasts, it did urge the Postmaster-General and the International Broadcasting Union (IBU) to use their influence with the Foreign Office to pressurise the French authorities into preventing privately owned French stations from transmitting broadcasts in English (Browne, 1985, p.6)¹⁶⁶. This provoked Plugge into making his own protest directly to Reith, complaining that British members of the IBU were being brought under pressure from the BBC to take a stance with the French government “with a view to obtaining the suppression of any publicity from French stations for British manufactured goods”. Plugge’s disingenuous basis for objecting to this was because, he argued: “I am sure you will agree that a most important point of principle is involved. In these times of unemployment and falling exports the advertising of British products abroad is of paramount importance”.¹⁶⁷ In fact, both Plugge and the BBC were pursuing a covert agenda: the BBC was publically silent on the issue of the IBC broadcasts, but used its influence behind the scenes to get them stopped; Plugge protested that his business was innocent entertainment and virtuous support of British industry during hard economic times, while pursuing his own commercial advantage.

However unwelcome the IBC’s activities were to the BBC, as the programmes were popular with the British public, the BBC risked its own reputation by opposing them too openly. When rumours did circulate that the BBC was, through the IBU, trying to suppress the broadcasts, some listeners wrote directly to their Members of Parliament to complain, as one anonymous (and partly torn) letter shows:

I have been informed that attempts are being made to stop Radio entertainments being given by the International Broadcasting Club from transmitting stations they use abroad, and as one who has always supported the Party you represent I desire to register my indignation at such autocratic interference with the pleasures of those who pay to use their wireless sets. I for one, do not feel inclined to have the select few dictate to me as to whether I shall be forced to listen to a programme of dusty Chamber Music and a conglomerate mush of discord by long passed composers, or not use my set at all, and I trust you will do your best t[o] stop any attempt at an apparent mail fist ed monopoly of Radio ent[ertain]ment. As I believe questions are to be asked shortly in the Ho[use of] Commons respecting this matter, I shall certainly follow the Par[liamentary] news with interest.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁶ The French Government promised to act and their words were sufficient to make the BBC believe that they would close down the operations of the English advertising programmes being broadcast from private French stations (Vinogradoff, 1945, p.26).

¹⁶⁷ Plugge, L.F., 1933. To Reith, J.C.W. (15th July). [Letter.] BBC WAC E2/2/1 Foreign Gen.: Advertising in English by Foreign Stations File 1, 1928-1936, also cited by Browne, 1985, p.7.

¹⁶⁸ Unattributed and Undated [Letter.] BBC WAC R E2/365/1 Foreign Gen.: International Broadcasting Company, File 1, 1930-1933. Following pressure from the BBC, a resolution was passed which held that “the

This view, though strongly worded, was essentially shared by many in the UK. The British public, who had been enduring a decade of music chosen for them by the BBC, resented the idea that their new-found choice was to be taken away from them, particularly at the hand of the “mail fisted monopoly of radio”. Major Atkinson received a letter from the political secretary of Lady Iveagh, MP for Southend-on-Sea, about the anxiety a number of her constituents had over the rumour that the BBC was trying to put a stop to the IBC broadcasts; it is revealing of the strength of the BBC’s desire not to appear involved in an attempt to close the IBC down, that in his response Atkinson distanced the BBC from any knowledge of the IBC’s activities, and from the pressure which the IBU was bringing to bear on broadcasts, such as those of the IBC, which crossed national boundaries.¹⁶⁹

However, by April 1933, there were two and a half hours of sponsored programmes being broadcast on Sundays by Radio Paris, twelve from Radio Normandy, and one hour and one and a half hours respectively from Radio Côte d’Azur and Radio Toulouse. These stations were soon joined by the newly opened exotic sounding Yugoslavian station Radio Ljubljana. Of all the foreign stations broadcasting sponsored English-language programmes Radio Normandy remained the most popular and was the IBC’s flagship; only Radio Luxembourg had more listeners (and greater advertising revenue). By this time, in addition to the Sunday broadcasts, the IBC was transmitting six and a half hours daily on weekdays from Radio Normandy (Briggs, 1965, p.361).

The editor of the *Radio Times* Maurice Gorham explained that although the BBC did not believe the listening figures, their position of not conducting audience research themselves had suddenly placed them in a weakened position:

Radio Normandie, Luxembourg and Athlone were getting some hold on the British public, largely through taking advantage of Reith’s Sunday policy, which was designed to ensure that the British people should not get the most popular programmes on the day when they were most free to enjoy them. We did not believe all of the figures these stations issued, and they would have taken a lot of believing, but we could not opposed them with any of our own.¹⁷⁰

systematic diffusion of programmes or messages, which are specifically intended for listeners in another country and which have been the object of a protest by the broadcasting organisation of that country, constitutes an “inadmissible” act from the point of view of good international relations” (Vinogradoff, 1945, p.26).

¹⁶⁹ Atkinson, C.F., 1933. To Miss Roberts, Political Secretary to Lady Iveagh (20th July). [Letter.] BBC WAC E2/365/1 Foreign Gen.: International Broadcasting Company, File 1, 1930-1933.

¹⁷⁰ Gorham, 1949, p.59.

Radio Luxembourg

The IBC's activities in France were not the only threat to the BBC's monopoly. Radio Luxembourg went on the air in the spring of 1933, in defiance of the International Broadcasting Union (IBU). The Compagnie Luxembourgeoise de Radiodiffusion (CLR) had been founded in 1930 by a mixture of 'Luxembourgeois' Belgian and French wireless enthusiasts and entrepreneurs and was incorporated as a company in 1931 (Sterling, 2004, p.1175; Garner, 2003, p.465; Sacre, 2005, p.257). The CLR had a franchise agreement with the Luxembourg Government which allowed it to broadcast on a frequency that was allocated internationally to the country by the (IBU) and, controversially, they were allowed both to use a massively powerful transmitter and to broadcast in foreign languages, including English (Sterling, 2004, p.1175; Garner, 2003, p.465; Sacre, 2005, p.257). CLR broadcast variety shows and dance-band concerts from their studios at the Villa Louvigny in the city of Luxembourg which had been produced mostly by London advertising agencies, the majority being made by J. Walter Thompson and the London Press Exchange. So successful was the association between the programmes and the products, that many of the Radio Luxembourg programmes can be remembered today.¹⁷¹ It was a highly lucrative business and Radio Luxembourg had attracted a British audience of around 4 million by the mid-1930s which represented massive revenue from advertising (Sterling, 2004, p.1175; Garner, 2003, p.465; Sacre, 2005, p.257). It is little wonder the shows were popular with British audiences; they were presented by major stars like Gracie Fields and George Formby (Garner, 2003, p.465). *Radio Pictorial* was able to capitalise on the newly formed concept of the radio star, which the BBC had, by contrast, always tried to stifle.

At this time, the Newspaper Proprietors Association (NPA) made an intervention which had a curiously similar effect to that back in 1923 when its boycott of the BBC's programme listings had led to the birth of the *Radio Times* (Briggs, 1961, p.142).¹⁷² In this case, the NPA turned its disapprobation on the *Sunday Referee*; one of its own members, which had been printing the IBC programme schedules since October 1931, together with details about the stations' wavelengths and even instructions on where to find it the stations on the wireless set

¹⁷¹ See Street, 2006, p.110.

¹⁷² A decade before the *Pall Mall Gazette* which was published by the entrepreneur Gordon Selfridge had defied the NPA ban on publishing the BBC's programme listings with the result that its circulation figures increased dramatically (Briggs, 1961, p.142).

dial. The results for the paper were quite dramatic, as former Radio Normandy announcer Stephen Williams recalled:

Rather to everyone's surprise, the *Sunday Referee* sold out completely along the South coast. The following week it did better in London and it was obvious that readers' interest was growing and the upward trend continued as Sunday followed Sunday.¹⁷³

This was incontrovertible evidence that the IBC programmes were extremely popular, and it prompted the *Sunday Referee* to then sponsor some Sunday broadcasts from both Radio Normandy and Radio Paris themselves (Wallis, 2008, p.87). However, this unexpected *coup*, which had nearly tripled the paper's circulation figures, was to have repercussions. The NPA still regarded radio advertising as a definite threat to its own revenue, and duly issued the *Sunday Referee* with instructions to cease its connection with the IBC (Williams, 1987, p.13).

It is somewhat ironic, in view of the history of a tense relationship between the BBC and the NPA, that the NPA had acted in such a draconian manner to one of its own because of its pre-existing agreement with the BBC that none of its members could use broadcasting for paid advertising or publicity purposes. The *Sunday Referee* tried to ignore the warnings but when the NPA banned it from access to the transport and distribution networks which it controlled, it was forced to capitulate (Williams, 1987, p.13). Although the story of the *Sunday Referee* is not intrinsically significant, it had one important consequence: like Reith a decade before him, Plugge came to the realisation that he had to publicise his IBC programmes himself, and as a result, from April 1933 the IBC began printing a weekly IBC Programme Sheet, which was sent out to IBC Club members.

The IBC Programme Sheet and Negotiations with *Wireless World*

The IBC Programme Sheet had the potential to threaten the interest of *World-Radio*; the BBC's Achilles' heel. The BBC was monitoring the situation carefully, as evidenced by a body of correspondence on the subject, which merited its own file entitled "Publications World-Radio Relations with Technical Wireless Press 1932-1933". The value of the IBC programme details was demonstrated by the effect it had had on the *Sunday Referee*'s circulation figures. However, in 1932, the threat to the BBC's magazines became much

¹⁷³ Williams, 1987, p.11.

greater when it became apparent that Plugge and his fellow Radio International Publicity Services (RIPS) director Leonard, and been in negotiations with Hugh Pocock, the editor of *Wireless World*, part of Lord Iliffe's publishing house. *Wireless World*, like Scott-Taggart's *Wireless Weekly* in 1925, had approached the RIPS with a request to purchase their foreign programme list for publication in *Wireless World*. Plugge and Leonard were eager to engage with this new contract, but were anxious not to thereby lose the custom of, or even damage their relationship with, the BBC.

The BBC's response was uncompromising: the Business Manager, Guy V. Rice, who was also a member of British Broadcasting Company's Control Committee which dealt with the BBC Policy, sent an internal memorandum (marked Private) declaring "if therefore Leonard is going in for big stuff like this, the best thing we can do is arrange for our own translating and put him out of business".¹⁷⁴ A handwritten note added "If they (that is the Technical Press) want to come in on the Programme side they must withdraw their objections to our development of the Technical side of W.R. [*World-Radio*]". This is a reference to the fact that the BBC had had an agreement with the Wireless Press Committee not to publish technical articles in *World-Radio*, as this would be in direct competition with their magazines. However, the danger of *Wireless World* becoming a direct competitor to *World-Radio* and the *Radio Times* as a programme listing magazine was sufficient for the BBC to let the directors of the RIPS know that their decision to supply foreign programme details to *Wireless World* had placed their contract with the BBC in jeopardy. Gladstone Murray wrote to Leonard with a thinly veiled threat that if the RIPS proceeded with their negotiations with the *Wireless World*, they ran the risk of their services for *World-Radio* being dropped by the BBC:

Just as Mr Pocock realises that the dissociation of the B.B.C. from the exclusivity arrangement with you creates a business risk, so your contract with "Wireless World" necessarily adds a measure of uncertainty to future relations between the B.B.C. and the R.I.P.S.¹⁷⁵

The unhappy Leonard appealed to Gladstone Murray by return of post, saying that he failed to see how "anything we have done" could possibly lead to uncertainty of the relations

¹⁷⁴ Rice, G.V., 1932. To D.I.P Agreement between R.I.P.S. & Wireless World (17th June). [Internal Circulating Memorandum.] BBC WAC R43/287/2 Publications World-Radio Relations with Technical Wireless Press 1932-1933.

¹⁷⁵ Gladstone Murray, W.E., 1932. To Leonard, A.E. (24th June). [Letter.] BBC WAC R43/287/2 Publications World-Radio Relations with Technical Wireless Press 1932-1933.

between the BBC and RIPS adding plaintively “We were not responsible for the original policy and have loyally adhered to our contract and to your instructions.”¹⁷⁶ The BBC was not to be placated, however, and immediately escalated the situation by threatening to regard the agreement with the rest of the Wireless Press Committee as terminated because one of its members (*Wireless World*) had decided to publish the foreign programmes listing. Accordingly, Gladstone Murray wrote to Bernard Jones, editor of *Amateur Wireless* and *Wireless Magazine*, who had taken over from Scott-Taggart as the Chairman of the Committee of the Wireless Press, to apprise him of these facts:

You will recall that under an informal arrangement, the B.B.C. agreed to refrain from publishing constructional articles and reviewing sets and components. It seems to me now that this new development on the part of a section of the wireless press makes it a matter of ordinary business precaution that the B.B.C. should free itself from the restriction which I have authorised. Accordingly will you please regard this as conveying notice to those who are concerned with the agreement, that on and after October 1st, 1932, the B.B.C. will feel at liberty to deal with any technical wireless subject, or to review any sets or components.¹⁷⁷

The BBC’s decision to contact Bernard Jones, as Chairman of the Committee of the Wireless Press, was a fateful one in view of subsequent events, as discussed later in the Chapter. This was quite an extreme move on the part of the BBC, because it relied on Plugge and the RIPS for material for *World-Radio*, and also because it had, from the earliest days of publishing the *Radio Times*, been careful to try to minimise accusations of unfairly exploiting its broadcasting monopoly by keeping an uneasy peace with the wireless press over the content of its own magazines. The exchanges also provide an insight into the lengths to which the BBC was prepared to go and the very thin nature of the line that the BBC was treading between its public service remit and the almost accidental, but highly lucrative, revenue derived from its commercial magazine activities; justifying its hard-line tactics to the Wireless Press Committee above as being “a matter of ordinary business precaution”. The threat took some time to work through the various parties involved, and in the meantime, *Wireless World* continued with its plans.

¹⁷⁶ Leonard, A.E., 1932. To Murray, W.E. Gladstone (24th June). [Letter.] BBC WAC R43/287/2 Publications World-Radio Relations with Technical Wireless Press 1932-1933.

¹⁷⁷ Gladstone Murray, W.E., 1932. To Jones, B. (30th June). [Letter.] BBC WAC R43/287/2 Publications World-Radio Relations with Technical Wireless Press 1932-1933.

The BBC's Advertisement Manager, Ralph Judson, sent out an internal memorandum with the "disturbing news" about the activities of *Wireless World*. In his memorandum he spoke in the strongest terms:

Up to a few weeks ago "World-Radio" had a monopolistic feature – that of advance Foreign Programmes. This monopoly has been successfully challenged by the "Wireless World" which now gives these programmes in full. No doubt other papers will follow the lead and Foreign Programmes will become a common feature of a number of wireless papers. This means that we have to face a most formidable competition in every possible direction. Our circulation is now menaced as it has never been menaced before. The public is fickle; we cannot rely on old loyalties.¹⁷⁸

The use of the term "monopolistic feature" is interesting and accurately conveys the fact that the BBC's monopoly did not extend either to its magazine interests or to the rights to publish foreign programme schedules, which were held by Plugge. In an internal memorandum Gladstone Murray reminded Reith why the launch of *World-Radio* (or *Radio Supplement* as it was at the time) had been so important in 1926:

We brought out the Supplement because we take the international side of broadcasting seriously and because we wished to signalize the advent of the international era. This, in our opinion, represented a logical and inevitable extension of our service of essential information. We were careful to acquire no exclusive rights and no copyright. Any other publishing concern is entitled to compete with us on equal terms and we have indeed, offered possible competitors the same facilities we ourselves enjoy in our sources of information.¹⁷⁹

Gladstone Murray's language betrays the fact that the BBC, being alive to the charge of exercising its monopoly unfairly, had therefore deliberately refrained from obtaining the rights to foreign programme lists. He also emphasised that "the Supplement" (subsequently *World-Radio*) had been viewed as extending of the domain of the *Radio Times*.

For the BBC's Advertisement Manager, Ralph Judson, who had an eye to the advertisement sales, the situation was doubly unfortunate and *Wireless World* was a particularly dangerous competitor, because he judged it to be the "best technical paper in the country". In addition, because it enjoyed a good reputation and produced quality articles on wireless construction,

¹⁷⁸ Judson, R., 1932. To D.I.P Gladstone Murray, W.E. Director of Information and Publications) (25th July). [Internal Circulating Memorandum.] BBC WAC R44/277/3 Publications World Radio (1931-1934).

¹⁷⁹ Gladstone, Murray, W.E., 1926. To Reith, J.C.W. (23rd January). [Internal Circulating Memorandum.] Page 5. BBC WAC R43/150/2 Publications/Radio Times/1926-1927.

radio manufacturers preferred to advertise their products in its pages.¹⁸⁰ Therefore a rise in *Wireless World's* circulation figures would be to the detriment of *World-Radio's*, which would be accompanied by a drop in revenue from advertising. Although he was a prolific contributor to other magazines himself, writing under the pseudonym of "Ralph Stranger", (Gorham, 1945, p.64) Judson was explicit in his disapproval of the wireless press as a whole:

Papers like "Popular Wireless," "Amateur Wireless," and especially the latest newcomer "Practical Wireless" (published by Newnes, who are also our own publishers of "THE RADIO TIMES," "WORLD-RADIO" and "THE LISTENER") are the worst examples of them. These papers are all run primarily for profit, they employ the cheapest unqualified technical labour on the Editorial, the contributory and constructional sides.¹⁸¹

The multiple functions of the BBC magazines is illustrated by Judson's words, when even the BBC's Advertisement Manager was disgusted that the other wireless press magazines were operating for profit. The BBC magazines were a very useful source of profit for the BBC, but their purpose was also to defend the stronghold of the BBC's monopoly. This invokes Browne's supposition that monopolies attract challengers and that such challengers have to employ tactics to circumvent the monopolist. The only reason why the BBC was able to operate in a manner where commercial considerations could become secondary was because its activity was subsidised by the licence fee.

The BBC was not prepared to allow *World-Radio's* biggest competitor to take over its sales, and Reith met with the owner of the publishing house, Lord Iliffe, to begin negotiations. When Pocock related this incident in an article in *Wireless World* in 1971 he recalled this period as a time when there was considerable interest in foreign programmes, which made the designers of receivers sets were eager to cater for the public's foreign programme listening habits by producing wireless sets with turning which was sufficiently sensitive for the foreign stations to be picked up:

Profiting from the monopoly of their own programmes, [the BBC] were able to obtain, by exchange, advance details of a wide selection of foreign programmes for publication in *World Radio*. This next, *World Radio* added to its contents technical articles and constructional designs, carried a sub-title 'The Technical Journal of the B.B.C.', and competed with us for contributors. In addition to protesting, which seemed to have little effect, we

¹⁸⁰ *Wireless World* is described by Anduaga (2209) as being, in 1930, "the most acclaimed radio journal with a wide acceptance among engineers and physicists" Anduaga, 2009, p.119.

¹⁸¹ Advertisement Manager, 1932. To D.B.R (21st November). [Internal Circulating Memorandum.] Page 5. BBC WAC R44/277/3 Publications World Radio, 1931-1934.

felt we had to take steps to safeguard our position especially when the B.B.C's use of the microphone to publicize its journals was taken into account.¹⁸²

As Pocock recounted, the BBC had carried out its threat outlined to Bernard Jones, and it even provocatively gave *World-Radio* a new sub-title to draw attention to the fact that it now carried technical journals. Pocock saw the situation as *Wireless World* “taking on” the BBC and embarking on a “policy of breaking the monopoly” by continuing to publish the foreign programmes listings, even in the face of the BBC’s opposition (Pocock, *Wireless World*, 1971). However, this was an expensive undertaking for them and the battle adversely influenced the sales of both journals which made them both unprofitable. So Reith met with Lord Iliffe on a number of occasions and eventually a bargain was struck. Lord Iliffe agreed to meet with the RIPS director Leonard, with a view to terminating their contract for supplying the foreign programme details.¹⁸³ For its part, the BBC would back down and it would “confine its future publishing activities to what was 'pertinent to the service of broadcasting’”. In return, *Wireless World* gave up the publication of foreign programmes (Pocock, *Wireless World*, 1971). In a memorandum marked “Confidential” and signed by Gladstone Murray, the BBC’s position with regard to *Wireless World* and the publication of foreign programme listings was laid out; not only would *Wireless World* relinquish foreign programmes but also, no other journal for which Lord Iliffe spoke would take them up including:

- *Popular Wireless*
- *Wireless Constructor*
- *Amateur Wireless*
- *Wireless Magazine*
- *Television*
- *Radio Pictorial*
- *The Wireless Engineer*
- *The Wireless Trader*
- *The Broadcaster*

¹⁸² Pocock *Wireless World*, 1971.

¹⁸³ There was blurring of the companies the RIPS and the IBC in the correspondence with Lord Iliffe; the contract for foreign programmes was held with Leonard and Captain Plugge’s company RIPS, but Lord Iliffe referred to the company as the IBC, for which Plugge was also a Director. The IBC was, by this time, a household name.

Lord Iliffe undertook that all journals published by Iliffe & Sons, Berry Group, Bernard Jones Publications, The Amalgamated Press or Odhams (apart from the Newnes' new wireless publication *Practical Wireless* which the BBC would deal with separately) would not carry the foreign programme listings.¹⁸⁴

Although he had agreed to the BBC terms, Lord Iliffe was extremely unhappy at the situation, because he was aggrieved at the way the BBC had manipulated its position by turning *World-Radio* into a direct competitor with the technical press. The situation led to a drop in sales for all the magazines, but the BBC was able to absorb such losses; so great was the BBC's power that its will could not be withstood. In stark contrast, Reith reported back to his BBC colleagues, with a fascinating lack of concern that, over lunch, Lord Iliffe had made "General observations ... as to the iniquity moral and otherwise, of our actions – breach of faith".¹⁸⁵

The agreement was eventually formally signed between Gladstone Murray on behalf of the BBC and Hugh Pocock for Iliffe & Sons in September 1934. However, in an unexpected turn of events, Lord Iliffe was not able to deliver his side of the agreement; while the BBC and Lord Iliffe had been negotiating, Bernard Jones, Chairman of the Wireless Press Committee, and owner and editor of *Amateur Wireless*, *Wireless Magazine* and from January 1934 *Radio Pictorial*, had been in secret negotiations with Plugge. T.W. Fletcher, Managing Director of Iliffe & Son Ltd, had to explain to Gladstone Murray what had happened:

Mr Fletcher explained that ... he had spent several hours yesterday with Mr. Bernard Jones in an endeavour to dissuade him from his intention to publish sponsored programmes. In the end, however, Mr. Jones declined to accede to the request, despite the pressure. I am satisfied that Mr. Fletcher did everything he could in furtherance of the honourable undertaking of Lord Iliffe.¹⁸⁶

Jones had hitherto been regarded by the BBC as an ally, and even, as described by Jones himself in an article in *Radio Pictorial* in April 1934, a personal friend of Reith's, whom he had known since he first took over the management of the BBC in 1922 (*Radio Pictorial*, 13th

¹⁸⁴ Gladstone Murray, W.E., 1934. (10th July). World Radio Technical Policy. [Internal Circulating Memorandum.] BBC WAC R43/287/3 Publications World Radio – Relations with Technical Press 1934-1937.

¹⁸⁵ Reith, J.C.W., 1933. 'World Radio' Lunch with Lord Iliffe (16th December). [Internal Circulating Memorandum.] BBC WAC R43/287/3 Publications World Radio – Relations with Technical Press 1932-1933.

¹⁸⁶ Gladstone Murray, W.E. 1934. Record of an interview with Mr. Fletcher and Mr. Pocock on the subject of "World-Radio" and "Wireless World" (16th August) BBC WAC R43/287/3 Publications World Radio – Relations with Technical Press 1934-1937. [Marked Private.]

April 1934). Yet Jones had been making a private deal with Leonard and Plugge to print the IBC's Programme Sheet himself in *Radio Pictorial*; and on this occasion there was no pressure that the BBC could bring to bear which could make him stop. Gladstone Murray's record of his interview with Fletcher and Pocock concluded ominously with the comment "Mr. Fletcher and Mr. Pocock accepted the suggestion that they could ask Mr. Leonard of R.I.P.S. to refer the Bernard Jones contract direct to us". But Jones was a free agent, an independent publisher and he alone was able to actually carry out what Scott-Taggart's *Wireless Weekly* had attempted in 1925 and Lord Iliffe had been attempting with *Wireless World* and publish the IBC's Programme Sheet. The BBC did its best to see if there was a way in which it could put pressure on the RIPS to attack the situation from that angle, as they had done in 1925 over the Scott-Taggart incident, as this memorandum reveals:

Please let me have details of our present R.I.P.S. contract with respect to foreign programmes in 'World Radio'; what the effect, in any, would be on it if their 'Wireless World' contract were terminated; what arrangements R.I.P.S. has with the newspapers and our degree of control there, etc.. 'Wireless World' may abandon programmes. We want to protect ourselves as far as possible against any extension of the present foreign programmes service in other journals – weekly or daily.¹⁸⁷

However, it was reluctantly concluded that their own safety clause of *not* holding exclusive rights to foreign programmes meant that the RIPS were entitled to contract with another paper.

Conclusion

The BBC's reaction to the IBC broadcasts gathered slow momentum until the commercial interest held in its publications was threatened then it was moved to take action. This was in spite of the fact that, in renegeing on the agreement with the Wireless Press Committee not to publish technical journals, it could itself have been accused of a breach of faith (as Lord Iliffe complained) at the worst, and at least of using its position of monopoly to gain unfair advantage. The picture that emerges from an examination of these incidents is that the BBC preferred to make its moves to protect its interest behind closed doors, by personal meetings

¹⁸⁷ J.S., 1934, Foreign Programmes in 'World Radio': Agreement with R.I.P.S. Ltd (12th July). BBC WAC R43/287/3 Publications World Radio – Relations with Technical Press 1934-1937. [Marked Private.]

and correspondence; when out of sight of public disapproval, its tactics with competitors were uncompromising.

Matters were becoming increasingly difficult for the BBC; apparently even allies, associates and friends could not be trusted and yet the BBC's old adversary, the Newspaper Proprietors Association, had turned supporter over the *Sunday Referee* publishing the IBC Programme Sheet. Even Plugge presented the BBC with a dichotomy; his input through the RIPS to *World-Radio* was essential to its continued success, and yet his IBC broadcasts were poaching the BBC's broadcasting audience. Ultimately, the real danger had come from an unexpected source, and the next chapter considers Bernard Jones' *Radio Pictorial* and how the magazine capitalised on the exciting developments which were taking place in British broadcasting.

Chapter Eight

A New Type of Broadcasting Magazine: *Radio Pictorial* becomes a “Fan”

There had been a weekly paper called *Radio Pictorial*, which had existed until the outbreak of the war. It was a glossy fan paper, full of photographs of radio stars, chatty, gossip, recipes, fashion notes and rubbishy fiction with a radio studio background; and its main reason for existence was that it printed Radio Normandy and Radio Luxembourg programmes. I had a copy on my desk all the time I had worked in radio. Now on my way out of France and on my way out of the whole commercial radio set-up, I saw its familiar bright orange cover lying between the rails. It was the only copy I had ever seen in France, except in our own studios. What curious chain of circumstances had brought it there? - but then, what curious chain of circumstances had brought me there to see it? ¹⁸⁸

Introduction

This Chapter examines *Radio Pictorial*, which was launched in 1934 at the very point when commercial broadcasters began to lure the BBC's audience away with popular light-hearted music, and an American-style presentation. The visual impact of the magazine is analysed as well as the content and market, as *Radio Pictorial* provides a graphic, and indeed pictorial, representation of the *zeitgeist* of this period in radio's history. The relationship between *Radio Pictorial*'s Editor-in-Chief, Bernard Jones, and the BBC is also considered, because the magazine was a potential threat to the BBC's own magazines, and the files at Caversham indicate that the BBC had concerns over the developments surrounding *Radio Pictorial*'s content, particularly when, seven months after its launch, Jones made the agreement with IBC's Captain Plugge to publish the foreign programmes listings, including the sponsored programmes from the IBC and Radio Luxembourg. As discussed in the previous Chapter, the BBC had twice before been threatened with competition to *World-Radio* of this nature, when first Scott-Taggart's *Wireless Weekly* in 1925, then Lord Iliffe's *Wireless World* in 1933 had entered into negotiations with Leonard and Plugge over publishing the foreign programme details. In both these cases the BBC forced the magazines to abandon their proposals. The pressure the BBC brought to bear was deeply resented by both Scott-Taggart and Iliffe, who felt that the BBC had used its monopoly position to unfair commercial advantage. Jones was an independent publisher however, and as he was breaking no contract and had no business arrangement with the BBC, he was free to follow his own course; which he duly did.

¹⁸⁸ Plomley, 1980, p.195.

The Launch of Radio Pictorial

Radio Pictorial was launched on 19th January 1934 and in the first number, Jones introduced his new magazine in a “Personal Word” to the magazines’ readership, and by implication the UK’s radio audience, with the following description of the service *Radio Pictorial* proposed to provide:

Here we are - RADIO PICTORIAL – the first number of an entirely new publication produced by the most up-to-date of all picture printing processes and by the finest photo-gravure equipment in Great Britain. RADIO PICTORIAL – full of personalities and full of pictures; on every page something about the people who work behind the microphone. A great invisible world that talks to you from countless stations, a world that has existed, so far, for your ears alone – is now made visible for your eyes to dwell upon and to add pleasure to your listening. RADIO PICTORIAL will show you, week by week, the people who sing and play and talk to you. It will bring a whole new world of interest to your fireside. The life-stories of the artists ... the happenings behind the mike ... that immense and ceaseless activity through the whole world which fills the ether with music and messages ... these will give you, week by week, in a unique, pictorial setting. Always remembering that your own B.B.C. – the most highly-organised broadcasting service in the world – is your big favourite. RADIO PICTORIAL will bring B.B.C. artists and speakers to life in its pages as well as dealing with the leading microphone personalities who star at the major broadcasters on the Continent.¹⁸⁹

So began the first number of *Radio Pictorial*. It is worth considering the messages inherent within this paragraph. Two clear themes emerge: the visual and the BBC. Great emphasis was placed on the images, with promises to *show* the readers pictures of the BBC personalities they heard singing, playing and talking to them through their radios. *Radio Pictorial* intended to bring “a great invisible world” (of the BBC) to its readers through state-of-the art printed photographs, with the purpose of adding “pleasure” to its readers’ listening. *Radio Pictorial*, the implication is clear, constituted a supplement to the service provided by broadcasters.

Radio Pictorial contained a message in its very title, not just about the highly visual nature of its content, but it was also flagging who it was aiming at. In an article described by LeMahieu as seminal, the author and typographer Holbrook Jackson identified a trend in the 1930s towards the creeping spread of graphics and illustrations in newspapers, which had become so extreme, he felt, it was affecting the ability of readers to concentrate on more than five hundred words at a time. “He attributed this transformation to the increasing influence of

¹⁸⁹ *Radio Pictorial*, 19th January 1934.

women readers and other feminine concerns on newspapers. ‘When men think pictorially they unsex themselves’” (Jackson, cited by LeMahieu, 1988, p.265).

The appearance of *Radio Pictorial* in 1934 was no coincidence; by the mid 1930s, the British public had had over twelve years of established broadcasting and 1934 was something of a watershed. Radio now held an undisputed place in everyday life, and the wonder of the technology had given over to an assumption that listening to broadcasts was a public right. *Radio Pictorial*'s arrival was symbolic in an evolution of the public attitude to broadcasting. For Briggs, the coming of *Radio Pictorial* in January 1934 reflects “the shift in interest of wireless as a technical hobby to radio as a social activity” (Briggs, 1965, p.23).

As discussed in Chapter Six, it was widely agreed that the BBC had made a mistake with its interpretation of the public's desire for lighter entertainment during its leisure hours, and even if no fault could be found with the overall quality of its programmes, or the range and balance of the material the BBC provided, or even with its ability to cater for the variety of tastes displayed by the different classes, still some of its policies were a source of constant criticism and bitter complaint. Plugge and the IBC moreover, were prepared to cater for whatever was most popular.

In the extract quoted above, *Radio Pictorial* acknowledged the place that the BBC held in the public's affections: it was still the nation's “own” BBC, and still, at least at the beginning of 1934, the favourite of most of the nation. There is no evidence to suggest that *Radio Pictorial* was set up with the objective of challenging the BBC, rather the intention was to make a profit out its popularity. *Radio Pictorial* had a regular feature entitled “Programme Headlines of the Week” which gave a round-up of BBC programmes of particular interest around the regions. At the bottom of this page the following text consistently appeared: “Radio Times gives full programme details”, thereby specifically directing its readers to its apparent competitor.

Similarly, on the women's pages a note was included about the forthcoming BBC “Morning Talks” for women. It even included a feature entitled “Plan your Week's Listening in Advance” which directed readers to highlights from the BBC's regional programmes and which was almost a direct copy of the BBC's “Plan Your Listening in Advance”. As the *Radio Pictorial* editors would have been aware from the magazine's circulation figures, it

could never be a threat to the *Radio Times*. And if they were not already aware of this, their readers told them:

Today, I bought the new number and found still more pages wasted. Why do you give us ‘Plan your week’s listening in advance’ and ‘High spots of the Programmes?’ There is nothing in those two features that cannot be easily learned from the *Radio Times* – and is there one amongst your readers who does not purchase the ‘Official Organ of the B.B.C.’?¹⁹⁰

Likewise, the evidence indicates that the BBC looked on the arrival of *Radio Pictorial*, at least at first, with apparent complaisance. Jones was a publisher with a considerable pedigree with the wireless press, and a journalist who had previously enjoyed a good relationship with the BBC. He was the founding editor of *Amateur Wireless* and *Wireless Magazine*, the former being one of the very first of the wireless press magazines which sprang up to cater for the amateur enthusiasts. It was first published on Saturday 10th June 1922 and the first number demonstrated its editor’s astute business acumen, and the excellence of his personal connections, because, most impressively, it included an address from the most important name in broadcasting at the time, Senatore Marconi, who sent a message from the middle of the Atlantic by telegraph to *Amateur Wireless* readers which reads: “My heartiest good wishes for most complete success of ‘Amateur Wireless’” (*Amateur Wireless*, 10th June 1922).

Jones’ relationship with the BBC was sufficiently amicable that, in 1928, he was invited to write an article in *The BBC Handbook* along with three other editors of “Wireless Journals”: Hugh Pocock, editor of *The Wireless World*, Norman Edwards, editor of *Popular Wireless* and *Modern Wireless* and Percy W. Harris, editor of *Wireless Constructor*. All of these magazines were mentioned in the internal memorandum from January 1926, referred to in Chapter Four, in which Gladstone Murray, the Director of Publicity and Reith discussed the competition to the BBC magazines. Jones’ article was an adroit piece of writing, in which he claimed that the BBC and the radio manufacturers both had the wireless press to thank for the development of broadcasting, because the wireless press “educated” the public (Jones, *The BBC Handbook 1928*, 1928, p.253). Jones was still the editor of *Amateur Wireless* in 1934 when he launched *Radio Pictorial*, although by 1935, *Amateur Wireless* had merged with

¹⁹⁰ *Radio Pictorial*, 9th March 1934.

Practical Wireless and the combined magazine was edited by F.J. Camm.¹⁹¹ The *Broadcaster Radio & Gramophone Trade Annual* for 1935 (reviewing 1934), carried a “Who’s Who in Radio” section. The criteria for inclusion were not provided, but the BBC figures Noel Ashbridge, Captain Eckersley (the then current and the former Chief Engineers for the BBC) and Reith all had an entry, as did Jones. Plugge did not have an entry however, which no doubt reflected his status as *persona non grata* during this period, as declared by the Newspaper Proprietors Association in its opposition to commercial broadcasting. Jones’ 1935 entry described him as the Managing Director of Bernard Jones Publications, Ltd., editor of *Amateur Wireless* and *Wireless Magazine* which he founded for Cassells, and then bought from them to set up his own company 1926 (*The Broadcaster & Gramophone Trade Annual* 1935, 1935, p.44).¹⁹²

As with Marconi’s address to the *Amateur Wireless* readers, for the launch of *Radio Pictorial*, Jones once again obtained a goodwill message from one of the major figures in broadcasting, in this case being the Director-General of the BBC. The first number of *Radio Pictorial* included a full-page black and white photograph, shot in soft focus, of a faintly smiling Reith (see fig. 10.2) with the following text in flowing italics:

From Sir John Reith to the Editor-in-Chief of Radio Pictorial

I am glad of the opportunity to wish you success in your new enterprise. You were, I believe, the first of your craft to realise the journalistic potentialities of broadcasting as constituted in Great Britain, and we have followed your career with lively interest. Your attitude of fairness and forthrightness has set a standard of value, not only to the B.B.C., but to journalism in general.¹⁹³

Jones must have been gratified to receive such effusive and public praise from so important a figure to British broadcasting as Reith. It was also, apparently, a generous gesture on the part of Reith, consistent with his concern over a decade earlier, that a message of reassurance should be broadcast when *Radio Times* was first published that it was not competing with existing wireless magazines.¹⁹⁴ It was also consistent with the care which the BBC took not to appear publically ungracious to a legitimate magazine competitor; the BBC apparently felt it was diplomatic to behave with equanimity towards the arrival of *Radio Pictorial*. It is evident

¹⁹¹ F.J. Camm was both the Editor of the *Practical Wireless* and a frequent columnist in *Amateur Wireless* and *Practical Wireless*, writing under the pseudonym “Thermion”.

¹⁹² Jones’ entry for 1936 listed him first as Editor of *Radio Pictorial*; there was still no entry for Plugge however.

¹⁹³ *Radio Pictorial*, 19th January 1934.

¹⁹⁴ Already quoted in Chapter Four, cited in WAC R43/150/1 Radio Times (1923-1925).

that Jones and his editorial team were determined to launch the new magazine with as much *panache* as possible. In addition to the friendly message from Reith, the first number of *Radio Pictorial* included a crayon portrait drawn by Albert H. Collings, of Henry Hall, “a popular and versatile radio ‘personality’” who was director of The BBC Dance Orchestra (Briggs, 1965, p.88).¹⁹⁵ The first number also included contributions from other major radio stars of the day, such as Christopher Stone and A.J. Alan. Stone was a particularly important figure, whom Scannell & Cardiff call “The world’s first ‘disc jockey’ (Scannell & Cardiff, 1991, p.230, also cited in Street, 2006, p.28) and at this point he was still a highly popular regular on the BBC, under which he had been under contract since 1927. Later in the year, in August 1934, Stone was to defect to the commercial station Radio Luxembourg, and was blacklisted by the BBC for it (Gifford, 1985, p.276). A.J. Alan, which was the “nom-de-air” of Leslie Harrison Lambert, was also an extremely popular BBC broadcaster who told his own carefully crafted short stories with an insouciance which made them sound like spontaneous anecdotes (Gifford, 1985, p.11). *Radio Pictorial* thus sold its first number on the strength of the popularity of the BBC’s radio favourites.

In a subsequent number, Jones returned Reith’s compliments with a double page spread entitled “Sir John Reith – The Truth. The Editor-in-Chief tells ‘Radio Pictorial’ readers what sort of a man Sir John Reith really is.” Apparently this piece had Reith’s approval since the caption beneath the posed picture read: “A Study of Sir John Reith in his room at the B.B.C., taken especially for ‘Radio Pictorial’” (*Radio Pictorial*, 13th April 1934). It is a curious article, which begins by exhaustively listing all the criticisms circulating about Reith in the press: “Sir John Reith is held up for ridicule; as he enters the entrance hall of Broadcasting House his staff has to ‘stand to order’” and “He is an engineer with a short army training, how much better if he were an entertainer”. It reads at first as if Jones is taking the opportunity to snipe at Reith himself. But then Jones reveals:

I have known Sir John Reith longer than ninety-nine out of a hundred of his critics. He and I lunched together, I well remember, within a week of his appointment in 1922. ... I received his confidences in many matters in those early years and was impressed with the tremendous effort the man was making to cope with a job that would soon have proved too heavy for the shoulders of another and less Atlas-like man.¹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁵ Gifford describes Henry Hall as “The greatest radio dance-band leader of them all. Henry’s hesitant announcement ‘Hello everyone, this *is* Henry Hall speaking’, was a trademark millions looked forward to” Gifford, 1985, p.104.

¹⁹⁶ *Radio Pictorial*, 13th April 1934.

The article then becomes a very public support of the BBC, urging understanding for its difficulties and a presenting a glowing tribute to Reith himself, which, being published within three months of the magazine's launch, must be taken as an indication that Jones wished to court the good favour of the BBC and send a clear message to Reith that while the magazine might appear to criticise the BBC, this was done in a manner which he felt should be "sensible and sympathetic", always bearing in mind "the immense difficulty of the task which the B.B.C. has been given to perform." It was another dexterous piece of writing from Jones.

The BBC gave out a consistent message that it was highly appreciative of the offer of honest and constructive criticism; certainly the *BBC Yearbook, 1932* requested:

more regular and general criticism in the Press would be of a great help to the B.B.C., particularly in arranging the talks. Nor would it be disadvantageous to the newspapers and periodicals which were enterprising enough to make it a regular feature.¹⁹⁷

There was certainly a great deal of complaint about the BBC, and little of the constructive debate. Yet, much of the criticism centred on the BBC's policies, particularly its persistent adherence to broadcasting dull but virtuous music on Sundays.

Radio Pictorial exemplified many features of modern and aspirational design which were prevalent at the time. In the extract quoted above, it proclaimed that it was produced using the most progressive picture printing processes, and employing the best photo-gravure equipment. A variety of different colours were used for the magazine's covers, varying between vibrant reds, oranges, occasionally blue, and even more rarely green (see fig. 11.1). The masthead "Radio Pictorial" itself was set in a modern sans-serif type font, in white capital letters, with a shadow effect against a coloured curving ribbon background. The letters were unevenly spaced, slightly crowded together suggesting a deliberate informality. It was attractive, eye-catching and modern-looking; the colour and the glamour suggested that it was aiming for a female market and the *Radio Pictorial* covers bear a striking resemblance to *Woman's Own* cover from the 1930s, with the shadow effect on the masthead lettering, the a close-up photograph of a glamorous female, set against a bright orange colour (see fig. 11.2). The covers were designed for the new female magazine market and show a marked departure from the covers adorning the wireless press magazines, particularly Jones' own publication

¹⁹⁷ *BBC Year-Book 1932*, 1932, p.160.

Amateur Wireless (see fig. 12.1). But *Radio Pictorial* was different to the wireless press magazines because it addressed a readership which was not interested in any of the subjects which had absorbed the early amateur hobbyists; it assumed that its readers had no curiosity whatsoever about the inner workings of their sets and their preoccupation with reception was confined to ensuring they had widest choice of stations. The magazine therefore carried no technical articles, and printed no diagrams of circuits, as this letter indicates:

Congratulations on a splendid paper. No doubt there are thousands like me who know little about the technical side of broadcasting, and (let us whisper it!) do not want to know anything about it. We are interested in the 'social' side, however, and I for one, have received your paper with open arms.¹⁹⁸

The social side of broadcasting and the world of the radio stars were the primary focus of *Radio Pictorial*, and accordingly, its front covers depicted famous BBC singers, musicians and band leaders with a stylised black and white photograph of the star in the foreground, and a coloured graphic behind. Occasionally topical cultural images were featured, such as rowers before the Oxford/Cambridge boat race. *Radio Pictorial* readers were dished up with a regular fare of photographs of the stars, the faces of the broadcasters. The photographs were casually posed, with the subjects looking relaxed and smiling. An example of the highly casual style was a photograph of the BBC radio bandleader Roy Fox who appeared in a dressing gown (or possibly a "smoking jacket") with his arm around his wife's waist (see fig. 12.2).

As Plomley asserts, *Radio Pictorial* was a "fan" magazine, and its editor, although he had a background in the technical aspects of wireless journalism, was prepared to produce an unashamedly populist magazine. It represented a complete move away from the wireless press magazines aimed at a male audience, and its human-interest stories, as Plomley correctly observes, often had only an obscure connection with broadcasting. Not all of the stories published in the magazine were as "rubbishy" as Plomley suggests however. Some were reproductions of A.J. Alan's talks, others were transcripts of plays originally broadcast on the BBC. On one occasion *Radio Pictorial* printed the script for a play of Stephen King-Hall and Val Gielgud entitled "Four into Seven won't Go" which had not even been aired yet (*Radio Pictorial*, 12th October 1934). And in the number for 18th January 1935, *Radio*

¹⁹⁸ *Radio Pictorial*, 9th March 1934.

Pictorial gained a literary *coup* when it published Dorothy L. Sayers' short story: "Dilemma: A Story with Surprise in it, Written Especially for Broadcasting".

The pages of *Radio Pictorial* were enlivened by the numerous advertisements, which are worthy to note because they allow a glimpse into what the advertisers believed the readership of *Radio Pictorial* most desired.¹⁹⁹ As might be assumed, many of the advertisements were for radios and radio components (with numerous advertisements for Jones' other magazines, *Amateur Wireless* and *Wireless Magazine*; later in 1934 and thereafter, advertisements for Jones' new publication *Television* appeared). It is therefore interesting to consider this point of connection between the magazine and the wireless manufacturing industry, whose advertising fees were such an important source of revenue for the wireless press (as discussed in Chapter Nine). There was a significant growth in the expenditure on advertising between 1920 and 1938; it rose from £31 million to £59 million, with print medium receiving 87% of the total of the 1938 figure. By the late 1930s, 2% of national income was being spent on advertising, and much of this came from the sales of "lifestyle" magazines (Greenfield & Reid, 1998, p.162) of which *Radio Pictorial* was one.

The fact that there were so many different types of wireless set designs, appealing to a whole range of potential consumers means that the advertisements in *Radio Pictorial* represent a cultural snapshot in time, and are revealing about the aspiration of the magazine's readership. The choice of radio set had initially been a performance-orientated purchase; there were many performance factors to consider, including decisions between a battery and mains power supply, the portability of the radio, tuning options etc. But the aesthetic and aspirational considerations came to dominate the 1930s and accordingly, many of the adverts portrayed smartly dressed people, in elegant homes listening to expensive-looking radio sets (see fig. 13.1). Others depicted the "modern" radio set for the contemporary home with the cosy family unit gathered around the radio in their mains wired suburban home with their populist *Radio Pictorial* ready to guide them around the global stations. They were designed to appeal to a house-proud woman who had assimilated the radio into her daily life, where it now had pride of place in her living-room.

¹⁹⁹ In 1932 a "Survey of Reader Interest in Various Sections of Sunday Newspapers to Determine the Relative Value of Rotogravure as an Advertising Medium" found that the photo-gravures, the printing process used by *Radio Pictorial*, were the most widely read sections of the paper and that advertisements there were three times more likely to be seen by readers than in any other section (Library of Congress, online source).

***Radio Pictorial* and the IBC**

As already discussed, the members of the Newspaper Press Association had a long-standing grievance that the BBC used its broadcasting monopoly to give it an unfair advantage in the magazine market. It is small wonder that those with magazine interests, such as Scott-Taggart and Lord Iliffe, watched every development the BBC made in its publications and were ever-ready to cry foul. In 1934, however, the situation was reversed, and it was the BBC who found that its revenue from its publications was being threatened. On 31st August 1934, following the secret negotiations between Jones and Plugge, *Radio Pictorial* started publishing the English Programmes from the Continent supplied by the International Broadcasting Company Ltd. It is notable that previously Plugge and his colleague Leonard had traded the foreign listings aspect of their business with the BBC under the name of their other company Radio International Publicity Services (RIPS), whereas in *Radio Pictorial* the information was recorded as having been supplied by the “International Broadcasting Company Ltd”. Plugge and Leonard presumably felt that the IBC was the name associated with their English language programmes broadcast from abroad and therefore the programme listings published in *Radio Pictorial* would provide publicity for their own broadcasts. The magazine also carried details of the Radio Luxembourg programmes.

Radio Pictorial did not have the monopoly on these listings, and, as discussed in Chapter Six, the BBC itself predicted that once the *Wireless World* had challenged this monopoly, other magazines would inevitably follow suit. Interestingly, the Newspaper Proprietors Association (NPA) did not take the same line with *Radio Pictorial* that it had with the *Sunday Referee* when it published the IBC Programme Sheet; it was not banned by any newsagents and “was on sale at many bookstalls” (Vinogradoff, 1965, p.39). This may have been because Jones was not dependent on the supply networks under the control of the NPA, which was what had finally caused the *Sunday Referee* to capitulate (Wallis, 2008, pp.88-89). It may also have been because, as the BBC had found, there was such interest in the IBC broadcasts that moves to restrict its activities met with intense public disapproval.

The BBC Director of Publicity, Gladstone Murray alerted colleagues to the fact that *Radio Pictorial* was carrying the IBC’ Programme Sheet with the words “our circulation is now

menaced as it has never been menaced before”.²⁰⁰ Scannell & Cardiff state erroneously that *Radio Pictorial* was the only magazine which printed the details of broadcasts from Radio Normandy and Luxembourg (Scannell & Cardiff, 1991, p.295). As discussed in Chapter Six, *Wireless World* had published the programmes for a period in the 1930s, until in 1934, the BBC had managed to force Lord Iliffe to discontinue (see fig. 13.2). In *Wireless World*, Plugge’s programme sheet appeared as “The Wireless World Foreign Programme Supplement” whereas in *Radio Pictorial* it was given the title “English Programmes from the Continent. Information supplied by International Broadcasting Co. Ltd.” thereby giving the IBC due publicity.

The cover of the first number to carry the IBC programme sheet, which was a striking green colour, instead of the more usual red or orange, portrayed the Chinese-American actress Anna May Wong, who would have been instantly recognisable during this period as a major American and European film star (Leong, 2005, p.2) (see fig. 14.1). The choice of this actress to appear on the cover of the first magazine to include the listings of foreign programmes was a masterful stroke, invoking as it did a strongly international feel, with a nod towards America.²⁰¹ *Radio Pictorial* described its front cover thus:

The Cover design this week features Anna May Wong on a background of prominent Continental Stations. Anna has, of course, been filmed at the Gaumont-British studios and was the “G.B.” Lime Grove studios when Henry Hall paid a flying visit their recently to see the film *Chu Chin Chow* in the making.²⁰²

As it happens, Anna May Wong was shown sitting in the middle of a map of *IBC* transmitters; Jones was clearly determined to maximise the impact of the inclusion of the *IBC*’s English Programmes from the Continent, but it is noticeable that he chose *not* to make this connection directly, referring to them obliquely as “prominent Continental Stations”. Also prominently displayed on the cover of *Radio Pictorial* for 31st August 1934 was the text: “Includes Full English Titles from the Continent”. After the BBC had finally forced Lord Iliffe to stop publishing the foreign programmes listing in *Wireless World*, *Radio*

²⁰⁰ Gladstone Murray, W.E., 1932. To Judson, R. (25th July). [Internal Circulating Memorandum.] BBC WAC R44/277/3 Publications World Radio (1931-1934).

²⁰¹ There has been a resurgence of interest in Anna May Wong, as her career has been re-evaluated from “puppet of Hollywood” who disgraced Chinese womanhood to a pioneer who had an extraordinary career which conquered America, Europe and China (Hodges, 2012, p.iv.)

²⁰² *Radio Pictorial*, 31st August 1934.

Pictorial changed the text on its front cover to read “THE ONLY PAPER publishing the CONTINENTAL PROGRAMMES FOR ENGLISH LISTENERS”.

Following Jones’ association with Plugge and the IBC, *Radio Pictorial* became a sponsor of a programme entitled: “‘Radio Pictorial’ Celebrity Concert”. Apart from this and occasional articles, there was comparatively little in the magazine about Plugge himself. In the number for 2nd November 1934 the following announcement appeared:

We are pleased to announce to I.B.C. that that Captain F. Plugge, President of the International Broadcasting Club was married to Miss Ann Muckleston of London on October 25, 1934 at St. Thomas’ Church, Fifth Avenue, New York City.²⁰³

Though not particularly noteworthy in itself, the announcement is curious because it appeared amongst the programme details, which points to the fact that the only editorial input Plugge had in *Radio Pictorial* was in the programme sheet which his company printed. The Radio Luxembourg presenters Christopher Stone (ex of the BBC) and Stephen Williams (previously IBC) had regular columns, but Plugge’s articles for the wireless press and for *World-Radio*, like his expertise, were of a highly technical content and *Radio Pictorial* eschewed anything of this nature.

Content of *Radio Pictorial*

The first number of *Radio Pictorial* carrying the IBC Foreign Guide contained an article entitled “Why Don’t You Try Listening to Continental Stations?” Jones had already displayed his adroit writing skills, and this was another example, since the article was actually an advertisement for the magazine in disguise:

One Sunday afternoon, when both the National and Regional were very boring, I accidentally turned the set knob to the long-wave position before turning it off. Idly I turned the tuning knob and heard a friendly voice speaking in English and announcing a popular light music programme. By the tone of the transmissions, I could tell that it was not any B.B.C. station to which I had previously listened. But the music was good, so I did listen. It turned out to be an advertiser’s sponsored programme from Luxembourg. Then I began to take an interest in the “Radio Pic.” Foreign Programme guide.²⁰⁴

²⁰³ *Radio Pictorial*, 2nd November 1934.

²⁰⁴ *Radio Pictorial*, 31st August 1934.

The article is highly revealing of the tactics employed by Jones and his editorial team, because it continued with a description of the programmes to be discovered and actually suggested readers should cut out the *Radio Pictorial* English Programmes from the Continent and compare it the *Radio Times* for corresponding days, in order to get “maximum pleasure” by choosing the best programmes. Meanwhile, at the BBC, once it had been discovered by Gladstone Murray that Jones had struck a deal with Plugge and *Radio Pictorial* would be shortly be printing the IBC Foreign Programme Sheet, the BBC staff were passing copies of the magazine around the office, as a memorandum from Val Goldsmith mentioned. Their feelings towards Jones were less than cordial at this point.²⁰⁵

Even after Jones’ defection to the IBC camp in August 1934, *Radio Pictorial* remained highly focused on BBC programmes, and much of the copy for *Radio Pictorial* came from the BBC programmes, staff and stars. However, as 1934 wore on, it began to include intermittent articles about IBC studios and announcers, and occasionally tours of stations in Europe including the IBC and Radio Luxembourg. In August 1934 *Radio Pictorial* reporters went to Germany to inspect “Hitler’s Broadcasting Machine” even making direct comparisons between the German Broadcasting House and the BBC’s (*Radio Pictorial*, 10th August 1934). There were frequent exhortations to readers to “Write to ‘Radio Pictorial’ and voice your opinions on the B.B.C. broadcasts” (*Radio Pictorial*, 9th March, 1934).

Regular features included humorous cartoons, and a cartoon strip family called “The Twiddleknobs” (drawn by “Ferrier”) who had various radio-related escapades. “Newsmonger’s’ Radio Gossip” was another regular feature, the majority of its content being facts and information about the BBC and its staff, although some of the reported gossip concerned IBC announcers and programme content. It was extremely similar in appearance and content to the *Radio Times*’ feature “Both Sides of the Microphone”. Much of the material in *Radio Pictorial* demonstrated that the magazine’s editorial staff, or its anonymous contributors, had extensive access to Broadcasting House and its staff. There was constant news about colourful BBC personalities, such as Eric Maschwitz, who started out as Editor of the *Radio Times*, but who went on to become Director of Variety; descriptions of the inside workings of Broadcasting House, including an article on “Eating at the B.B.C” which

²⁰⁵ Goldsmith, V.H., 1934. To B.B.T. Sponsored Programmes (24th August). BBC WAC R43/287/3 Publications World Radio – Relations with Technical Press 1934-1937.

described the food provided and even the prices in the BBC restaurant (*Radio Pictorial* 18th May 1934). *Radio Pictorial*'s intense interest in the BBC meant that no detail was too trivial and as a result, it recorded many examples of life at the BBC. There is a description of Christmas Day at the BBC, with photographs of the BBC chefs cooking Christmas lunch, and the BBC staff eating it:

A thoughtful engineer has arranged that from 12.15 to 2 p.m. programmes shall be relayed from outside Broadcasting House, London, so announcers, engineers, producers and others on duty will dine together.²⁰⁶

Radio Pictorial obviously had people on the inside at the BBC, as this story from "Newsmonger's" Radio Gossip indicates:

While I was [in the studio] Val Gielgud came in "Hello you old rascal," was his greeting, "You can come down with me and hear a bit of Will Shakespeare if you like". I went with him into the Studio 6A and heard a scene rehearsed. After that we went down to the Studio together.²⁰⁷

This was not, perhaps, a particularly interesting story, but it achieved its primary purpose, which was to demonstrate an ease and familiarity with key BBC figures, and also presented BBC figures in a manner which was more relaxed, and much less stiff than the BBC's habitual presentation. The impression given was of a close and tight-knit world, where people were always bumping into each other. This agrees with the picture presented by the *Radio Times* editor Gorham when he described how, like many of the BBC staff, he used to go to the Dover Castle pub for lunch when the BBC was at Savoy Hill and how he used to see the "commercial radio men from the International Broadcasting Company across the way" whose local it was too (Gorham, 1948, p.47). There is no evidence in the BBC files at Caversham that the BBC tried to ban staff from appearing in the magazine, and many of the key senior figures of administration, including Burrows and Reith, posed for photographs at different times.²⁰⁸ It is even possible that the BBC could see certain advantages in allowing *Radio Pictorial* to portray a more informal view of its activities. At Christmas time, *Radio Pictorial* printed messages from the IBC announcers and also from the supposedly anonymous BBC announcers. The senior BBC announcer, Stuart Hibberd's message read: "To all readers of

²⁰⁶ *Radio Pictorial*, 7th December 1934.

²⁰⁷ *Radio Pictorial*, 11th May 1934.

²⁰⁸ Burrows was Secretary-General of the International Broadcasting Union by 1934, but he had been the BBC's first Director of Programmes.

Radio Pictorial I send my warmest greetings for Christmas and the New Year and wish them many happy returns” (*Radio Pictorial*, 7th December 1934).

Radio Pictorial frequently dispensed with all but a very tenuous connection with broadcasting, unlike the *Radio Times* which required articles to retain some association, however remote (Briggs, 1965, p.284). The magazine clearly assumed that its readership would be primarily female; there were knitting patterns, recipe pages, and fashion advice; recalling Braithwaite’s observation, *Radio Pictorial* had specialised and appropriated a niche of the broadcasting magazine market. Regular features aimed directly at this female readership included “Eve and the Mike”, which became “The Woman Listener” on 1st June 1934. Women readers were exhorted to share their domestic problems with “Margot”: “If you are worried over any household or domestic problems, then tell your troubles to “Margot.” Fashion, cookery, and beauty hints, to mention only a few examples, can be dealt with ...” (*Radio Pictorial*, 23rd March 1934).

This can be compared to the pages in the *Radio Times* in which Irene Veal invited direct questions on personal or home matters. Similarly, Margot’s page provided useful recipes, advice about skin problems, solutions for tricky laundry issues, suggestions for colours for the home, uses for old hair nets, instructions on how to make home-made insecticide, tips for achieving “middle-aged chic”, revelations about the secrets of “foot comfort”, lessons on the correct care of saucepans, to name but a few of the areas covered. *Radio Pictorial* thereby demonstrated its adherence to the characteristic prevalent in women’s magazines during the period, as identified by Greenfield & Reid as “professional domesticity” whereby homes were to be run along the lines of scientific management, almost like a factory (Greenfield & Reid, 1998, pp.169-170). Another feature, “Aunt Belinda’s Children’s Corner” was aimed at the mothers amongst the readership, which, just like the BBC’s Children’s Hour, and, incidentally the IBC announcers, referred to the children as “nieces and nephews”.²⁰⁹

A striking characteristic of *Radio Pictorial* was the large number of regular features about the BBC announcers. Occasionally there were features on the IBC announcers, but they did not have the same mystique; the IBC announcers’ names were printed in the programme sheet.

²⁰⁹ The IBC had no compunction in copying the BBC’s ideas, as was freely admitted in *Radio Pictorial* by one of Radio Normandy’s first announcers, Stephen Williams, who explained: “We wanted to attract youthful listeners, and there seemed no better way than to emulate the B.B.C. with their birthday greetings” (*Radio Pictorial*, 23rd November 1934).

Plugge wanted maximum publicity for his announcers and even offered to sell pictures of them. *Radio Pictorial* had identified that its female readership was particularly interested in BBC announcers (see fig. 14.2) as this article demonstrates:

Why do women fall desperately in love with radio announcers? And, on the other hand, why does the B.B.C. employ announcers with voices so charming that they cause a fluttering of many hearts? “My dear! That B.B.C. announcer’s too charming. I simply adore the way he says “Good-night to you all.” So exaggeratingly human, don’t you think....”²¹⁰

Accordingly another regular feature was for *Radio Pictorial* to visit BBC announcers in their homes and describe aspects of their lives. In one such article, *Radio Pictorial* visited the prestigious BBC announcer Stuart Hibberd, commenting that, in spite of the BBC’s “official cloak on anonymity”, Hibberd still attracted a lot of correspondence (*Radio Pictorial*, 13th April 1934). The magazine was aware that this fascination with announcers was extended to other radio voices, and duly made much of the fact that some of its readership would be single women, turning to their radios (and therefore to *Radio Pictorial* too) for solace: “A wireless set is a wonderful companion to a lonely woman. It brings a friendly voice to her friendless world” (*Radio Pictorial*, 23rd March 1934).

Further evidence that *Radio Pictorial* was aiming at a female market can be found in February number for 1936, when *Radio Pictorial* addressed its readers with:

Now then girls! How would you like to be married to Norman Long? In a sensational contribution in next week’s “Radio Pictorial” this great comedian tells you in an article entitled “What *Is* This Thing called Love?” all about the type of girl he wants to marry. Don’t miss the opportunity!²¹¹

In one particularly pertinent article, Godfrey Winn, who was a highly respected journalist, addressed the issue “Do Women Listeners get a Square Deal?”:

If I were a woman, with a woman’s outlook on life and a woman’s interests, I should feel that I had a justifiable grievance against the B.B.C. ... Indeed it surprises me that there are not more complaints from women listeners, since as a sex, they are not given to suffer in silence!²¹²

²¹⁰ *Radio Pictorial*, 23rd March 1934.

²¹¹ *Radio Pictorial*, 28th February 1936.

²¹² *Radio Pictorial*, 17th August 1934.

The basis of the complaint, as articulated by Winn, was that women were reasonably well served by programmes in the morning but ignored “or rather unsexed” from midday to midnight in that “they cease to be women as far as listening-in is concerned, and become men”. Winn felt that although the BBC would argue (and indeed, did argue in its 1934 *Radio Times Woman’s Broadcasting Number* quoted above) that its attitude towards its listeners was sexless, there was still a “strong masculine flavour” to most of its programmes. Winn urged women listeners to be much more vociferous in calling for items which are “purely feminine in flavour”. He had reportedly addressed the BBC on the subject himself:

I know that Miss Marjorie [sic] Wace, who runs this section of the Talks Department, thinks that I am wrong. We have had friendly, if furious arguments on the subject. In fact, when I suggested that she sadly neglected the lighter side of feminine life, and that she should have gay attractive talks on frivolous things like make-up and clothes and silk-stockings, she registered horror and stern disapproval. Her own conviction is that listeners who use their wireless sets in the morning aren’t doing so for amusement or vanity’s sake, but simply and solely to obtain practical instruction on household matters.²¹³

Murphy points out that in 1936 Margery Wace was one of the organisers of the “BBC’s Women’s Conference” convened to discuss the timing and content of the *Morning Talks*. This was attended by nearly four hundred women, from more than sixty different organisations, and there was “no doubt that these talks were widely appreciated” (Murphy, 2011, p.219). It is interesting, nevertheless, that *Radio Pictorial* chose to publish an article upbraiding the BBC on its provision of programmes for women, and as some of the readers’ letters to *Radio Pictorial* reveal, notwithstanding the support for the *Morning Talks* which Wace found at the Conference, Winn had certainly identified a grievance which some women felt deeply. (The readers’ letters to *Radio Pictorial* and *Radio Times* are examined in detail in Chapter Eleven, including several letters on this subject.)²¹⁴

In pursuit of the female magazine market, *Radio Pictorial* drew its readers in with a knowing sympathy towards their secret yearnings, with articles such as “The Voice That Thrills Women” by Nerina Shute. It is worth quoting this passage at length because it gives a flavour of the magazine’s content. It began:

²¹³ *Radio Pictorial*, 17th August 1934.

²¹⁴ Murphy notes that Marjory Wace was dubbed the “Housewife’s friend” by *Radio Pictorial*, although in addition to misspelling her name in the Winn article, in the number for 21st September 1934 *Radio Pictorial*’ “Newsmonger’s” Radio Gossip” erroneously referred to her as “Dorothy Wace, the housewife’s friend”.

Supposing you are a lonely woman. You turn on the radio sometimes and listen in a state of ecstasy to a man whose name is given as “The Vagabond Lover”. I guess hundreds of women have been thrilled by “The Vagabond Lover.” Some of them were moved to tears. Women love his singing. But his real name was kept a secret by BBC officials and that gave him about ten times more romance than anyone else. It meant that women could love him and feel possessive about him. Anyway, last week I met “The Vagabond Lover.” Mr. Cavan O’Connor.²¹⁵

If the BBC, in pursuing its policy of refusing to give publicity to artists and announcers unwittingly fed the fires of its audience’s imagination, *Radio Pictorial* recognised that their readers’ curiosity was exploitable. The article continued with details of Cavan O’Connor’s life, and was accompanied by a photograph of him looking suitably smouldering.

Neither the programme sheet, nor the magazine itself changed much during the six and a half years that it was published. In later numbers there were articles on Television – not technical – but rather light-hearted ones about topics such as the BBC’s experiments to find the best effects from make-up *Radio Pictorial*, 25th September 1936. The advertisements became slightly more “up market” with photographs of models rather than hand-drawn pictures. Advertisements for brands which sponsored Radio Luxembourg’s concerts such as Ovaltine, reminding readers to listen to the Children’s Programme “The Ovaltineys Concert Party” were particularly prominent. In 1935 *Radio Pictorial* expanded slightly and the women’s pages were spread over three pages rather than the single page in 1934; knitting patterns were also given their own page rather than a single column. Some regular items changed their names, such as “Newsmonger’s’ Radio Gossip” became simply “Radio Gossip”, but the content was essentially the same.

The number of articles about the IBC programmes and staff, and Radio Luxembourg increased from 1935 onwards, as the programmes became more widely known and popular. The price had gone up in August 1934 from 2 pence to 3 pence, when the IBC programme sheet was included. The editorial quality was not of the highest standard; as with the examples above, people’s and place’s names were misspelled and occasionally were simply wrong, accents in foreign words were incorrect. Occasionally the photographs were blurred, and in some illustrations the printing was distorted; quality was not necessarily the primary objective of *Radio Pictorial*.

²¹⁵ *Radio Pictorial*, 29th May, 1936.

***Radio Pictorial* Advertisements as a Gauge of its Market**

Based on empirical data gathered by examining the advertisements in *Radio Pictorials* for 46 numbers in 1934, it is apparent that just over a third of the advertisements carried in *Radio Pictorial* in 1934 were aimed directly at women; the remainder was non gender-specific. The criterion for deciding whether an advertisement was intended to attract the attention of women expressly was based on an assessment of whether it was for a specifically feminine product, or if it carried a picture of a woman in the advertisement. Of the remaining two thirds of advertisements a very small number were aimed implicitly at men (such as Silvikrin, which would “stop scalp starvation” and thereby prevent baldness). Of these, some fell into the category of products which a wife might buy for her husband. (See list of advertisements in Appendix III.) Many of the products advertised were from brands whose names appear only in items of nostalgia today, such as “Bile Beans for Bilioussness” or “The Tradoss Nose Shaper” which “corrects all ill-shaped noses quickly, painlessly and permanently” and more obscurely “Widow Welch’s Female Pills” (the complaint for which these pills were the cure, is not specified).

Some of the products reflect the particularly anxious preoccupations of the period, as discussed in Chapter Three, such as a booklet which promised: “The Torture of “nerves” banished for ever”. With the glamorous radio advertisements discussed above, the advertisements in *Radio Pictorial* demonstrate that the advertisers assumed the magazine’s market to be one which was mostly female, was interested in their appearance, and slightly anxious about some aspects of it. The advertisements were also mostly for products at the lower end of the price range (apart from some of the radio sets). They were not for necessities, but also not for luxury items: comfortable and flattering corsets, creams and ointments. The most expensive items were the Berkley Superlax furniture, Bravingtons Diamond Rings, and slightly surprisingly, Rileys Billiard Table which hailed women with “This will keep your boys at home”. The indications are that the *Radio Pictorial* readership was presumed to have a modest-income.

Greenfield & Reid (1998) identify that women’s magazines from the 1930s were competitive and stratified into four clear categories: those read by the upper- and middle-class women, which appealed to the affluent reader; the shilling magazines aimed at middle-class women, which were distinct from the sixpenny weeklies which were aimed at lower, middle-class

and working-class women” (Greenfield & Reid, 1998, pp.165-165). There was also a two-penny mass-circulation weeklies category which targeted working-class women. From Greenfield & Reid’s description of the staple fare of the twopenny mass circulation weeklies, it may be concluded that *Radio Pictorial* fell into the latter: with a familiar, “chatty” tone, an unchanging agenda, and with plenty of romantic stories and knitting patterns. Greenfield & Reid’s observations about *Woman’s Own* during the mid-1930s, can also be applied to *Radio Pictorial*. They identify:

Knitting and sewing pages, along with the inclusion of pulp romance ... were indicative of its targeting of a working-class readership. ... The increased space devoted to knitting and sewing patterns reflected the magazine’s awareness of the discrepancies between idealized and realized life-styles: ready-made clothing remained relatively expensive for most readers.²¹⁶

Radio Pictorial does fit the hallmarks of a magazine aiming at a working-class market, as defined by Greenfield & Reid’s research; it was launched as a twopenny, in addition to the instruction and knitting patterns, it carried advertisements for dressing on a budget, for example “‘Smartwear’ How to dress well on 10/ or £1 per month”, and sold itself on romantic escapist fiction. If its readership was primarily working-class, it still has aspirations, and *Radio Pictorial* was prepared to cater for these by providing glimpses of glamour in the lives of the radio stars. However, Greenfield & Reid also observe that *Woman’s Own*, does not fit easily within their own four-tier categorisation “and should be regarded as the first of a new publishing genre” (Greenfield & Reid, 1998, p.165). Similarly, there is an argument to say that *Radio Pictorial* was unique amongst magazines, with its broadcasting/fan/female life-style focus, not to mention its interesting revelations about the BBC, and its market cannot therefore be defined as purely working-class; its more aspirational features indicate that it was aiming at, and may have attracted, a more upper-class market too.

Conclusion

Radio Pictorial set about filling in the gaps which were necessarily left by the ephemeral and aural medium of radio, and all the omissions which *Radio Times* chose not to address. Consciously *un*-highbrow, it addressed itself to the lower middle- and working-class woman, in her suburban houses, so recently attached to the National Grid, with her aspirations to own

²¹⁶ Greenfield & Reid, 1998, p.170.

a stylish electrical radio set. Unlike, the BBC magazines, which saw their role as guiding public taste, *Radio Pictorial* set about catering for the public's wants and ministering to its desires. Various sub-titling itself "The Family Magazine" and "The Magazine for Every Listener" (in contrast to *The Radio Times*' self-regarding "The Journal of the British Broadcasting Corporation") *Radio Pictorial* was inclusive and gave its readers what they wanted: fashion tips and etiquette advice, lots of glamorous, smiling photographs of the stars, romantic stories, and plenty of views "behind the scenes" and backstage gossip. Whether the BBC appreciated it or not, *Radio Pictorial* brought the BBC publicity and presented it in a more lowbrow and populist light; a perspective which it was not prepared to bring itself in the *Radio Times*.

Scannell & Cardiff correctly observe that *Radio Pictorial* allowed a glimpse of "the quality and output" of the programmes from Normandy and Luxembourg (Scannell & Cardiff, 1991, p.xiii). However, it gave much more than that, because, in addition to following the lives of the major radio celebrities of the day, it also recorded an immense amount of detail about the BBC and its staff too. It showed smiling informal pictures of the administrative staff in addition to the broadcasting staff, sometimes in their own homes, sometimes with their families. It asked them their views, and even reported their remarks verbatim. It described BBC studios, the secrets of Broadcasting House, visits to the Droitwich transmitter, articles on how the BBC building never really slept, snippets of surprising information, such as the fact that when the Midland Regional Director Percy Edgar was unwell, Reith *insisted* that he obeyed his doctor's instructions! Or that Reith had an album with an autographed picture of every member of staff who had served more than ten years with the BBC (*Radio Pictorial*, 26th October 1934, 2nd November 1934).

Paine & Paine describe magazines as being a "barometer of contemporary culture at any given point in time" claiming that they offer snap shots of a contemporary world that has ceased to exist (Paine & Paine, 1987, p.13). *Radio Pictorial* provides an intensely detailed picture of the preoccupations, hopes, worries, fears, the minute detail of the lives of lower middle-class and working-class British women in the 1930s. It also reveals what the radio meant to women: a source of escapism for some, vicarious glamour for others and instructional information in the running of the home for the housewife. *Radio Pictorial* is a rich source for cultural as well as broadcasting historians precisely because its *business* was to appeal to women, and therefore it used, as its material, the nation's obsession with all

things pertaining to the radio, chiefly the BBC, but also the Continental programmes from the IBC and Radio Luxembourg. In feeding its readers' curiosity about life at the BBC staff, *Radio Pictorial* also recorded immense detail, often with photographs, which would otherwise have been lost. It can therefore be regarded as recapturing not just a quality about the Continental stations, but also a quality about the BBC.

Footnote to *Radio Pictorial*

Radio Pictorial was only published for six and a half years, but by the time it closed down broadcasting magazines had been well and truly domesticated. When the Second World War broke out, it ceased publication, the last number being 8th September 1939. Jones attempted a reincarnation of his magazine as *War Pictorial*, with no programme details, but this magazine was not a success, existing only briefly from 15th September 1939 to 29th December 1939. It was incorporated into *War Weekly* published by George Newnes Ltd. from January 1940, and Bernard Jones Ltd. went into liquidation. The weekend programme details of Radios Luxemburg and Normandy were picked up by the *Daily Worker* from 30th November 1939 (Vinogradoff, 1965, p.39).



Fig. 5.1 *Radio Times*, 1926 artwork, reproduced in Driver, 1981, p.11.



Fig. 5.2 *Radio Times*, first number 1923.



Fig. 6.1 *Radio Times* Mastheads

First seen 28th September 1923. Radio transmitter masts drawn in.



First seen 29th August 1924. Transmitter masts removed as the number of locations increased.



First seen 6th February 1925.



First seen 21st September 1928.



Thunderbolt: First seen 10th January 1937. 'THE' is dropped from the name of the magazine. Printed in red between 5th November 1939 and 9th April 1944.



Fig. 7.1 *Radio Times*, 1940 featuring coloured cover and new masthead.

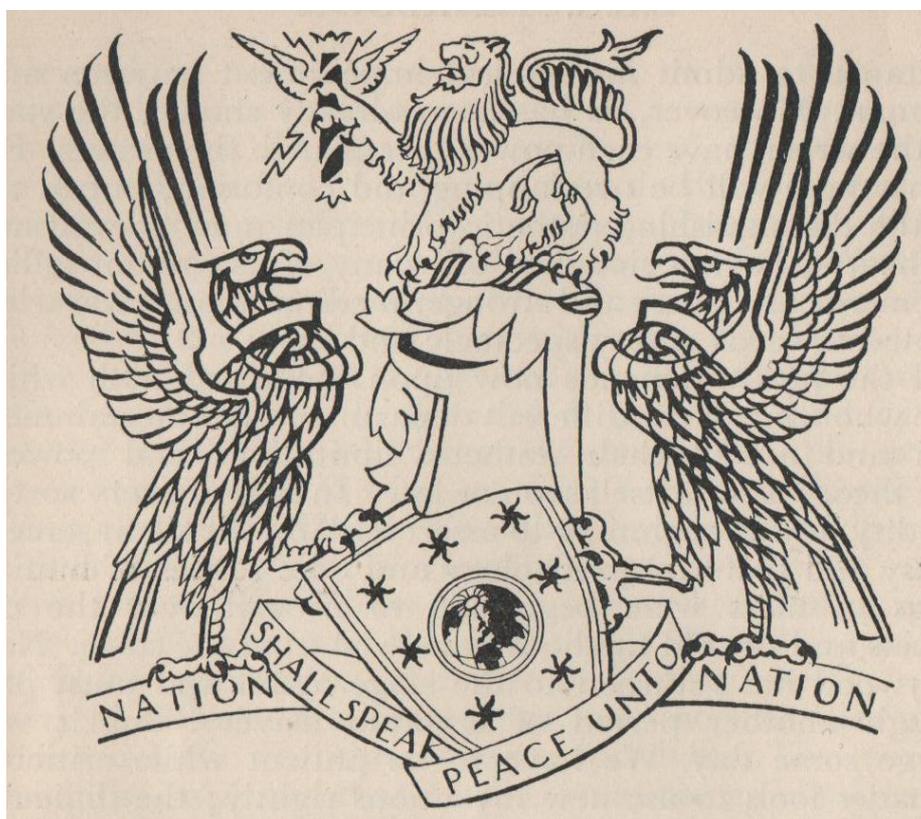


Fig. 7.2 BBC Coat of Arms, *BBC Year-Book 1930, 1931*, p.44.

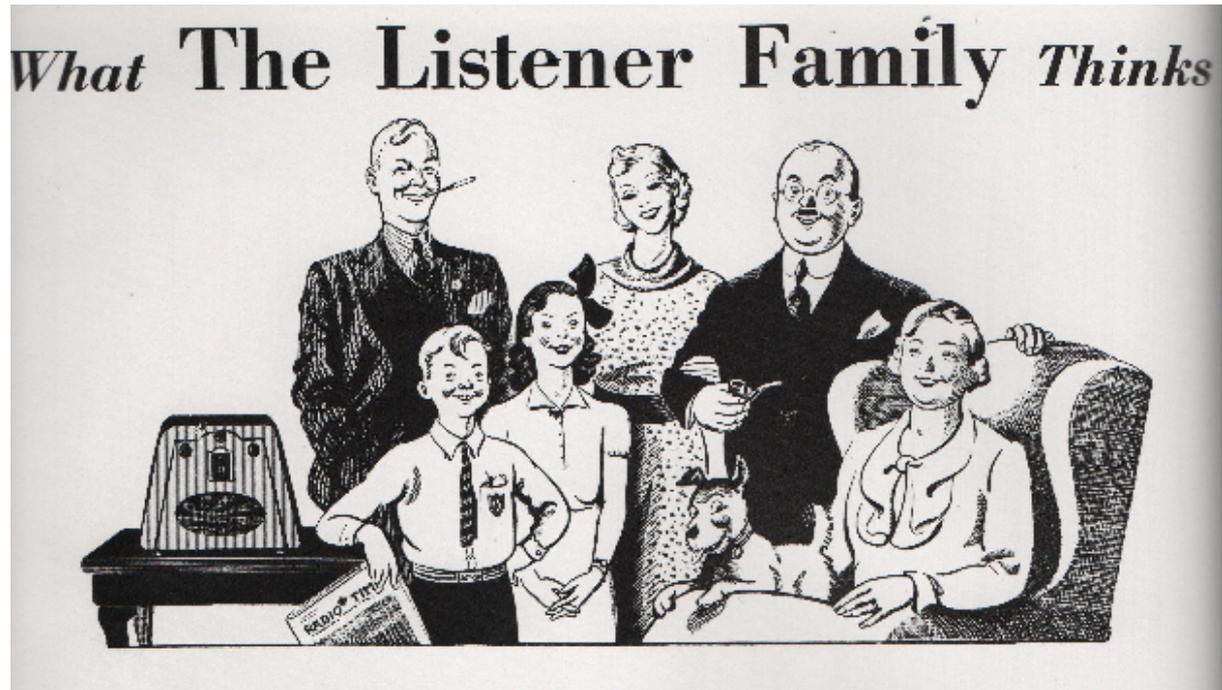


Fig. 8.1 Illustration, *Radio Times*, reproduced in Driver, 1981, p.44.

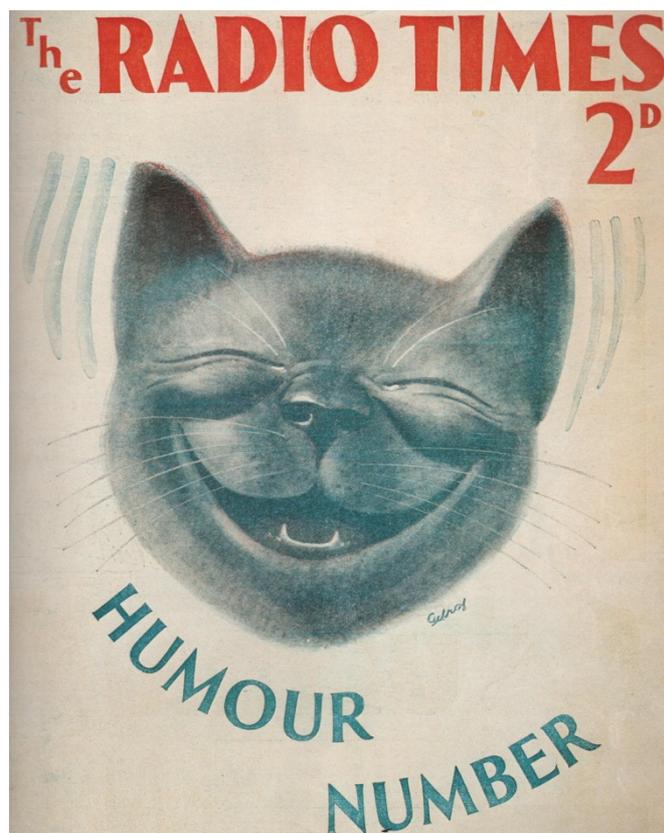


Fig. 8.2 *Radio Times*, 1936, reproduced in Driver, 1981, p.45.



Fig.10.1 BBC and IBC Logos



Fig. 10.2 Reith, *Radio Pictorial*, January 1934.



Fig. 11.1 *Radio Pictorial* covers.



Fig. 11.2 *Woman's Own*, 1932.



Fig. 12.1 *Amateur Wireless*, 1933.



Fig.12.2 BBC Radio Bandleader Roy Fox with his Wife, *Radio Pictorial*, February 1934.

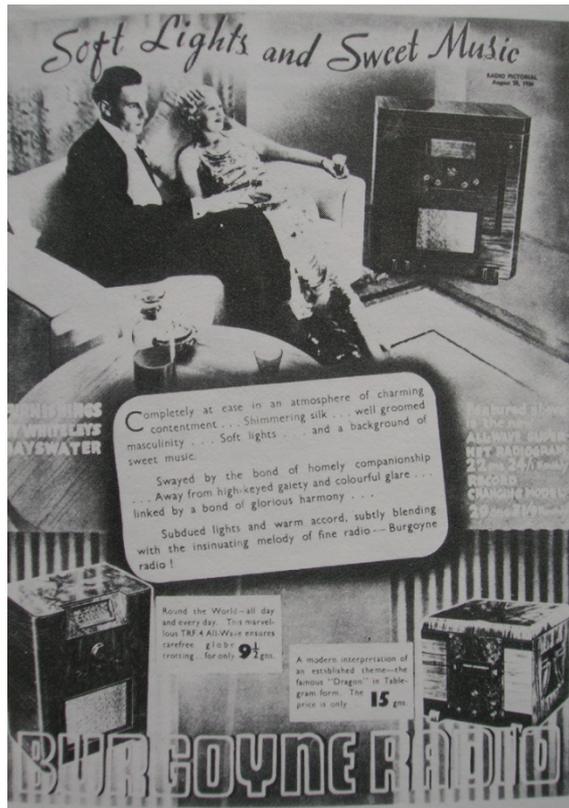


Fig. 13.1 Advertisement in *Radio Pictorial*, 1936, reproduced in Briggs, 1981, p.87.

SINGLE-SPAN TUNING EXPLAINED

4^D

The Wireless World

THE PRACTICAL RADIO JOURNAL
with Complete Foreign Programmes

Friday, April 6th, 1934.

RADIOPHONE for RELIABILITY

- a Component for Every Need

Complete Range of VOLUME CONTROLS from 4/-

and Q.M.B. SWITCHES from 1/3

Manufactured by British Radiophones for Quality and Economy

BRITISH RADIOPHONE LTD., ALDWYCH HOUSE, LONDON, W.C.2.

BRITISH-MADE "Q.M.B." SWITCHES

OUR FAMOUS "Q.M.B." "BROW" 750-WATT MAINS SWITCHES ARE GUARANTEED 100% LONDON MADE.

CHARACTERISTICS OF SWITCHES

Prices are very reasonable. Our most popular types are—

No. 122, 2 P. 250 W. 2 A.C. 250 V.	No. 22, New 1/6
No. 124, 2 P. 250 W. 2 A.C. 250 V.	No. 23, 1/6
No. 125, 2 P. 250 W. 2 A.C. 250 V.	No. 24, 1/6
No. 126, 2 P. 250 W. 2 A.C. 250 V.	No. 25, 1/6
No. 127, 2 P. 250 W. 2 A.C. 250 V.	No. 26, 1/6
No. 128, 2 P. 250 W. 2 A.C. 250 V.	No. 27, 1/6
No. 129, 2 P. 250 W. 2 A.C. 250 V.	No. 28, 1/6
No. 130, 2 P. 250 W. 2 A.C. 250 V.	No. 29, 1/6
No. 131, 2 P. 250 W. 2 A.C. 250 V.	No. 30, 1/6

AS USED BY PRACTICALLY ALL THE LEADING RADIO MANUFACTURERS. MANY OTHER PATTERS.

CLAUDE LYONS, LIMITED,
Head Office: 76, OLDHALL STREET, LIVERPOOL, 2.
LONDON, 8, BUCKINGHAM GATE, S.W.1.

COLVERN COLPAK FERROGART TUNING UNIT

The most compact, efficient tuning unit of all

You can depend on

COLVERN

TELSEN D.R. TRANSFORMER

- the I.F. Transformer with a STRAIGHT LINE CHARACTERISTIC

CHARACTERISTIC

With your TUNING AND FLUCTUATION into the noise zone, and radio interference, the Telsen D.R. with a 4000 ohm impedance, is the only transformer which does not allow any possibility of thermal drift or hum.

8/6

TELSEN TO COVER EVERYTHING IN RADIO

No. 762, Vol. XXXIV, No. 14.

Fig. 13.2 *Wireless World*, 1934 with "Complete Foreign Programmes".



Fig.14.1 Anna May Wong amidst IBC transmitters, *Radio Pictorial*, 1934.

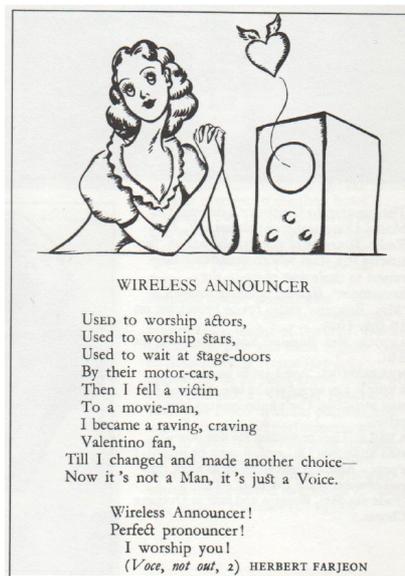


Fig. 14.2 Wireless Announcer Poem, reproduced in Briggs, 1981, p.137.



Fig. 15.1 Cartoon, reproduced in Briggs 1981, p.161

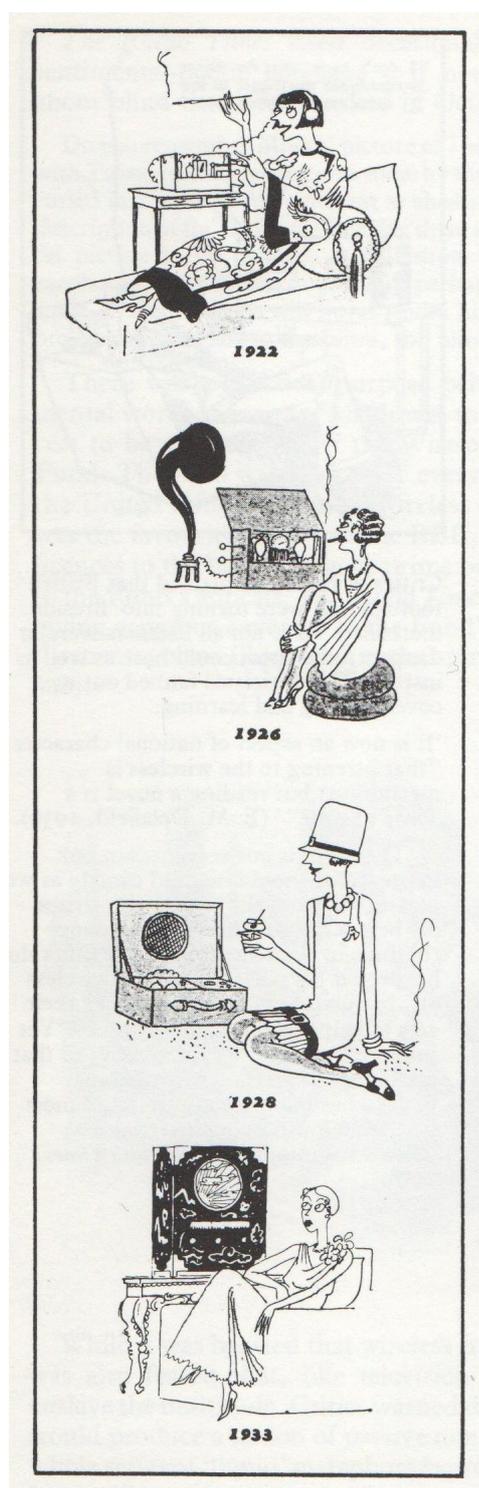


Fig. 15.2 Cartoon, reproduced in Briggs, 1981, p.60.

Chapter Nine

Making Waves: the BBC's Reaction to *Radio Pictorial*

Had that reader considered that there may be many people who have to toss up between the RADIO PICTORIAL and the RADIO TIMES? These people find that for the same money they can, together with the daily papers, keep up with the wireless programmes, by dispensing with their RADIO TIMES and taking a paper which will give both hints for listening and also delightful reading.²¹⁷

Introduction

This Chapter begins by going back to the origins of the *Radio Times* and considers its growing importance to the BBC as a major source of revenue. This aspect is significant, because it is with regard to its commercial magazine activities that the BBC displayed an uncompromising, even aggressive behaviour which was at odds with its patriarchal, public service broadcasting image. The degree to which the BBC exploited the *Radio Times* is also examined, once again, drawing on the BBC's correspondence for evidence, and also on its own words in its annually published *Handbooks*, *Year-Books* and *Annuals*. When the BBC's actions are examined from this angle, what emerges is that the BBC had double standards, both with regard to the advertising through its broadcasting and its magazines, but also in its representation of itself to the public.

The BBC's image with its audience was a particular issue at this time, because it was being affected by the broadcasting activities of the IBC. These had been intruding on the BBC's airtime increasingly as the 1930s wore on; this Chapter considers the progression of the IBC's influence with the UK public, and argues that after *Radio Pictorial* formed an alliance with Plugge's IBC and began to print the IBC Foreign Programmes Sheet, in the eyes of the BBC, the magazine went from a minor competitor, which could not begin to threaten the BBC's position, into a source of aggravation, not least for the mirror it held up to the BBC's own magazines.

²¹⁷ *Radio Pictorial*, 25th May 1934.

The significance of the *Radio Times* to the BBC

The BBC had quickly become aware that the creation of the *Radio Times*, though born of necessity to publicise its programmes when the newspapers refused, was an outstanding piece of good fortune for the BBC. The revenue derived from its enormous circulation and its advertising potential was not only considerable, it was also independent from the Post Office and therefore the Government. The BBC accordingly kept careful guard over the revenue it generated, as its editors were fully aware. In 1928, when Eric Maschwitz was editor, he felt that the *Radio Times* was “a property of ever-increasing value, the profits derived from which are of increasing service to the Corporation and the listening public”.²¹⁸ Briggs describes the magazine as the “perfect advertiser’s medium” because of the size of its circulation (Briggs, 1965, p.280). The subsequent editor Maurice Gorham recollected that however successful the *Radio Times* was, yet the BBC was always looking to increase profit from it. Gorham recalled:

I think Reith felt that publications profits were the only thing he could count upon, as licence revenue went not to the BBC but to the Treasury, who then gave back some proportion of it to the BBC; at any rate he showed keen interest in them. With a circulation which had grown to two million in the first ten years, there was little inducement to put the money back into the paper and plenty to take it out.²¹⁹

The importance to the BBC of having an independent source of the revenue from its magazine arm can hardly be over-stated. In the *BBC Hand Book 1929*, the BBC published its finances, with some explanation as to how its income was derived. As expected, the bulk of it came from the Post Office, based on the number of receiving licences issued, and the balance received by the BBC is given as £896,875. The next source of income is identified as coming from the BBC’s publications which had been “established as a necessary means of supplementing programme work”. It is interesting to note that even in 1929, an explanation of these figures is accompanied by a justification, prompted by the consciousness that it was a generally held view within the magazine industry that the BBC took unfair advantage of the situation:

²¹⁸ Maschwitz E., 1928. To Nicholls, B.E. *Radio Times Editorial Policy* (16th January). [Internal Circulating Memorandum.] BBC WAC R43/150/3 Publications/Radio Times/1928-1934.

²¹⁹ Gorham, 1948, p.65.

These publications are managed on a commercial basis, and the net income, which amounted in 1927 to £93,686, goes to augment the revenue available for broadcast purposes. The Corporation is specifically empowered by its Charter to undertake this activity.²²⁰

Based on these figures, the BBC publications, mainly the *Radio Times*, contributed more than 10% of the BBC's overall income as at 31st December 1927. During this period the BBC had a number of important publications from which to draw, *The Listener*, which was a successful concern, *World-Radio*, which was much less so, and a series of supplementary Publications, these being the *Year-Books/Annuals*, concert programmes, and pamphlets. However, as Gorham recalled the *Radio Times* alone was “the biggest magazine in the country”:

Before the war the published profit from BBC publications amounted to £400,000 a year, and taking into account the losses on other enterprises and the overheads of the Public Relations Division, I reckoned that an ordinary publishing house would have been making £600,000 a year out the *Radio Times*.²²¹

Even allowing for some exaggeration of Gorham's part, with a circulation of 3 million copies by 1936, the profits from the magazine were huge in comparison with other magazines (Currie, 2001, p.35). In the extract above, Gorham is referring to the fact that the *Radio Times* was “carrying” *World-Radio* (which had, as has been demonstrated, a specific strategic importance to the BBC). The profits were derived both from the cover price and revenue from advertising and Gorham explained how eager the BBC was to find more and better spaces for advertisements to increase the revenue, complaining “I don't know how many days and nights I've spent over dummies, totting up text v. ads in whole pages, and halves, and thirds” (Gorham, 1948, p.65). In the 1933 *Radio Times Tenth Anniversary Number* it was admitted that the make-up of the editorial pages of the paper fell “short of the ideal” precisely because of the tendency “for advertisements to encroach upon editorial space” (*Radio Times Tenth Anniversary Number* 29th September 1933).²²² The “encroachment” of advertisements into BBC publications was noticed by the other BBC departments and it was recognised with some consternation that the Publications Department was treading a very thin line between maximising income and actually contradicting the BBC's own policies. In 1928, Major

²²⁰ *BBC Hand Book 1929*, 1929, p.47.

²²¹ Gorham, 1948, p.64.

²²² This is supported by a brief examination of the progression of the advertisement pages; the *Radio Times* for 5th June 1925 was 46 pages long; after the first 26 pages, the rest of the paper was mostly advertisements, with fourteen pages of full-page advertisements. This can be compared to the number for 22nd February 1924, when out of the 40 pages there were only ten full page advertisements.

Atkinson, who was then the BBC Foreign Director, complained to Isa Benzie, then a Secretary in the Foreign Department:

Hilversum is already transmitting a British advertiser's (Brandes) programmes, announced in English, on Sundays, clashing with the Bach cantatas. Singularly enough, the advertisements of these concerts have been admitted into "World-Radio" and even "Radio Times". I raised the matter strongly at the "World-Radio" conference ... But, after all, so long as our papers are required to produce vast profits for the general funds, it is difficult to criticise the Publications Department for making money.²²³

Atkinson felt that the BBC should not allow its magazines to carry advertisements or publicity for commercial broadcasts which were aimed at its own audience. It is also interesting to note that *World-Radio*'s, which was not a profitable magazine for the BBC, was yet still sufficiently important to merit a "conference". However, the BBC's position over advertising remained anomalous; by 1929 it had three major magazine publications and in 1926 it had set up a department or the purpose of selling advertising space (Murphy, 2011, p.212).

Yet, in the *BBC Year-Book 1933* (which covered the period 1st November 1931 to 31st October 1932) the radio critic and weekly contributor to the *Radio Times*, Filson Young, presented a piece entitled "Broadcasting and Advertising" in which he, speaking for the BBC, explained (in a tone which could be interpreted as patronising) that in the widest possible terms, all broadcasting was advertising, in that it was drawing attention to something. That having been said, Young reasoned that there are two kinds of advertising; one was for public benefit, the other for private. He asserted that the BBC would, naturally, only associate itself with the first kind of advertising and "with the second it has from the beginning decided to have nothing whatever to do, in spite of the obvious financial benefits to be derived from a different policy" (*BBC Year-Book 1933*, 1933, p.61). To call this hypocritical is to miss the point; the BBC saw itself as, on the one hand as holding a Charter for a *broadcasting* public service monopoly, and on the other hand as running a publication arm along "ordinary business" lines (as quoted in Chapter Four from an exchange between Gladstone Murray and

²²³ From Atkinson, C.F., 1928. To Benzie, Isa, (5th November). [Internally Circulating Memorandum.] BBC WAC E34/960 Policy Commercial Broadcasting: Foreign Competition with BBC 1928, 1937-1939.

Jones).²²⁴ These two activities clearly had many points of intersection, but the BBC saw no paradox in operating them on morally opposed principles.

Moreover, Young's article appeared in a BBC publication interleaved with advertisements; admittedly there were less in this *Year-Book* than there had been in others, which were extensively filled with advertisements, and the ones in this *Year-Book* were mostly for wireless sets and component parts. But these advertisements had no public benefit, their purpose was to sell products to the BBC's customers, and the BBC had been paid for the advertisements to appear. In a similar piece of extraordinary "double-think", the BBC had banned Christopher Stone from broadcasting for the BBC when he defected to Radio Normandy in 1934, and yet the *Radio Times* continued to carry advertisements almost every week which depicted a picture of a smiling Stone, endorsing either Will's cigarettes or Bush Radios. It seems that the BBC's principles were flexible where advertising revenue was concerned.

As has been demonstrated, correspondence held in the files of the BBC Written Archives at Caversham reveal that the BBC was at times ruthless in its protection both of its rights, and of its profits. In the BBC's own words, holding power over "the ether" was a lucrative business for whoever controlled it:

If you think of the ether as a huge hoarding to be placarded by matter for the public to see and read, you will realise at once that its benefit or its detriment to the public depends entirely on who controls it and decides what shall be placarded.²²⁵

It is clear from this that the BBC considered that its Charter had given it control of the very airwaves, or at least those that swirled around the British Isles. For the BBC, broadcasts aimed at the British audience threatened the loss of its control of the ether, which, by its own admission, was a "huge hoarding". Due to the connection between broadcasting, the radio manufacturing industry and their advertisements in magazines, this would eventually affect the BBC's revenue, and as discussed, the BBC was extremely protective of its advertising interests in its magazines. It justified the generation of income from the advertising in its publications on the basis that it ran these *departments of the Corporation* on commercial

²²⁴ Gladstone Murray, W.E., 1932. To Jones, B. (30th June). [Letter.] BBC WAC R43/287/2 Publications World-Radio Relations with Technical Wireless Press 1932-1933.

²²⁵ *BBC Year-Book 1933*, 1933, p.61.

principles. It claimed that it did not allow advertising from the microphone – except itself and its own publications, as discussed in the internal memoranda.²²⁶ In other words, the BBC did not accept payment from commercial companies to advertise its products over the airwaves. These are very narrow distinctions on which to claim such a moral stance and the qualifications were not articulated in Young’s article. It seems impossible that the irony had escaped the BBC of refuting all “financial benefits” from advertising, when its publications were positively laden with them. The target of this article was undoubtedly commercial broadcasters, particularly the English broadcasts from the IBC and Radio Luxembourg. Young referred obliquely to the sponsoring of programmes:

However eminent the artist employed by the advertiser to attract attention to his goods, however sumptuous the bribe, so to speak, offered to the public to induce them to think about soap or bedsteads, the motive behind it is not to benefit them. ...the B.B.C. ... has never sold to others either the choice or direction of its programmes.²²⁷

This last statement at least had the merit of being true. But then, at this point, the BBC was facing the unassailable fact that it was not the only concern to recognise the “huge hoarding” nature of the ether, and that the English audience was attractive to commercial companies who saw it as so many potential consumers. The threat of the public being bribed by those who did not intend to “benefit” them rang rather hollow, and the magazine and newspaper markets were not alone in feeling that the BBC’s position on advertising was curiously double-edged. In an article in *Radio Pictorial*, which was, by its own admission, “pugnacious” Dr. Sisson Relph (described as a “well known journalist”) commented: “We know that in one breath the B.B.C. tells us it cannot give any “puff” over the ether, although in the next it manages to boost its own publications quite effectively” (*Radio Pictorial*, 5th October 1934). The thorny issue of the BBC making profit from its publications, either by the income from selling magazines or from the advertisements contained inside them was picked up again in the *BBC Annual 1935*, which reviewed the year 1934. This time, the subject was tackled directly, and with a degree of candour:

That the B.B.C. makes profits from its own activities in this direction may, and does, provoke envy and criticism, but the full return of these profits appears in the improvement of the service – programmatic and technical – and above all, in the fact that this supplementary income takes the place that ‘capital’ occupies in a

²²⁶ Mr. Brown, 1923. To Reith, J.C.W., (23rd Sept.) [Letter.] BBC WAC R43/150/1 Radio Times (1923-1925).

²²⁷ *BBC Year-Book 1933*, 1933, p.61.

commercial concern. The Corporation, as is well known, has no capital, and all long-term developments have to be financed from annual revenue.²²⁸

Thus the BBC justified its profit-making; it had no capital, and it used its gains from its publications to improve its programmes. As Chignell observes, “The BBC has been a self-conscious organisation often feeling the need to justify its actions” (Chignell, 2008, online source). The issue of the BBC raising a lucrative income from its publications was dealt with very fleetingly in the Report of the Broadcasting Committee for 1935 (the Ullswater Committee); it gave very little consideration to the BBC’s publications, on the basis that the Committee deemed the present system to be satisfactory because: “the B.B.C. has hitherto observed reasonable limits in the exercise of its powers, and we have no reason to suppose that it will do otherwise”.²²⁹ That the BBC did have extraordinary powers was tacitly recognised here, but the assertion that it always observed “reasonable limits” in the exercise of its powers would have been refuted by those who had threatened its revenue and experienced the aggression of its ensuing tactics. It should be remembered that the BBC had represented a new medium when it began broadcasting, but its advent had an impact on existing industries, as Crisell observes; the theatre managers, music hall artists, record companies and even the newspaper proprietors, all had come to illustrate a familiar feature of cultural history:

Those who in some way control traditional media or genres begin by opposing a new medium, and then make an accommodation with it which often provides them with a new and profitable role, albeit one which is changed or reduced somewhat.²³⁰

The media and the agencies involved in traditional entertainment had all had to make accommodations for the BBC; but the BBC had strayed out of its prescribed sphere when it began publishing. It is also interesting to note, that after just over a decade of broadcasting, the BBC found that it was now being faced with the requirement to make accommodations for the commercial newcomers to broadcasting.

The BBC had a problem in its response to both the IBC and *Radio Pictorial*, in that, however much the it might resent the intrusion of their activities, it had behave in a circumspect

²²⁸ *BBC Annual 1935*, 1936, p.82.

²²⁹ *Ullswater Committee's Report*. 1936. London: His Majesty’s Stationery Office, 313 (cc1759-60), p.41.

²³⁰ Crisell, 2002, p.35.

manner, since, Jones was a legitimate publisher, whom the BBC had not long ago endorsed. The IBC's schemes were often a nicely judged blend of impudence and (apparent) innocence, and it was not actually doing anything illegal, or at least, nothing that English law could tackle. The subject of the erosion of the BBC's monopoly was also broached in the 1935 Ullswater Committee Report:

It has been widely recognised that the practice of excluding advertisements from broadcast programmes in this country is to the benefit of the listeners. In recent years, however, this policy has been contravened, and the purposes sought by the unified control of broadcasting have been infringed by the transmission of advertisements in English from certain stations abroad, which are not subject to the influence of the British authorities except by way of international agreement and negotiation.²³¹

No mention was made of the pressure the BBC was bringing to bear on the Post Office and the Foreign Office behind the scenes (Vinogradoff, 1945, p.26) only of the fact that these agencies were taking "all the steps which are within their power" to prevent the broadcasts.²³²

The BBC's public policy was to *not actually acknowledge the IBC's existence*. As early as January 1933, warnings in memoranda were being circulated indicating that staff should do nothing which could result in the BBC being "quoted as attacking or discouraging a legitimate commercial activity".²³³ The warning to the Foreign Director Major Atkinson was that the BBC must steer clear of any direct engagement with the IBC at all, and he replied that he was fully aware of the "inadvisability of even indirect recognition of the I.B.C."²³⁴ This is an interesting tactic when juxtaposed with the quotation above; the BBC's desire to avoid being seen as "attacking" the IBC was driven by a fear of the public perception of its actions, rather than by any inherent moral stance.

The Reaction of the BBC to the arrival of *Radio Pictorial*

The news that there were to be two new wireless-related publications in preparation had first come to the notice of the BBC when it was mentioned in an internal memorandum dated 13th

²³¹Ullswater Committee's Report. 1936. London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 313 (cc1759-60), p.34.

²³²Ullswater Committee's Report. 1936. London: His Majesty's Stationery Office, 313 (cc1759-60), p.35.

²³³ M.,G. 1933. To M.,S.C. (31st Jan.) International Broadcasting Club. BBC WAC E2/365/1 Foreign Gen.: International Broadcasting Company, File 1, 1930-1933.

²³⁴ Atkinson, C.F., 1933. To D.B.R. (24th November). [Confidential Letter.] BBC WAC E2/365/1 Foreign Gen.: International Broadcasting Company, File 1, 1930-1933.

December 1933; this was not long before the first number of *Radio Pictorial* actually appeared, in January 1934. The BBC only had sketchy details of the competitors at this stage; one of the new magazines was simply referred to as “one of Newnes”, in fact, it was *Practical Wireless*.²³⁵ The other was initially described as “Pictorial Wireless” but then subsequently this is changed to “Wireless Pictorial”, both of which were incorrect, of course:

I learnt yesterday that there is still one more wireless publication coming out – this will be a Bernard Jones production, a weekly called “Pictorial Wireless” ... “Wireless Pictorial” will probably consist largely of pictures, possibly in gravure. The advent of these two publications shows two things (1) that there is a demand and (2) that our papers do not satisfy this demand. Until one sees the actual publications, one cannot visualise whether or not they will have any effect on “Radio Times and “The Listener”, but in any case they will certainly not do the papers any good. If the market is there, why cannot we capture it?²³⁶

It is clear from this that the monopoly-mentality of the BBC’s broadcasting arm extended to its publishing activities. Once *Radio Pictorial* had appeared on the shelves of British newsagents, Gorham was able to evaluate it against his own magazine, the *Radio Times*. The physical appearance of the *Radio Times* was considered against that of *Radio Pictorial* in an internal memorandum from Gorham to Gladstone Murray, the Director of Publicity:

In comparing the appearance of our editorial pages with those of the sprightlier photogravure magazines, it must be remembered first that photogravure lends itself to a certain eccentricity of display that is not practicable with ordinary letterpress printing and secondly that stunt displays take up more space than we can usually afford.²³⁷

It is apparent that Gorham was not interested in the *Radio Times* attempting an “arresting effect” at the expense of the credibility of the magazine’s editorial material. In his view, the *Radio Times* was not in competition with *Radio Pictorial* because the latter was aiming at a “limited class” of people and the material within the *Radio Times* appealed to readers who were not catered for by such “cheap photogravure magazines”. Moreover, he felt that it was a mistake to assume that *Radio Pictorial* was even trying for a similar circulation as the *Radio Times*. He continued:

²³⁵ George Newnes Ltd were the publishers of the *Radio Times* and *World Radio*.

²³⁶ P.B.M., 1934. To D.B.R. (13th December). [Internal Circulating Memorandum.] BBC WAC R43/167/3 Publications: Radio Times Make Up: Memoranda (1933-1934).

²³⁷ Editor “The Radio Times” 1934. To D.I.P. Make-Up of Editorial Pages (20th September). [Internal Circulating Memorandum.] BBC WAC R43/167/3 Publications: Radio Times Make-up Memoranda, 1933-1934.

Such a magazine as “Radio Pictorial” ... has never aimed at more than a tenth of our circulation. It is possible that if it were run for two million people, instead of the more limited fan public, it would be a good deal less jazzy than it is now. It certainly does not follow that if it were more jazzy it would be more popular.²³⁸

Gorham’s use of the word “jazzy” was not merely coincidental, but rather invoked the whole debate over the nature of jazz music, which was being argued during this period; the question was whether jazz was a sophisticated expression of high art, or “primitive and lewd” and therefore a distinctly lowbrow pleasure (Crisell, 2007, p.31). The use of this word associated *Radio Pictorial* with the mass culture, of which the “craze” for jazz music was a particular feature. The BBC’s own reaction to jazz was to ban “hot jazz” or filter it through the medium of a “sedate” presenter, and as far as possible, and to “improve” a more refined form of Jazz “to make something decorously British out of this vigorous new art form” (Crisell, 2002, p.31).

In spite of Gorham’s insistence that *Radio Pictorial* was not a credible threat to the BBC papers’ circulation figures, there was yet a tacit acknowledgement that *Radio Pictorial* was more visually more striking than the *Radio Times*, and that it might be *supposed* that the BBC considered it represented competition to them. This memorandum was written in September 1934, and it was less than three weeks before, at the very end of August 1934, that the *Radio Pictorial* editor Jones had effectively raised the stakes by contracting with Plugge’s Radio International Publicity Services, to print the English Programmes from the Continent.

If the BBC was observing *Radio Pictorial* as a competitor, it might have been alarmed by the fact that the magazine was giving increasing column space to the IBC; the article which appeared in the number for 6th July 1934, in which *Radio Pictorial* visited the IBC at Poste Parisien. There the reporter met one of the English announcers, Bernard McNabb, known to listeners as “Uncle Benjy” who, the readers were told, was now “so popular” that he needed a secretary to handle his fan mail (*Radio Pictorial*, 6th July 1934). Just two weeks later, *Radio Pictorial* visited Radio Normandy, commenting “Radio Normandy is undoubtedly one of the best known and most popular of the Continental Stations with British Listeners”. The article included a photograph of the Radio Normandy Announcing staff, and a photograph of the Fécamp transmitter owner Monsieur Fernand Le Grand, but neither Plugge nor Leonard was

²³⁸ Editor “The Radio Times” 1934. To D.I.P. Make-Up of Editorial Pages (20th September). [Internal Circulating Memorandum.] BBC WAC R43/167/3 Publications: Radio Times Make-up Memoranda, 1933-1934.

mentioned. The BBC would certainly not have been happy that *Radio Pictorial* was giving the IBC such direct publicity. Shortly after this however, the news travelled through the BBC that *Radio Pictorial* was about to carry the full foreign programme listings, like *World-Radio* in effect; this caused instant alarm. Val Goldsmith, who had become Director of Business Relations in 1933 (Briggs, 1965, p.64) was sent a copy of *Radio Pictorial*, and he was unequivocal about the threat it posed. He was also surprised that a competitor had managed to become a rival the BBC's own publications, commenting "That this sort of 'Radio Times' can be published indicates a high degree of organisation" and saying "If I could see any way of combating the menace of our encirclement by this sponsored wireless, I would send this to the Post Office." He continued:

but I am a little afraid that, with their unsympathetic attitude towards our view of exchanges, the Post Office may merely reply that to ban these items from the small number of exchange subscribers and allow this excellent organisation to penetrate the whole of the south by wireless is straining at a gnat and swallowing a camel.²³⁹

The BBC had set up *World-Radio* with the specific intention of preventing a business competitor from poaching on its territory by launching a programme listing magazine. Clearly this had failed when Jones ignored the pressure and contracted with Plugge. However, the BBC's problem was compounded by the very different principles on which *Radio Pictorial* operated from the BBC's own magazines. *Radio Pictorial*, as established in Chapter Eight, was very much concerned with the female reader/listener. The *Radio Times* had dabbled with features aimed at women in the past, but in January 1934, when *Radio Pictorial* was launched, there were no regular pages specifically for women (in spite of the efforts of Elsie Sprott (Murphy, 2011, p.218) discussed in Chapter Five). It is a persuasive argument to associate the introduction of the women's 'homepages' as a regular feature in *Radio Times* from March 1934 with the competition from the very lively and highly illustrated women's pages in *Radio Pictorial*.

Another aspect of *Radio Pictorial*'s favoured tactics in catering for its female audience was filling in the gaps which the BBC had left wide open. The BBC policy of anonymity for its announcers was a strategy which had a direct impact on its magazines, and one which was

²³⁹ Goldsmith, V.H., 1933. To H., B.C. (7th June). International Broadcasting Club Weekly Programme for June 4th – 10th. [Internal Circulating Memorandum.] BBC WAC E2/365/1 Foreign Gen.: International Broadcasting Company, File 1, 1930-1933.

something of a gift to the competition. One of the most obvious differences between the pages of the *Radio Times* and those of *Radio Pictorial* was that there was no publicity given by the former to its own broadcasting staff. For *Radio Pictorial* this was a rich source of material which chimed with its readers' interests and was undoubtedly irksome to the BBC. *Radio Pictorial* went into BBC announcers' homes and was even able to tell its readers what their golf handicap was! (*Radio Pictorial*, 18th May 1934). *Radio Pictorial* readers were highly appreciative of the service offered, as this enthusiastic letter shows:

May I congratulate the RADIO PICTORIAL on its most interesting items and pictures concerning the staff at the B.B.C. headquarters, whose voices we wait for, as we would our own family, and faces we conjure in our minds. We have started a picture gallery, and Henry Hall and Christopher Stone already adorn the wall, but the Chief Announcer, whose cheery 'Good-night' greeting is always waited for, from now on will hold a prominent place, and I am sure we shall see a smile flicker across, as we return his good-night." - *E.S., London*.²⁴⁰

Not only was *Radio Pictorial* profiting from the BBC's policy of anonymity by selling pictures of its staff, after Jones made his agreement with the IBC in the summer of 1934, the IBC began to advertise the sale of announcers' photographs on its programmes, as Isa Benzie, Foreign Director in 1934, reported:

You will remember my mentioning the other week that "Radio Pictorial" was advertising from foreign stations. Now I.B.C. is announcing in its programme that photographs of its announcers are on sale and are to be had from the offices of "Radio Pictorial".²⁴¹

The situation was becoming serious for the BBC, as increasingly, the alliance between *Radio Pictorial* and the IBC began to resemble its own arrangements, whereby its broadcasting and its magazines were mutually advantageous in the commercial benefits they afforded each other. Now the BBC found itself in a farcical situation whereby the IBC and *Radio Pictorial* were actually making a profit out of its anonymity policy.

However, *Radio Pictorial* had been in circulation for two years before the anonymity issue was acknowledged and discussed in a memorandum from August 1936 to the now Director of Business Relations, Val Goldsmith. The context was the inclusion, or not, in the Christmas supplement, of information that had hitherto been prohibited:

²⁴⁰ *Radio Pictorial*, 16th February 1934.

²⁴¹ Benzie, I.D., 1934. To E, I.M. (19th November). IBC and "Radio Pictorial". [Internal Circulating Memorandum.] BBC WAC E2/365/2 Foreign Gen.: International Broadcasting Company, 1934-1946.

I have been discussing the Christmas Supplement with Mr. Gorham and we have agreed that a very good feature to run would be photographs of all the announcers. ... This proposal will certainly be opposed by the Programme Division, but it seems to me such a very good feature that it is worth pressing. Apart altogether from The Radio Times the programme value with the public is bound to be popular. People have their favourite voices although they do not know the names attached to them, and if they see the photograph and link it up with the voice there is undoubted programme value in this.²⁴²

A hand written note at the bottom, possibly by Val Goldsmith, read: “I think it will make a good feature”. Nicholls replied that he saw “no objection to it” on the basis that they had had pictures of the announcers in the Christmas number before “even under the old conditions of anonymity” but also because the C.(P.R.) – Sir Stephen Tallents – “has recently been pleading for less anonymity as regards the announcers eg. putting their names in the *Radio Times* when they are doing special work”.²⁴³ Tallents was appointed as BBC Controller of Public Relations in 1936, as discussed below, and he had views on the public relations aspect of the BBC’s publications. He had support from Gorham who, as Editor of the *Radio Times*, was one of those who welcomed the prospect of relaxing the rules. It could make a material difference to his copy for the *Radio Times*. He wanted to be able to do pieces about the ‘real people’ who the listeners heard (Briggs, 1965, pp.284-285), like *Radio Pictorial* could. However, perhaps surprisingly, in view of the fact that pictures would provide additional and more animated material, previous *Radio Times* editors had supported the BBC’s policy of keeping figures anonymous. For Eric Maschwitz, writing in 1928 to Basil Nicholls, the General Editor of BBC Publications, this was less a question of publicity and more of aesthetics:

I do not favour the inclusion of many diminutive portrait-pictures as in the past. To see the ‘face’ of an artist is of no assistance to the listener unless the face be that of an outstanding personality which conveys some real hint of the brain and character behind the voice. In the latter case a picture of generous dimensions should be used. Artists will always scream for ‘pictorial publicity’, of course.²⁴⁴

Maschwitz’s phrase “pictorial publicity” is an interesting presaging of the name and intent of the subsequently published *Radio Pictorial*. But the tactics of the IBC, when associated to the

²⁴² M.P., 1936. To Goldsmith, V.H. The Radio Times: Christmas Supplement (18th Aug). [Internal Circulating Memorandum]. BBC WAC R43/169/1 Publications: Radio Times Make-up - Layout, 1934-1938.

²⁴³ Nicolls, B. E., 1936. To GHS – The Radio Times: Christmas Supplement (20th Aug). [Internal Circulating Memorandum]. BBC WAC R43/169/1 Publications: Radio Times Make-up - Layout, 1934-1938.

²⁴⁴ Maschwitz E., 1928. To Nicholls, B.E. Radio Times Editorial Policy (16th January). [Internal Circulating Memorandum.] BBC WAC R43/150/3 Publications/Radio Times/1928-1934.

selling power of *Radio Pictorial*, challenged the logic of the BBC's policies. It was not that the BBC was unaware of the opportunities it was feeding to Jones and Plugge; it was rather that, as over the question of audience research, it moved very slowly when it came to changing ingrained assumptions and their related policies. It might discuss tactics for hitting back at its competition, but the BBC demonstrated a marked lack of agility with regard to modifying its procedures. Even after this exchange, the policy of anonymity was not immediately revoked. A subsequent memorandum from Goldsmith to Tallents and Gorham stated that it might be admissible for a Christmas feature, but the Controller of Programmes, Cecil Graves "would disagree with it as a continuing feature".²⁴⁵

In the end, the BBC's position on anonymity became unsustainable through events: this was due partly to the advent of television which presented announcers in person. Even while the BBC executives were voting to keep their radio announcers anonymous, an article entitled "Here's Looking At Them" was introducing "some of the principal personalities of television staff at Alexander Palace" in the "*Radio Times Television Number*" for October 1936. This article had pictures of the staff, and also gave their names and a description of their jobs (*Radio Times*, 23rd October 1936). In this case, it seems the opportunity for attracting an audience for its new medium was more powerful than maintaining a point of principle.

Another reason for the policy being set aside was the advent of the Second World War which changed the situation totally. In 1940, the man in charge of newsreaders, John Snagge, took the policy decision into his own hands. Without preamble, he announced "Here is the news read by Alvar Liddell" (*Radio Times Fiftieth Anniversary Souvenir 1923-1973*). His reasoning was that the listeners liked to know something about the familiar voices they heard with such regularity. However, even at this point Snagge was well aware that his explanation would not be readily accepted, and he rehearsed his defence accordingly:

I had my answer ready. When the Germans invaded Poland they tricked the Poles by putting out phoney news broadcasts in Polish. By establishing a name with a voice in Britain it could foil the same ruse if we were invaded. And that was the official explanation given – and unquestioningly accepted.²⁴⁶

²⁴⁵ Goldsmith, V.H., 1936) To H.M.S. The Radio Times: Christmas Supplement (25th September). [Internal Circulating Memorandum]. BBC WAC R43/169/1 Publications: Radio Times Make-up - Layout, 1934-1938.

²⁴⁶ *Radio Times Tenth Anniversary Number*, 29th September 1933.

The anonymous Nazi propaganda broadcasts from the popularly nick-named “Lord Haw Haw” (mainly made by William Joyce) were also a factor in ending the desirability of anonymity (Durrant, H. & Durrant R., 1940, pp.443-450).

The Introduction of a New BBC Department

Until the early 1930s, the public had to take what the BBC chose to give; however, during this period, the BBC’s control over the social and cultural reception of broadcasting by the public began, slightly at first, to wane. This was precipitated by the fact that, for the first time since broadcasting began in Britain, listeners were being offered a choice in what they listened to. Previously, in not actually canvassing the opinions of its listeners, the BBC was able to make assumptions and assert that it knew what the public needed. By offering the listeners a choice, the commercial broadcasters effectively made it much more difficult for the BBC to maintain this stance with any credibility; as discussed in Chapter Six, the introduction of alternative music choices, especially on a Sunday, were being freely discussed, as observed by the press critic Moseley (Moseley, 1935, p.162). Moreover, by insistently holding fast to its policies in the face of public dissatisfaction, the BBC stood in danger of distorting the direction of broadcasting, by what it would *not* provide for the daily audience.

The gathering situation contributed to general internal debate around some of the BBC’s more stalwart, but some felt increasingly anachronistic, policies. Reith had misgivings, but the activities of the commercial broadcasters fuelled discussion over the wisdom of trying to find out what the audience wanted, as Nicholas explains:

In May 1930, Charles Siepmann of the Talks Department and Val Gielgud (brother of Sir John), Director of Features and Drama, both of whom had long expressed frustration at the lack of substantive information about the audiences for their programmes, strongly argued for a more systematic approach to audience research ... This point was subsequently reinforced by Hilda Matheson, former BBC Director of Talks (1927-31), who, writing in the *Sociological Review* in 1935, argued that information about the modes of presentation that audiences preferred were just as important as information about the types of programme they most listened to; further, that ‘more attention was being paid to social change in primitive societies than to the social effects of radio’.²⁴⁷

²⁴⁷ Nicholas, 2006, p.3.

Finally in January 1936, it had been determined by the BBC's General Advisory Council that a limited programme of specialised listener research should be implemented, under the direction of Tallents, as the newly appointed Controller of Public Relations. It was largely due to his efforts that the 'Listener Research Section' was established at all (Nicholas, 2006, p.3). The irrepressible *Radio Pictorial* had reported the story that Tallents would be leaving the Post Office to take up "an important position at the B.B.C." and featured a posed picture of him writing at a desk (*Radio Pictorial*, 19th July 1935). The Listener Research Section's remit was vague, according to Nicholas:

With no specified terms of reference beyond a general injunction that its findings would not be used to determine future policy, the BBC Listener Research Section was inevitably going to be very much the creation of its first Listener Research Officer. Tallents' choice, Robert J. Silvey, was an inspired one, and it is to Silvey that the entire BBC audience research operation owes both its character and its success.²⁴⁸

Sunday Broadcasts and *Radio Pictorial*

In one area, the BBC, and most emphatically Reith, was prepared to concede only a very little: the Sunday broadcasting policy. Although the BBC would not allow the competition of the commercial broadcasts to push it into altering the Sunday policy in any fundamental way, the correspondence in the files reveal that it did try to "lighten" the music provision to be "as popular as possible within the well defined limits of the BBC Sunday Service" (Vinogradoff, 1965, p.27). As Street observes:

It is important to note however that commercial competition would not have achieved the success it did without the BBC's steadfast adherence to its Sunday broadcasting policy, a policy directly emanating from John Reith's strict Sabbatarian principles, which alienated a large number of working class listeners during the 1930s. It was the direct confrontation between these two elements, the BBC's lofty pursuance of a public service ideal, and the spirit of the entrepreneur as personified by Captain Leonard F. Plugge, which was to inform the conflict within the media during the 1930s.²⁴⁹

In fact, the BBC's policy did have, as Briggs suggests, a cumulative impact on societal interaction with broadcasting: by *alienating* an entire section of the public (Briggs, 1965, p.23). The BBC's decision to restrict the hours of broadcasting on a Sunday and instead to maintain rigidly to a diet of classical and religious music may have opened the door to

²⁴⁸ Nicholas, 2006, p.3.

²⁴⁹ Street, 2006, p.61.

competitors, but, as Gorham irreverently suggested, Reith suffered from a “subconscious horror” that the listeners might actually be enjoying themselves: “Giving pleasure to the ungodly was not amongst his objectives for the BBC. If they liked it too much, it could not be doing its job” (Gorham, 1948, p.59).

The BBC’s didacticism over Sunday broadcasting embroiled it in another row when in 1934 the IBC made a foray into religious broadcasting, with a series of Sunday Addresses which *Radio Pictorial* reprinted. The cleric at the centre of the row was the Reverend James Wall. The BBC’s Director of Religious Broadcasting, the Reverend Iremonger took it upon himself to try to put a stop to these addresses, by writing to Wall’s Dean, the Reverend Allington:

I wonder whether you could help me in a matter which is rather delicate? I see that your Precentor Mr. Wall, spoke some words yesterday for the Radio Normandy Broadcasting Company, at 3.15 in the afternoon. I cannot write too much, the law of libel being what it is, but this is an entirely undesirable Radio Company, for which no reputable Church of England priest should work, especially on a Sunday afternoon. It is an unpleasant commercial affair, and it is trying to cut us out with its Sunday secularised programmes.²⁵⁰

It is apparent from Allington’s replies that when approached on the matter, Wall had taken great exception to this intervention, and wished to know more about the nature of the complaint against the IBC. It was subsequently revealed in a handwritten note, added by the Foreign Director Isa Benzie to correspondence on the issue, that Wall was “a close friend of Plugge’s”.²⁵¹ When the incident came to the attention of R. Jardine Brown, the BBC’s lawyer, his alarm is patent: “First I think you should tell the Dean to be careful to keep your letter to him in his own hands. Your description of the Company as “undesirable” & unpleasant might prove troublesome if passed on”.²⁵² This incident, though a trifling one in the scale of events, is nevertheless interesting for what it reveals about the language employed internally about the competition as “unpleasant commercial” affairs. It also confirms that while the BBC had a public policy of non-interference with a legitimate business concern, privately it tried to discredit the IBC.

²⁵⁰ Iremonger, Rev. F.A. 1934. To Allington, C.A. Very Reverend Dean of Durham (16th April). [Letter.] BBC WAC E2/365/1 Foreign Gen.: International Broadcasting Company, File 2, 1934-1946.

²⁵¹ Iremonger, Rev. F.A., 1934. To Allington, C.A. Very Reverend Dean of Durham, (16th May.) [Letter.] BBC WAC E2/365/1 Foreign Gen.: International Broadcasting Company, File 2, 1934-1946.

²⁵² This was a handwritten note at the end of the letter.

Post-1935 and an Investigation Amongst Readers of the *Radio Times*

There is little significant mention of *Radio Pictorial* in the files at the BBC Written Archive at Caversham after 1935, beyond the fact that the BBC was keeping an eye on it as a competitor. There is no evidence that the BBC attempted to ban its staff from their frequent appearances amongst its pages. Such a stance would have been difficult to adopt, given that Reith himself appeared in the first number and had given Jones a glowing message of good luck. If *Radio Pictorial* was a potential competitor to the *Radio Times* through its content and women's pages, then the inclusion of the foreign listings also made it a competitor to *World-Radio*. There is evidence that it did manage to poach readers from *World-Radio*, of which the BBC was well aware, as reported in a memorandum: "Since "Wireless World" ceased to publish programmes, its sales have dropped – proving there is a demand for them – These sales have not gone to "World Radio" but to "Radio Pictorial."²⁵³

Radio Pictorial and *World-Radio* were not natural competitors aside from the foreign programme listings; the whole focus of the magazines was otherwise different. *World-Radio* was technically orientated, and in no way a "fan" magazine. However, when *Radio Pictorial* started printing the IBC programme sheet it went head to head with *World-Radio*, effectively becoming a threat to two BBC magazines. This no doubt contributed to the BBC's decision to ask the readers of the *Radio Times* about their reading habits. The BBC commissioned the advertising company J. Walter Thompson's to conduct an investigation entitled *An Investigation amongst readers of the "Radio Times" and "Listener"*, the results of which were published internally in 1937. The survey comprised interviews with a sample of 3,438 people, who were divided into three social groups, and broken down by geographical location and age. The participants were asked to state "Reasons why those who have seen a copy of *Radio Times* have not had it in the Home". Two of the possible answers were "Take *Radio Pictorial* which is sufficient and "Take *World-Radio* to get foreign programmes". The BBC must have been comforted with statistics however, since almost nobody indicated these as reasons, which positioned *Radio Pictorial* as supplemental to the *Radio Times*; this was encouraging in terms of *Radio Pictorial* not adversely affecting the *Radio Times*' circulation figures, but it still did not remove the unwelcome presence of the magazine as an undesirable

²⁵³ Elwick-Harrison, J., 1935. To C.M. (16th January). Report on World Radio [Internal Circulating Memorandum.] BBC WAC R43/280 World Radio Confidential Memos 1933-1939.

comparator to the BBC's own. Only 1% of the sample took *World-Radio* instead of the *Radio Times*. However, the BBC may well have been disconcerted to learn that the vast majority of people (77%) who did not take the *Radio Times* instead relied on the programme schedules printed in the daily paper.

The BBC's reaction to the report which it had commissioned was cautious, although consistent with its well-documented resistance to statistical analysis of the audience. Moreover in 1937, surveying the public's behaviour was still a relative innovation:

I was much interested in J. Walter Thompson's investigation, but besides the very small sample they used (which as G.M.P. says, makes the calculation in terms of calculation quite unreliable) it should be remembered that editorial methods are not their metier, and their views must be considered as those of intelligent laymen (rather as my views of advertising methods, if I expressed them).²⁵⁴

The BBC's scepticism towards the J. Walter Thompson investigation may be explained by the observation of Tallents, who, champion though he was of the introduction of listener research, felt that the BBC would not be ruled by audience statistics. When making a case to the BBC General Advisory Council in January 1936 he had stated:

Any research that might be undertaken should be so controlled as to secure that it never developed from a servant into a master, to the detriment of the essential qualities of good broadcasting – a responsible but sensitive outlook and a readiness to experiment.²⁵⁵

Conclusion

In some ways, *Radio Pictorial* had the advantage over the BBC magazines because it was able to cater for a particular market, which, as discussed in earlier chapters, gave it a competitive benefit. It could never rival the *Radio Times*' circulation, which was greater than any magazine in the country. It could still be a thorn in the BBC's collective flesh, however, in several ways; it published the foreign programmes which came under the remit of *World-*

²⁵⁴ Unattributed, 1937. Radio Times Increased size, increase costs, circulation, editorial appeal GMP's Memo of June 9, 1937; Radio Times – Increased size, Increased Costs Circulation Editorial Appeal (21st June). [Internal Circulating Memorandum.] Page 1. BBC WAC R 43/174/1 Publications: Radio Times Policy and Development (1936-1936).

²⁵⁵ G.A.C. 23, memorandum presented by Sir Stephen Tallents to the BBC General Advisory Council, January 1936 cited by Nicolas, 2006, p.1.

Radio; it sold itself as a family magazine, which trespassed into the territory of the *Radio Times*; and it was a radio programme listing magazine, which threatened the BBC's unique magazine market niche. It also sold itself on the publicity it took from the BBC's staff and stars, it supported the commercial broadcasts of the IBC and Radio Luxembourg (as well as other IBC initiatives) by printing details about their programmes and gave them publicity through its articles about their studios.

In arguing that its publishing activities formed an extension of its broadcasting service to the public, the BBC had thereby committed itself to producing a magazine which mirrored its broadcasting ethos. The *Radio Times* was duly inclusive to all sectors of society, with aspirations towards highbrow quality, and an educational and informative tone. However, it could not reflect all of the BBC's broadcasting principles because it carried advertisements. *Radio Pictorial* was unhampered by any such remit and, as Jones was an independent publisher, he was free to follow his own agenda. In this respect, *Radio Pictorial* had found a lucrative niche as a magazine with a focus on all-things broadcasting, joining the IBC in exploiting the BBC's assets which its own policies, ironically, forbade it to do itself. Added to this, *Radio Pictorial* was freely critical of the BBC, as were the letters from readers which it published on a weekly basis.

Chapter Ten

The Importance of Minorities: The BBC's Post-Bag

The only sure way of arriving at the cause of discontent – if there be any discontent – is to take careful note of the complaints and suggested remedies shown in letters from readers.²⁵⁶

Introduction

As discussed in Chapter Five, through the *Radio Times*, the BBC had exposed itself to a channel for feedback from the audience, and moreover, the credibility of the magazine would be severely compromised if it failed to give voice to the criticisms and detractions which were consistently leveled at the BBC. The readers' letters page is a regular feature of most regularly published newspapers, journals and magazines. While the BBC had always encouraged the public to write in with its views, the readers' letters page in a magazine published the views of the audience publically. The issue of how representative of the wider audience any one letter can be said to be is also examined, with particular reference to the view of the BBC's audience researcher, Robert Silvey.

This Chapter considers the particular importance which the readers' letter pages in the *Radio Times*, and argues that in an environment in which the audience individually had very little opportunity to air its opinion, this section of the magazine assumed a particular significance. The BBC's attitude to its correspondence with the public is explored to investigate whether, as with some of its other attitudes, there was a difference between its publically expressed opinion, and privately held views, and if so, what were the driving forces which motivated its behaviour.

Reith and Listeners Letters

Reith acknowledged that he was particularly interested with the listeners' letters to the BBC (Reith, 1924, p.151). The number of letters received varied over the period, but by the 1930s it amounted to about 300 a week to the BBC generally and 400 to 500 directly to the *Radio*

²⁵⁶ Odhams, E.L., 1931. To Nicholls, B.E. World Radio. (9th November). [Internal Circulating Memorandum.] BBC WAC R44/277/3 Publications/World Radio/1931-1934.

Times.²⁵⁷ Reith saw it as the personal side of gathering the audience's views, in stark contrast to the 'dictatorship of percentages' which he despised and about which many of the BBC senior staff were deeply suspicious (Briggs, 1961, p.204). Reith knew that the letters could only reveal the opinions of a tiny percentage of the listening public, but he was interested in minority opinions: "With us" he wrote, "'minorities' are very important sections of the community, and a 'limited appeal' may still involve many hundreds of thousands" (Reith, 1924, p.151). Reith declared that he wanted "honest criticism" of the BBC's output, motivated not by "gossip" but concerned with "standards" (Briggs, 1965, p.24).

And yet, the BBC's attitude to listeners' opinions was problematical; as discussed in the previous Chapter, the BBC conducted no systematic research of listener views until 1936. The reason for this was deeply ingrained: the BBC felt that a public service should provide what people needed and not what wanted, and that it was the best judge of what this output would look like. Reith freely admitted this, as quoted above (in Chapter Three) feeling that the BBC knew better what the public needed than they did themselves.²⁵⁸ Gorham recalled attending a Programme Board:

where Colonel Dawnay, then Controller of Programmes, mentioned that the BBC's efforts had been highly appreciated by Press and public, and added 'But of course that is not the final test. The real criterion is what we ourselves round this table think of our work'. Whilst that point of view obtained, it was easy for the BBC to be satisfied that it was doing a good job.²⁵⁹

In addition, Reith, amongst others in the BBC, was very resistant to the notion that statistics derived from researching public opinion would drive the programmes. Essentially, these reasons were all interlinked and came down to the issue of who held the control, the public or the BBC.

Do Letters Represent the Majority-Held View?

Robert Silvey was the much respected Head of BBC Audience Research from 1936-1960; he set the department up, and defined its remit. His views on the BBC's attitude to its post-bag

²⁵⁷ *BBC Year-Book 1930*, 1930, p.250 and memorandum quoted below Hodder, H.G., 1931. To Maschwitz, E. Drawings for 'Listeners' Letters' Page (6th February). [Internal Circulating Memorandum]. BBC WAC R43/150/3 Publications, Radio Times, File 3, 1928-1934.

²⁵⁸ Reith, 1924, p.34, also cited by Briggs, 1961, p.238.

²⁵⁹ Gorham, 1948, p.52.

are therefore extremely insightful, although it is noted that there is a strong presupposition to what his views might be, in view of the nature of his job. When Silvey says that “It was the BBC policy to respect its correspondents and to take as much trouble in answering them as it had taken to write” (Silvey, 1974 p.13) it is reasonable to extrapolate that this deference was largely due to the fact that its enormous post-bag was a key element to the BBC’s justification in *not* conducting in any audience research before 1936. In Silvey’s view:

It may now seem extraordinary that the BBC did not set about studying its public systematically until ten years after it had become a public corporation. But when anyone suggested that it was out of touch with its public, it would point to its postbag. Listeners had not waited to be asked their opinions; they had volunteered them. ... a broadcaster who could triumphantly point to a pile of letters acclaiming his programme seemed to have the final answer to anyone who had the temerity to criticise it.²⁶⁰

This raises two very important points: that broadcasting did not provide an inherent means for responding, and that listeners did not wait for the BBC to organise its listener research, but found their own channel for the expression of their opinions. The readers/listeners letter pages of the *Radio Times* was one such channel, and later, these pages in *Radio Pictorial* became another. The *Radio Times* and *Radio Pictorial* both encouraged readers to write in with their views about the BBC’s output. It is the *significance* of these views, however, which can lead to misunderstanding, as Silvey explains:

Even today there is much confused thinking, certainly not confined to broadcasting circles, about the significance of spontaneous expression of opinion. At one extreme there are those who appear to regard the post-bag as the authentic Voice of the People; at the other, those who dismiss every letter-writer as slightly mad. I know of no published study of the significance of this phenomenon – of people volunteering their views to those whom they regard as in a position to do something about it? What is its significance? What weight should be attached to it?²⁶¹

Silvey considers carefully whether it was possible to determine that the opinion expressed in a letter is shared by any, a few or none and concludes that: “In a word no one knows what any letter or bunch of letters is a sample of” (Silvey, 1974, p.29). His argument is that letters are *not* representative of general listener opinion because only the listener who is particularly moved by the experience will write. Letter writers have, *de facto*, been polarised by a strong reaction, and he cites a test case in the form of Orwell’s *1984*, which was broadcast on

²⁶⁰ Silvey, 1974, p.28.

²⁶¹ Silvey, 1974, p.29.

television in 1955. When it was aired this programme provoked a storm of letters, all expressing strong feelings; two-thirds complaining and one third praising the programme. By chance, the BBC had also collected the views of a viewing panel and found that these same proportions were represented by those who had reacted strongly one way or the other. However, the important point is that the strong reactions were a very small minority; the majority was fairly neutral, but their opinion was not represented in the post-bag at all.

Crisell also subscribes to the view that the unsolicited letters sent in to the BBC were not truly representative of the opinions of the audience as a whole as “they came from a tiny fraction of it and were written by untypically literate people with untypically strong views” (Crisell, 2002, p.40). Similarly Marquis had found that the BBC eschewed the “direct approach of asking but rather “delighted in using letters to confirm its judgment of what the audience wanted”. This approach had been proved unreliable by a study in the US:

A psychologist who analysed a batch of these letters concluded that 'an excessive proportion' came from obvious neurotics, 'people writing about their own mental troubles or those of their children and friends'. CBS claimed that of 10,000 letters to American School of the Air, 80 per cent came from 'persons of a high order of intelligence'. NBC even sorted letters by type of paper, grammar and spelling. But historian Will Durant, asked to study another sampling, inferred that most came from 'invalids, lonely people, the very aged, the very youthful, hero worshippers and mischievous children'.²⁶²

The consensus is then, that letters are not written by representative members of an audience, and consequently they cannot tell us whether the majority of the audience liked or hated a given programme. However, the letters still contain data which is interesting to the historian, particularly the broadcasting historian who, in addition to having few of the programmes from this period, also has little systematically gathered audience research to study. The value of the readers' letters lies both in what can be learned from them intrinsically (the subjects that preoccupied the writers and the trends in their provenance) and also in what they reveal about the agenda of the publishers, in this case the BBC and Bernard Jones Publications Ltd. As the next chapter explores, information can be inferred from the differences between the letters to two concurrently published magazines, particularly when one is the organ of the BBC, and the other is independent. Understanding what the readers' letters signified to their

²⁶² Lumley, 1971, p.167 cited by Marquis, 1984, p.395.

publishers is part of the process in assessing the significance of the letters as meaningful extant texts.

The *Radio Times*' Attitude to Letters

The official BBC line was that its listeners' letters were treated with the utmost respect; in all BBC public relations, the message was one of deference. The BBC had been broadcasting for a year before a Programme Correspondence section was set up in May 1924 under Ralph Wade, specifically to deal with the huge volume of correspondence (Briggs, 1965, p.67). Briggs explains how the letters were recognised as the "main link between the Company and the listening public" (Briggs, 1961, p.204). Similarly the *BBC Hand Book 1928* described how much emphasis the BBC laid on "the value of a bond of friendship and understanding between the B.B.C. and its listeners" and how, although the bulk of the correspondence they received from their listeners was praise "criticism is there too". It was the duty of the Correspondence Staff to give the listeners letters "the consideration to which they were entitled" (see fig.15.1) (*BBC Hand Book 1928*, 1928, p.79) The BBC was anxious to show that it was quite prepared to print criticism. Briggs comments that correspondents were given every opportunity to express their views, even if critical, and observes "Correspondents were still given the opportunity freely to criticise programmes, and if the criticisms were often repetitive or similar, this was because there were the same recurring divisions of opinion from one year to another" (Briggs, 1961, p.307).

The correspondence in the BBC files record how some of those closest to the *Radio Times* letter pages regarded them; unfortunately, while Reith may have valued the listeners' unsolicited views and the *BBC Handbooks* flattered the public with an image of the utmost respect for their correspondence, between themselves, the editors and sub-editors of the magazine with the remit to print them, were less complimentary. The exchanges between the *Radio Times* editor Eric Maschwitz, the General Editor of BBC Publications Basil Nicholls, and a *Radio Times* sub-editor for Programmes, Hodder, are very revealing. Maschwitz and Hodder had been discussing how they might improve the *Radio Times*' letters page, with Maschwitz telling Hodder that in view of the "very indistinguished [sic] nature of most of our mail" he had been happy to endorse Hodder's original suggestion that they should publish a large number of letters "most of them either foolish or flippant". However Maschwitz felt that the experiment had run its course:

I think the time has come when we have shown listeners quite plainly enough what fools they are and should concentrate on getting together something more distinguished. I do not suggest that we abandon entirely the short, homely and foolish type of letter but I do not think that there should be more than one column of these under some separate title at the end of the page.²⁶³

It is interesting that neither Maschwitz nor Hodder took into account the fact the letter-writing public (small though it may be) may have looked askance at having their contributions printed in the “foolish letters” section. What is clear is that, contrary to the official line, the editors of the *Radio Times* felt that it was a struggle to find enough letters of sufficient quality to make up an interesting and intelligent letters page. In fact, the problem was so great that they felt their only option was to encourage letters from “fairly sensible people outside”, that is to say, not from the general public but from “names” identified by the BBC whom they could coach to introduce “lively” topics for discussion. Hodder replied that although the magazine was attracting between 400-600 letters a week, some of these were “footling” but they had been doing their best to print “some of the more intelligent ones”. Hodder agreed that they must do their best to work up correspondence which was “better in form and fundamentally more interesting and of better tone”. He also agreed with the idea of inviting contributions from “people with names which are well-known”. This would have the additional advantage of producing an additional feature “which would cost the paper nothing in editorial charges”.²⁶⁴

Nicholls’ contribution to the discussion was to comment briefly that the fewer letters printed “of the present calibre” the better.²⁶⁵ The most arresting remarks, however, belonged to Maschwitz, who suggested that, going forward, a certain number of “sensible letters” should be printed in 8 point or 9 point type but that a few of the letters “of picturesque stupidity” should also be printed, but in smaller type font. Again, the scope for causing offence at such a lay-out was not considered. Maschwitz continued:

Harvey Grace is sending a fairly long racy letter for our issue of 6th March. I can persuade Compton Mackenzie, Vernon Bartlett, Douglas Woodruff, Christopher Stone and others to initiate correspondence if you would like

²⁶³ Maschwitz, E., 1931. To Mr Hodder (6th February). [Internal Circulating Memorandum.] BBC WAC R43/150/3 Publications, Radio Times, File 3, 1928-1934.

²⁶⁴ Hodder, H.G., 1931. To Maschwitz, E. Drawings for ‘Listeners’ Letters’ Page (6th February). [Internal Circulating Memorandum.] BBC WAC R43/150/3 Publications, Radio Times, File 3, 1928-1934.

²⁶⁵ Nicolls, B. E., 1931. To Maschwitz, E. ‘Listeners’ Letters’ Page (9th February). [Internal Circulating Memorandum]. BBC WAC R43/150/3 Publications, Radio Times, File 3, 1928-1934.

me to do so. I think we could start a fairly lively topic every two or three weeks and nurse the correspondence resulting from it, even if it implies writing a certain amount ourselves?²⁶⁶

The whole tone of this exchange is far removed from the deference towards letters expressed by Reith and espoused in BBC publications. It also emphasises the importance of the page; as established in Chapter Five it was very popular and therefore a key element of the magazine content. The BBC and the *Radio Times* editors were accordingly prepared to manipulate their letter page to ensure that its contents reflected only what they wished; soliciting letters on topics they prescribed, and “writing a certain amount” *themselves*. The whole point of the *Radio Times* was that it was the mouthpiece for BBC policy; it is clear why the BBC would wish to control the contents.

This particular exchange ended with a decision to devote a page and a half to the letters page separating the letters into two types, making the *Radio Times* letter page much longer than the average. As mentioned in Chapter Five, with regard to Razlogova’s findings in the United States, the more usual number of letters for a weekly magazine was from three to eleven (Razlogova, 2011, p.69). The *Radio Times* frequently printed over two and a half times the usual maximum, at 25 to 29 letters per weekly number. Such excessive devotion of space to the letters page is consistent with the fact that the BBC received a great deal of correspondence which, in the absence of the listeners having any other forum for expression, it felt honour-bound to provide. Also, the *Radio Times* placed a value on the letters pages in terms of its circulation figures. As discussed in Chapter Nine, Gorham was fully aware of potential revenue-value of every page of the magazine (Gorham, 1948, p.65). The editors decided that the full-page should be given over to the “more serious stuff” and the half page should go to the letters dealing with the “more foolish letters”. This is also consistent with the presentation of the magazine as essentially serious in tone, although it was recognised that the more asinine letters had an entertainment value which it was unwise to ignore.²⁶⁷ In 1934, the *Radio Times* was still running with a page and half of letters per weekly number.

The inference from this internal BBC correspondence is not that the editors felt the letters they received were too critical, nor that they were not sufficiently constructive, both of which

²⁶⁶ Maschwitz, E., 1931, To Hodder, H.G. Drawings for ‘Listeners’ Letters’ Page (19th February). [Internal Circulating Memorandum.] BBC WAC R43/150/3 Publications, Radio Times, File 3, 1928-1934.

²⁶⁷ Maschwitz, E., 1931. To Hodder, H.G. Drawings for ‘Listeners’ Letters’ Page (19th February). [Internal Circulating Memorandum.] BBC WAC R43/150/3 Publications, Radio Times, File 3, 1928-1934.

might have been a reason for editors choosing *not* to print letters; it was rather that the letters were not sufficiently intelligent to make attractive copy for the page, and also because the BBC wanted to keep control of the tone and topics which were chosen for airing, according to its prevailing policy.

The *Radio Times* had a greater circulation than other magazines, and through its connection with the broadcast programmes, it was inevitable that it would attract many more letters than the norm. In this respect, *Radio Pictorial* was not as fortunate. At less than a tenth of that magazine's circulation (according to Gorham's estimate quoted in Chapter Nine) *Radio Pictorial* could not have been receiving more than 40-60 letters a week, probably considerably less. From 1935 onwards not every number carried a letters page, which, since the letters page is widely regarded as a popular feature of magazines and newspapers by editors, indicates that *Radio Pictorial* did not always receive enough letters to make a page. In later numbers, it rectified the possibly disappointing numbers of letters it had received by introducing an occasional a feature called "Unposted Letters" which consisted of letter written by *Radio Pictorial* and signed "John Listener". Also, there was a recurrence of familiar names, which either indicates a deliberate strategy to give regulars a hearing, or points to the fact that the *Radio Pictorial* editorial staff had many less suitable letters to choose from than the Correspondence Staff had at the *Radio Times*.²⁶⁸

Conclusion

With all the provisos that readers' letters are inherently polemical and could not therefore be held to represent a majority view, they still have significance, all the greater because so little information on audience opinion was recorded. If the caveats are accepted, the letters yield information about the themes which preoccupied the audience and a degree of information about who was writing them. However, it is also clear that the letters must be understood in the context in which they were printed: in contrast to the BBC's public professions of the respect for listeners' letters, the internal correspondence betrays an irritation with them, and moreover, a determination to give the letters page a specific direction. The themes and topics which the letters covered cannot therefore necessarily be taken at face value, but this is

²⁶⁸ Albert Race and his wife Edith from Sheffield had their letters printed with great regularity.

explicated if the letters to one magazine are compared to those of a contemporaneously published magazine with a demonstrably different agenda.

Chapter Eleven

Closing the Loop: The Listeners Give their Feedback

What do you think of broadcasters at the B.B.C. and Continental Stations? What are your views on radio programmes, and how do you think broadcasts could be improved? What do you think of the men who run broadcasting, and what helpful suggestions could you offer? Let us have your views briefly.²⁶⁹

Introduction

Readers' letters pages are an enduringly popular section of newspapers and magazines, for readers and publishers alike. For the publisher it is a place in which they can "give a nod to issues they do not have the resources to cover otherwise" (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2006, p.312), and for readers, in addition to being a source of entertainment, if they are fortunate, it gives them a chance to share their views. During the 1930s the *Radio Times* was devoting more than the average amount of space to letters. They were clearly important at the time, and they are therefore now a significant piece of evidence for informing what broadcasting meant to its early audiences, and how they responded to it. Using a hierarchy of codes to examine the letters as extant texts, as described in Chapter Two, allowed me to draw out the recurring themes, as well as organising the letters into a series of contextual categories, from which a picture developed of who was writing to the magazines; their gender, (where this could be determined), whether they used a pen name, and where they were writing from. It was also possible to establish why the writer had chosen to write their letter, whether it was to praise something, complain about it, respond to a previous letter in the magazine, make a request, or share a general comment or observation. In terms of this particular moment in broadcasting history, it was also interesting to identify to whom the letter was addressed. For example, some of the letters written to *Radio Pictorial* had been prompted by a piece in that magazine, but many more were concerned with the output, in some form or other, of the BBC.

Some clear themes emerged from my analysis, which will be discussed in turn, but also, an over-arching understanding evolved; Briggs had said that "It was in terms of the range, the balance, and the quality of the programmes that most people judged the BBC, whether they were press critics like Sydney Moseley ... or ordinary listeners by their firesides (Briggs, 1965, p.23). But the ordinary listener at home, forming their opinions as they listened, had

²⁶⁹ *Radio Pictorial*, 2nd February 1934.

no channel for communicating their judgments back to the BBC. It was observed earlier that broadcasting was a new form of communication, but one that was all one way; listeners were communicated *to*. The early wireless press magazines which had sprung up around the industry had always demonstrated an uncommon degree of reciprocity between the magazine publishers and the readers; readers wrote in with details about the broadcasts they had picked up, and the editors, inundated with letters though they were, did their best to respond. Plugge's *World-Radio* column "Which Station was That?" continued this development, offering an individual response service to its readers/listeners over their foreign station queries. This aspect continued into the 1930s, to the effect that broadcasting magazines became the conduit of communication between broadcasters and their audiences, with the readers' letters pages being the principal platform for expression. As Silvey said, until 1936, the BBC was not seeking the views of the audience by any formal process, but, not waiting to be asked, listeners had volunteered their opinions.²⁷⁰

The advantage of such an arrangement was that it gave readers/listeners free reign to write about the subjects which were most important to them. The magazines could impose their own editorial filters and control which letters appeared, but with no formal mechanism for eliciting opinion, they still had to choose from the letters they received (unless they wrote the letters themselves, which the editors of the *Radio Times* contemplated, as discussed in Chapter Ten). Overall the data shows that the readers/listeners were primarily concerned with the content of the programmes being broadcast, as opposed to comments directed at the magazines themselves.

Context of the Letter Writers

As might have been anticipated, there were areas of convergence between the type of people who wrote into the *Radio Times* and those who wrote in to *Radio Pictorial*, and there were also key differences. Some of the differences between the subject matters of letters printed might be explained by the sensitivity of the topic, but on occasion the contextual data of gender and location of the letter writer was neutral. It was not possible to positively identify the gender of the letter writer for a large proportion of letters to either magazine, because letter writers tended either to use a non-gender specific pen name or only supplied their

²⁷⁰ Silvey, 1974, p.28 quoted in Chapter Eight.

initials. However, where it was possible to identify the gender, the overall majority of letter writers proved to be male. More women wrote to *Radio Pictorial* than wrote to the *Radio Times*, which is consistent with *Radio Pictorial* being pitched at a female market.

Regarding the location of the letter writer, the figures are mirrored between the magazines, with the majority of letters originating from the South of England, and in particular London. Otherwise the locations showed a very similar spread between the two magazines, the only anomaly being the comparatively large numbers of letters coming from the North of England directed to *Radio Pictorial*. This greater number of listeners in the North may be explained by the fact that a survey conducted by the Institute of Incorporated Practitioners of Advertising in November/December 1935 revealed that the signal for the IBC broadcasts from the French station Radio Poste Parisien, was particularly strong in the North and was very popular with listeners (Vinogradoff, 1945, pp.63). The figures for Scotland, Wales and Ireland are surprisingly low for both *Radio Pictorial* and *Radio Times*, but consistent with each other.

Letters from Women

There were fewer letters from women than men, so what were women letter writers interested in? Overall, women wrote mostly letters which either praised an aspect of the magazines or broadcasts, or made requests, most of the requests from women being to *Radio Pictorial*; these included requests for offers being run by *Radio Pictorial*, such as pictures of BBC announcers. Women were also interested in programmes for women, which during this period, included the *Morning Talks* discussed in Chapter Four and other informative broadcasts aimed at the woman in the home. All of the letters printed in *Radio Pictorial* about women's programmes were written by women. The overwhelming majority of letters about women's programmes were requests for a change, for example, this letter from 8th June 1934:

A Woman's Point of View

I have no quarrel with the B.B.C. but from a woman's point of view I do think that they should be considered more. What woman wants to hear about fat stock prices? I suggest a 'Ladies' Hour' of real interest to women, preferably about seven-thirty after the children have gone to bed. I am sure a dress show by Selfridge's or one of the big stores, with a description of the dresses broadcast by a lady, would be most interesting to women listeners. We could also be informed of how to get across London when we come up, the best places to stay if

our income is not lordly, some reasonable beauty shops and how to get to them from Waterloo, etc., and many more interesting things. – “*Ladies First*,” *Portsmouth*.²⁷¹

This letter was typical in that it was not framed as a complaint to the BBC, but rather an offer of constructive criticism and suggestions for programme content. It was consistent with the assumed interests of *Radio Pictorial*'s readership, since *Radio Pictorial* itself covered fashion and beauty advice so comprehensively in its pages (as discussed in Chapter Eight). The letter conveys a longing for women to be allowed some light and frivolous fare, far removed, for once, from the helpful but heavy advice items about family health and the family home usually served up by the BBC for its female audience. This letter certainly chimed with other female readers, because *Radio Pictorial* printed a response, entitled “Down with F.S.P.” (Fat Stock Prices):

I also quite agree with ‘Ladies First’. The Fat Stock prices mean nothing to women. I am sure that it would be most interesting to have a dress show, with the description given by Mrs. Giles Borrett, or, barring that, why not a few gramophone records with the numbers, etc., given last, so that we could have a guessing game. We all, I am sure, enjoyed those that Christopher Stone held a while ago. Please, Down with Fat Stock prices. – *Kathleen Whiston, E.16*.²⁷²

“Mrs Giles Borrett” was the female announcer who the BBC dismissed after numerous complaints, reputedly from female listeners. When she told her story to *Radio Pictorial*, she remarked that people had made a great deal over the fact that most of the criticism of her came from women and that her dismissal was therefore due to jealousy from other women: “But I would say, on the other hand, that nearly 90 per cent. of those charming people who wrote me letters of appreciation were women too. So you see, that really proves nothing, except perhaps, that only women write letters!”²⁷³

There was only a small number of letters published in the *Radio Times* about the *Morning Talks*, but the fact that the letters were along extremely similar, and heartfelt, lines suggests that this was a view which was held by many more women. This letter to the *Radio Times* supports Bailey’s comments referred to earlier, that during a time of economic hardship women had become the target for messages about appropriate behaviours for the family, and this woman was pleading for a more realistic representation:

²⁷¹ *Radio Pictorial*, 8th June 1934.

²⁷² *Radio Pictorial*, 6th July 1934.

²⁷³ *Radio Pictorial*, 9th March 1934.

I have listened to as many as possible of the ‘How I Survived on £_’ talks. Would it not be possible to arrange a series of talks by less provident people, the sort whose husbands can do no repairs about the house, who do not help with the housework, who are dreamers, who do not pay bills when they should and spend money on well-what does a man spend money on? I should be interested to know (and I expect there are many others like me) how the housewife manages who sometimes thinks profane thoughts on cooking, housework, children, husbands etc, and who dashes out and spends money she cannot afford on a new hat, dress, or even a meal; the housewife who sometimes entertains her friends or relatives when she should be working or studying her household budget: the housewife who sometimes shops extravagantly for the mere pleasure that reckless spending sometimes gives me. In short the housewife who loathes cooking and housework but who has to do it as efficiently as possible, but who sometimes to save her reason has to go all blah - *Lilian M. Everson, London.*²⁷⁴

There was another letter in the same number of the *Radio Times* from ‘Knotermotle’ (Not a Model) along a similar there, also taking issue with the worthy programmes aimed at the perfect housewife:

We housewives are tired of hearing paragons of virtue like ‘The Wife of a Constable’, etc. Cannot you give us ‘The Confessions of an Extravagant Wife’ or ‘The Mistakes of an Untrained Wife’ to point out what we are not to do? You know that the model girl in school was never the most popular one! – ‘Knotermotle’, *Burry Port.*²⁷⁵

As might have been expected, most of the letters about children’s programmes came from women, although there was a spike in the number of letters about children’s programmes written to the *Radio Times* when the powerful new Droitwich Transmitter took over from the Daventry Transmitter on 7th October 1934 which caused a problem for people with older radio sets with poorer selectivity because they were unable to tune into any other station than the strong Droitwich signal. This is pertinent because, while not an intrinsically important incident, it illustrates that the *Radio Times* was responsive to readers’ concerns, at least over neutral topics, even if the policy of the BBC did not change. The *Radio Times* number for 2nd November 1934 duly carried nine letters complaining about the fact that the new Droitwich transmitter was drowning out the Children’s Hour, which listeners had been tuning into on the London Regional Programme. “My portable is helpless against Droitwich, and instead of the delightful Children’s Hour I have to listen to something I do not want or nothing at all” complained A.R.S of Weymouth (*Radio Times*, 2nd November, 1934).

²⁷⁴ *Radio Times*, 19th October 1934.

²⁷⁵ *Radio Times*, 19th October 1934.

The overwhelming majority of letters printed in *Radio Pictorial* about public figures, which included the occasional reference to a State figure such as Winston Churchill, but also included announcers and celebrities, were from women, which is consistent with it being magazine targeted at women. Women were also interested in the poetry being broadcast by the BBC; two thirds of the letters to the *Radio Times* about poetry were from women. Of more significance was the fact over 70% of letters printed in *Radio Times* from women were about the content of programmes; which recalls the prevailing perception in the 1920s, discussed in Chapter Four, that men tinkered with radios as toys, while women were interested in the programmes themselves.

Music – Classical and Variety

A very clear picture emerges that music was a principal theme for letter writers, which is consistent with the fact that the bulk of the BBC's output, from the very first days, was music (Scannell, 1981, p.243). The BBC had long experienced the polemical effect which the playing of music elicited in the listening public:

The appeal of Broadcasting to the emotional side of individuals naturally renders the subject of programme criticism so diffuse as to be difficult of analysis. ... There is, again, the impression that anything particularly disliked invariably predominates. To those to whom dance music is anathema it appears to be broadcast in every programme. A listener who does not care for talks cannot switch on without finding one in progress, and another who longs for variety entertainment is utterly bewildered at the interminable transmissions of symphony concerts.²⁷⁶

Predictably then, there was a sharp divergence between the types of music in which the two groups of letter writers were interested. Letter writers to *Radio Pictorial* wished to discuss Variety Music, with only a very small proportion writing in to discuss Classical music. By contrast, the vast majority of *Radio Times* letters were concerned with Classical Music, and those who did write in about Variety Music were generally complaining about it. Since the majority of the output of the Continental broadcasts for which *Radio Pictorial* was the listing magazine, was Variety Music, the connection with the readerships' taste is clear. Similarly, the BBC placed a great deal of emphasis on the quality of the Classical Music it broadcast, and explained and discussed it extensively in the pages of the *Radio Times*, and this

²⁷⁶ *BBC Hand Book 1928, 1928, p.79.*

connection with the taste of the readership is therefore also clear. This is also consistent with the way the magazines presented themselves; the *Radio Times* seeing itself as more elitist and highbrow, and *Radio Pictorial* pitching itself at a populist lower middle- and working-class market. This letter on “Perfect French” could only have appeared in the *Radio Times* for example:

I must write a word to say what *intense* pleasure hear French so *perfectly* sung as by Mr Cuthbert Smith, on December 29; exquisite phrasing, beautiful sympathetic voice, and, what is so rare, absolutely perfect pronunciation and enunciation of French. Thank you! And what a thrill the Empire chain of greeting on Christmas Day! Wonderful! When one has dear ones in India, it brought them so near. I wish you would broadcast from Calcutta! Do! – ‘*Ross-on-Wye*’.²⁷⁷

A comparatively large proportion of letters printed in the *Radio Times* were responses to letters from other readers in general, but particularly with regard to Classical Music. Some of the exchanges ran over a number of weeks, with multiple letter writers becoming involved, which would indicate that Classical Music was one of the topics about which the Editors of the *Radio Times* wished to stimulate intelligent discussion. This fits with the Public service ethos of uplifting the public. By contrast, very few *Radio Pictorial* letters were from readers’ responding to the letters of other readers, on any subject. Most of the music letters were directed towards the BBC; even *Radio Pictorial* letter writers who wrote on the theme of music were concerned primarily with the BBC’s output. Comparatively few of the letter writers were actually interested in intrinsic aspects of either of the magazines, although the *Radio Times* did attract more letters discussing some aspect of its content than *Radio Pictorial* did. While, as Wahl-Jorgensen (2006) notes, the readers’ letters page clearly remained the “property” of the magazine, the *Radio Pictorial* readers saw it as a new forum through which they could address the BBC about its programme content; and the great advantage was that the BBC had no authority over this platform to exercise editorial control and veto their opinions (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2006, p.312).

Related to the music discussion was the often vexed subject of audience participation. The *Radio Times*’ readers were notably less interested in the subject, probably because noisy applause from the audience was more likely to accompany a Variety performance than an Orchestral one. It is an interesting topic, because for some, the audience participation was a

²⁷⁷ *Radio Times*, 12th January 1934.

wonderfully atmospheric addition to the pleasure of listening; for others it was an unwelcome interruption, the latter being the emotions experienced by one regular contributor to the *Radio Pictorial* readers' letters page:

I have one abomination – the persons who are permitted to be present at broadcasts and spoil the pleasure of millions. I refer to those who applaud before an item is finished. Quite often a song item is ruined by the ill-judged applause that drowns out the final note and accompaniment. It is bad enough having to tolerate those who laugh at the comedian before he speaks and the ones that pander to a watching audience, but to have this further evil is going beyond bounds and the offenders should be eliminated for, after all, it is the millions who provide their entertainment not they who provide for the millions. An audience may provide atmosphere but it can also be a nuisance. – *Albert Race, Sheffield.*²⁷⁸.

Inevitably, no letters appeared in the *Radio Times* letters about any broadcaster other than the BBC and there were also no letters which discussed the issue or programme content of the Continental broadcasts printed in the *Radio Times* at all. This was consistent with the BBC's policy of ignoring the activities of the IBC and other commercial competition such as Radio Luxembourg. However, only a comparatively small number (10%) of *Radio Pictorial* letters were addressed either to broadcasters in general or specifically to the IBC or Radio Luxembourg. Such letters as there were, were very blunt, such as this one entitled "The Housewife's Point of View":

Don't you think we might have some music broadcast during the mornings? The B.B.C. is behind several foreign stations in this respect. It would make life more cheerful for the housewife, who forms a great part of the listening public – and a powerful one. Gramophone records could be broadcast with little trouble and would be greatly appreciated. Is this possible? - *G.M., Shoeburyness.*²⁷⁹

The relatively small amount of correspondence on this subject is slightly surprising when *Radio Pictorial* had begun to carrying their programme listings from August 1934 onwards. This reason for this is open to interpretation; it may be that the audience was prepared to take what it was given from the Continental programmes, as a pleasant form of diversion, but it had strong views about the BBC's programmes because this was its own public service. The *Radio Pictorial* audience was, after all, paying a licence fee for the BBC Service and had an expectation of the quality, and popularity of the fare with which it was provided. The *Radio Pictorial* readership saw the magazine as a forum for voicing opinion about the BBC output,

²⁷⁸ *Radio Pictorial*, 23rd November 1934.

²⁷⁹ *Radio Pictorial*, 23rd November 1934

but not international broadcasting. Not all of the letters which *Radio Pictorial* printed supported the commercial competitors over the claims of the BBC. This letter writer had an interesting perspective, which *Radio Pictorial* duly allowed a hearing:

I feel that there is a demand for 'sponsored' programmes in England, but entirely separate from the present programmes. Therefore I suggest that when the new Droitwich transmitter opens, one of the redundant stations should be maintained as a self-supporting establishment, under the auspices of the B.B.C., which incidently [sic] would be an admirable training ground for B.B.C. officials, and transmit only sponsored programmes, news and other essential daily features. Even if these sponsored programmes were confined to about 10.30 p.m. and onwards, and afternoon transmissions, I maintain that they would be most acceptable to the average listener and worth while to the average trader. – *P.I.P., Sheffield.*²⁸⁰

The BBC's Sunday Service

One striking difference between the letters printed in each magazine is that a modest proportion of *Radio Pictorial* letters was agitating about the BBC's Sunday Service. This figure divided equally between complaint and request, that is to say, letters which were framed not as a complaint per se, but rather as a request or suggestions for alternatives. This contrasted sharply with the 1% of *Radio Times* letters which were printed on this subject. Clearly, *Radio Pictorial* letter writers felt this was a topic which needed an airing, but the *Radio Times* letter writers either did not agree, or as may be suspected, the *Radio Times* editors (or their Seniors in the BBC) did not consider the BBC's Sunday Service to be a subject which was open for debate. Such letters as did make it into the print on the subject kept within the spirit of the BBC's Sunday policy:

Thank you for including in the programme for July 8 some delightful pianoforte playing by Raie da Costa. Cannot we have a similar programme every Sunday, say, for half-an-hour or an hour at dinner time? After all, dinner on Sunday can do with a little musical aid as on Saturday or Monday. And may I say how much I have enjoyed listening to Howard Marshall on the Test Matches. He is a delightful speaker, and his commentaries really make one feel almost in that little box with him. – '*A Very Contented Listener and Reader of THE RADIO TIMES*', *Guildford.*²⁸¹

²⁸⁰ *Radio Pictorial*, 29th June 1934.

²⁸¹ *Radio Times*, 10th August 1934.

Radio Pictorial did feel it was a matter for discussion however. This letter purported to support the BBC's position and sympathise with the difficulty of its task in attempting to please the multitude; but the letter had a sting in its tail:

As a radio serviceman I have, perhaps a better opportunity than most people of gauging public opinion of B.B.C. programmes, with the result that the B.B.C have my deepest sympathy in their efforts to achieve the almost impossible task of pleasing everybody. A big mistake that most radio critics make is to compare wireless programmes with other forms of entertainment. But the poor B.B.C. has to cater for both - and the listener who likes neither. But I have one serious criticism of the B.B.C. - that is that they have quite lost the spirit of Capt. P.P. Eckersley's 'Alternative Programme Scheme.' This, you will remember, aspired to give listeners in every region two alternative and *contrasted* programmes - i.e., heavy music and talks on one wavelength and light and dance music and vaudeville on the other. The present programmes are the very antithesis of this idea - especially on Sundays. Hence the tremendous popularity of the I.B.C. broadcasts. It may interest you to know that almost invariably, on demonstrating a new set, the first question asked is 'Will it get Luxembourg?' - *John Bland, Hampstead, N.W.*²⁸²

If the *Radio Times* was receiving letters like this in its post-bag (which it almost undoubtedly was), it is not really surprising that it chose not to print them, in view of the immovability of its Sunday Service policy. Another *Radio Pictorial* letter, entitled "Sunday on the Long Waves!" had an even blunter message:

How you can publish such 'tripe' as the article, *Why Have Sponsored Programmes* by W. Wilson is beyond my comprehension. As the organ for the I.B.C. and Luxembourg programmes you should know better than to antagonise your readers in this way. Your correspondent Wilson states that those who prefer brighter programmes on Sunday are in the minority. How does he know? And has an official ballot ever been taken? We are not interested in the narrow-minded views of Sir John Reith nor in such ridiculously sweeping statements as those in this article. If Mr. W. Wilson likes to visit me I can take him to a dozen or more radio owners within 300 yards of my house (and we are a small community) who spend most Sundays on 1,304 metres. - *L.C. Sprague, Westbay, Bridport, Dorset.*²⁸³

Of course, *Radio Pictorial* was "the organ" of neither the IBC or of Radio Luxembourg, but its close alliance with the IBC led to confusion of affiliations in the minds of some. It was in *Radio Pictorial's* interest to promote the Continental broadcasts, and there was no barrier to it engaging openly with the "Sunday" issue. While it was mostly silent on the issue of music on

²⁸² *Radio Pictorial*, 1st February 1935.

²⁸³ *Radio Pictorial*, 21st June 1935.

Sunday broadcasts, the *Radio Times* did print other letters concerned with Church Services on Sunday or some aspect of the daily services; all of these were letters of praise.

Another topic with a specific relevance to the period was the question of audience research. A small number of letters printed in *Radio Pictorial* were concerned with this, with several innovative suggestions for the means by which the BBC might conduct this, such as this letter with its suggestion for “*Gauging Public Taste*”:

If the B.B.C. really wanted to find out what the public wants it could be done very cheaply. The Programme Department might ring up the music publishers and the gramophone people and inquire into sales of the various classes of music, songs, etc., and then list them in the same percentage in the programme. By doing this no one could complain to the B.B.C. that they weren't working according to public taste.” – *W.H. Dellar*.²⁸⁴

There was general scepticism however, about how responsive the BBC would be to the results of any audience research: “I suppose it is useless to expect the B.B.C. to take any notice of what listeners want!” (*Radio Pictorial*, 9th February 1934). There were no letters printed in the *Radio Times* on this subject at all, pointing to the suggestion that this was another “sensitive” area for which the official BBC policy was to ignore it.

The Anonymous Letter Writer

There was a considerable use of the “nom de plume” or pen names amongst the letter writers to both magazines, which is interesting because of the gender implications. In a study of the use of pen names in women correspondents to Scottish daily papers, Pedersen found that at least 30% per annum of female letter writers used pen names when corresponding with the editor of a paper. The use of a pen name by women increased in the lead up to the First World War, leading Pedersen to speculate that “For some, this choice of anonymity was made from fear of retribution, whether from an employer, teacher or husband, if their identity was revealed ... For a few, there was a real fear that their views would leave them open to verbal or even physical assault”. Pedersen feels it is possible to make a correlation between the “reactive and proactive” letters, with the latter “requiring the correspondent's identity to be made public while writers of letters reacting to other letters or editorial might feel more secure behind the cover of a nom de plume” (Pedersen, 2004, p.176).

²⁸⁴ *Radio Pictorial*, 1st June 1934.

The use of a pen name was quite prevalent within the broadcasting industry, the BBC had its Uncles and Aunts for its children's programmes, and the identity of staff was generally controlled. In the United States, Volek identifies a phenomenon in the radio environment that it "highly coded" in nature "a coding that transcended the mechanical dots and dashes of wireless telegraphy into a pervasive system of nomenclature and operations" (Volek, 1993, p.103). The assumption of "nick-name" or an assumed identity was also well established: for example, guessing the identity of the BBC's story-teller A.J. Alan was a favourite national pass-time. This mystery occupied several letters to the *Radio Pictorial*, and even more to the *Radio Times*. It was one of the more light-hearted subjects on which the *Radio Times* printed letters, as this final letter on the subject illustrates:

A.J. Alan, of course, is a retired dry-salter who now divides his time between Broadcasting House, a lightship in mid-Atlantic, and an Elizabethan cottage in Peckham. His real name is Hobblehodge, his hobby is drawn-thread work, and he is rarely to be seen without his pet canary. Brunhilde, whose cage is wheeled along in a truck at his heels by a Samoan retainer of the name of Albert. A.J. Alan first thought of broadcasting while sitting in a puddle in Jermyn Street waiting for an airship to take him to a party; and he has since adopted many novel disguises to conceal his identity, including those of a fourteenth-century crwth-player and a Professor of Eurhythmics at Wisconsin University. It is useless your denying this, I happen to know –J. E. Healey N.10.
[This correspondence is now closed. - Editor, *The Radio Times*.] ²⁸⁵

²⁸⁶The identity of "The Vagabond Lover" also excited considerable interest, until *Radio Pictorial* named him as Cavan O'Connor (see Chapter Eight). *Radio Pictorial*'s editorials were often either unattributed or written under a pseudonym such "Newsmonger" and the advice on its women page was distributed by someone known simply "Margot". The BBC's enforced anonymity of its announcers has also been noted. *World-Radio*'s column "Which Radio Station was that?" encouraged readers to write in with their queries about stations that had picked up, but only printed the magazine's replies. However, it required letter writers to supply a *nom-de-plume* through which the magazine could address them. It is less surprising therefore that in such an environment, letters writers should assigned themselves an identity which denoted their preoccupation: "A Housewife", "A Satisfied Listener", "Lonesome Woman" or even "A Very Contented Listener and Reader of THE RADIO TIMES".

²⁸⁵ *Radio Times*, 7th September 1934.

²⁸⁶ A.J. Alan was actually Leslie Lambert, and his identity, which the *Radio Times Fiftieth Anniversary Souvenir 1923-1973* called the "the biggest unsolved mystery in broadcasting in the 20s and 30s" was only revealed after he died" (*Radio Times Fiftieth Anniversary Souvenir 1923-1973*, 1973).

Miscellaneous Topics

Inevitably a number of themes emerged which are no longer meaningful to a modern audience, and which are peripheral to the current study, but these are worthy of a brief note, because they capture in words some of the sounds of radio which cannot be recreated. The interval signal was terribly important at the time: this was “radiated at all times when the programme when an unexpected interval arises, i.e. one which does not appear in the *Radio Times*”. It was nick-named ‘The Ghost in Goloshes’ and divided the listeners into those who loved it, and those who did not. The BBC explained that it was very difficult to find a repetitive noise which could be listened to with “equanimity” seven or eight times a day, week after week. (*BBC Year-Book 1932*, 1932, pp.373-374) During the period under question the interval signal was replaced with the peal of Bow Bells, which duly inspired another flurry of letters.

Conclusion

As discussed in Chapter Ten, there is a sufficient body of evidence to conclude that readers’ letters do not necessarily represent prevailing opinion. But a study of the letters offers insights of a different kind; glimpses into the responses of individuals of the 1930s audience; feedback to programmes which are now lost in themselves, and moreover, reactions to the policies behind the material broadcast. There were two points at which the data for the magazines diverged sharply; taste and topic. Being an overtly populist magazine, *Radio Pictorial* pitched itself at the aspirational lower-middle and working classes, who spent their money carefully, but who dreamed of glamour, and whose taste leaned heavily towards the lively, entertaining Variety side of music. This is consistent with a magazine which published the schedules of the Continental broadcasters, the majority of the output for which was Variety-orientated. *Radio Times*’ readers, by contrast, preferred to listen to Classical music, and had interesting exchanges with fellow readers over the finer points of performance.

Predictably for an independent publication, *Radio Pictorial* letters tended overall to be more critical towards broadcasters than those printed in the *Radio Times*. It is noticeable that where the topic was neutral there were striking similarities between the statistics for the magazines; these diverged for subjects towards which the BBC was sensitive. Of the recurrent themes

which were represented in both magazines, women's attitudes to programmes intended for their consumption was the most strikingly similar. Indeed, of all the shared regular magazine features, the women's pages were very alike, possibly as a consequence of the *Radio Times* taking its lead from *Radio Pictorial*. Clearly, discussions about the Sunday Service and the IBC and Radio Luxembourg broadcasts were almost entirely ignored by the BBC. Unfortunately for the BBC, their very silence on these issues was all the more conspicuous while *Radio Pictorial* was giving them an open forum, free from BBC control.

The letters pages were utilised as a platform for reciprocity, a channel through which to give feedback; this feature was particularly important for broadcasting, offering as it did, no inherent opportunity for response or counter viewpoint. The readers' letters pages also give a flavour of the sentiments of the 1930s audience, and are a fascinating insight into a world for which the original broadcast material cannot be recovered.

Chapter Twelve

The Conclusion

Introduction

The history of broadcasting has long been synonymous with the history of the BBC. Briggs' colossal work *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom* is a history of the BBC; the UK had organised its broadcasting on a monopolistic model, and the BBC held the Charter. But the monopoly did not therefore go unchallenged, as others, such as Street, have explored. Street demonstrated that "the erosion of the concept of the BBC's monopoly was actively under way long before previous commentators have suggested" (Street, 2006, p.7). What has not been fully appreciated, however, is the extent to which the BBC controlled the appearance of its behaviour to the public, while actually fighting back behind closed doors against the threats to its powerbase. It has also not yet been articulated that the BBC was most threatened by commercial competition when this struck against its publications arm. This is an important perspective to bring to the study of broadcasting because it necessitates a reframing of the accepted view of the BBC as a benign presence hovering over British Broadcasting, and presents it more as a public service which was propped up by commercial enterprise. It was moreover, prepared to protect its own interest, particularly with regard to its magazines, and unapologetic of the advantage which its monopoly in broadcasting gave it. There is correspondence in the files at Caversham which demonstrate that the BBC was at times ruthless in its protection both of its rights, and of its profits. In the BBC's own words, holding power over "the ether" was a lucrative business for whoever controlled it (*BBC Year-Book 1933*, 1933, p.61). The Charter had given the BBC control of British airwaves, and having been given that 'control', the BBC would not easily relinquish it.

Radio Pictorial represented something of a conundrum for the BBC; Bernard Jones had circumvented the BBC's tactics to block competitive listing magazines, but the magazine's subsequent strategy towards the BBC was a complex blend of support, criticism and debate about its output. It often provided a public relations vehicle for the BBC, and, by giving the public the pictures and gossip it desired, it presented the BBC in a more sympathetic light to its own audience. In eschewing the populist approach adopted by *Radio Pictorial*, the BBC indicated its disapproval of such publicity tactics, and yet it did not stop its staff and stars from appearing in the magazine's pages.

Having investigated the individual research questions within the thesis, this final chapter provides a reprise of the key findings related to each of the questions, and a summary of their contribution to the body of knowledge relating to the study of broadcasting history.

What part did the broadcasting magazines play in the arrival of commercial competitors to the broadcasting environment in the 1930s?

Broadcasting magazines were always an integral part of the broadcasting industry; from the very first they provided a forum for the scientists to explain the technical issues of the emergent technology, and for the amateur hobbyists to compare notes, and critically, to ask questions. After the formation of the British Broadcasting Company in 1922, the BBC's magazines discussed programmes which had already been broadcast and drew attention to programmes yet to come; they provided a source of information which supplemented the broadcasts, and one which formed a permanent record, unlike the ephemeral broadcasts. They constituted themselves as forums for listeners, gave details about the stars, inside information from backstage; they even displayed the latest radio sets and component parts. For a period when the programmes themselves cannot be heard, and the reception they received cannot be recaptured, the magazines are an important primary source for broadcasting historians. The magazines are the key to recapturing an echo of our broadcasting past.

In studying the broadcasting magazines, including the early wireless press, it is possible to gain an overview of the period which began before the BBC started broadcasting; this goes back to the earliest experimental broadcasts, when the yet-to-be BBC's Chief Engineer Captain Peter Eckersley was making experimental broadcasts from Writtle. During the time between Eckersley's broadcasts in the early 1920s and the IBC broadcasts of the mid-1930s, society had been changing and the shifts had provided the IBC and *Radio Pictorial* with an audience of aspirational lower-middle and working-classes, who had increased leisure time, and an appetite for pleasure. The radio had been assimilated into the home; domesticated, tamed, and claimed by a female audience. Radio offered the working class the opportunity to press their noses, as it were, against the window of upper-class pleasures; if they could not experience the actual concert, yet they could still hear the music and soak up something of the atmosphere. Moreover, the flow was not necessarily one way; the upper class could listen to the commentaries of football matches, or hear Talks about the plight of the unemployed.

Whatever the intentions of the broadcaster, the listening public were bound to hear programmes which stretched their horizons.

From the perspective of broadcasting magazines, which had been flourishing as the wireless press before the idea for a British Broadcasting Company had even been conceived, the BBC appeared in the guise of an interloper. Moreover, when it entered the broadcasting magazine market, largely by accident, it did so with the huge advantage of having the sole rights to publish much of the most lucrative material. In 1934, Plugge's IBC made a successful connection with Jones' *Radio Pictorial*, and so they formed an alliance which gave them some of the advantages enjoyed by the BBC, with a broadcasting arm and a magazine arm. The discovery of this connection is important, and worthy of further analysis in future studies, because it changes the previously accepted view of the particular dynamics in operation at the time: the BBC changes from the rightful holder of a state-endorsed monopoly, beset by commercial pirates, who, operating outside UK law, were attempting to poach the audience, and instead presents the BBC as the owner of a dominating market position in the magazine sector, determined to keep its lucrative commercial deals from being eroded. So great was the BBC's advantage, that in other circumstances, the Government might have felt compelled to intervene to protect the rest of the market from anti-competitive dominance.

Through *World-Radio* and Plugge's RIPS, the IBC already had a relationship with the BBC, which complicated matters for the BBC, and which means that there is a lot of material about the situation in the files at the BBC Written Archive at Caversham. Essentially however, it does not matter that the IBC was a comparatively small player in the broadcasting world, or that *Radio Pictorial* enjoyed nothing like the circulation of the *Radio Times*. What is important is that together they offered an alternative to the BBC output; and one which threw the staidness and *unpopulist* fare on offer by the BBC into sharp relief.

One of the objectives has been to study the magazines as extant artefacts of broadcasting history and explain their content within the context of their presentation. This exercise has demonstrated that some of the character of the radio which they were reflecting was captured in their pages. Each magazine brought its own nuances of this image, to be found in the smiling pictures in one, and the posed portraits in the other. In choosing a BBC publication

therefore, and an independent one: *Radio Pictorial* and the *Radio Times*, it was possible to cover the perspective from both angles.

What effect did radio's journey from male-orientated scientific contraption to object of aspiration and glamour have on the broadcasting magazines?

The journey of this research has come full circle with the realization that the wireless press magazines were just as much “fan” magazines as *Radio Pictorial*; they were fan magazines of the technology and *Radio Pictorial* was a fan magazine of the stars the technology created. When wireless technology first appeared it was the antithesis of glamour; it had not become a social invention, but rather it sat on the periphery of society, the province of hobbyists and school boy enthusiasts. The wireless press that served this market was a reflection of its readership; the magazines were functional, full of diagrams, utilitarian. Before the technology could be assimilated into the home environment, it was necessary for a transformation to occur, in the technology, in its adoption and in the broadcasters' perception of its audience. The gendered hegemony had to be transmuted into an application of universal usage, accessible across class, gender and age.

The diffusion across society of the radio may now seem inevitable; the ability to listen to broadcasts was too precious to stay within the sphere of any one faction, offering as it did such new and diverse experiences. And yet, the spread of the technology even in its most unwieldy crystal wireless form, was possible because, by sheer chance, it was feasible to construct a wireless set at a comparatively modest price. In order for the wireless to be reassigned from scientific contraption to domestic appliance, however, a catalyst was necessary; and that was the realisation by both the broadcasters and the radio manufacturers, that there was a female daytime audience at whom they could target their programmes and pitch their new radio designs. The appropriation of daytime broadcasting to a female audience meant that women working in the home had much greater access to political and societal debate and opinion; while their horizons were being broadened on this front, at the same time the traditional familial role prescribed for women was being strengthened, but with the new twist of a focus on domestic discipline and orderliness. Under the public service remit of the BBC, broadcasting provided a channel through which the women of the nation could be addressed and exhorted, for the perceived good of society. The plaintive letters from women indicate that this gratifying, yet sometimes dreary, message was duly received.

As the technology itself became more domesticated, and women found a role for the radio set in their daily lives, it was an inevitable consequence that women would become similarly absorbed into the broadcasting magazine market. What had begun as a male hobbyist fan market converged into the family and female magazine market as the wireless became a feature of everyday life. The *Radio Times* followed *Radio Pictorial's* lead and introduced pages specifically for women. The *Radio Times* even issued the *Radio Times Woman's Broadcasting Number* in 1934, asserting the important position women held for the BBC, from both sides of the microphone. With magazines came the opportunity to *show* broadcasting to the public, and at last the public curiosity about their favourite, yet mysterious announcers could be satisfied, courtesy of *Radio Pictorial*.

How did the BBC respond to the commercial threat to its magazines and was its public attitude always consistent with its private reaction?

When the British Broadcasting Corporation was granted its Charter in 1927, the question of how to preserve the airwaves around the United Kingdom for the exclusive use of one organisation had not yet arisen. Having been granted its Charter however, the BBC was bound to defend it. And yet, how was it to accomplish this? To add to the problems besetting it, the BBC, along with the wireless press, had inadvertently delivered a British public straight into the hands of the advertisers and sponsors; a public which had been trained and primed to receive foreign broadcasts. Their long distance tuning-in queries had been answered by Plugge in the BBC's own magazine *World-Radio* and their smart new valve sets, which picked up the foreign stations so clearly, had been advertised in BBC publications. If the BBC feared losing control of the ether, the circumstances through which this might happen were at least partly its own fault. The BBC was evidently infuriated by the broadcasts in English from the Continent, which poached its audience, but strictly speaking, the broadcasts were not a commercial threat, because the BBC was not itself a commercial concern.

As demonstrated in the BBC memoranda, the public policy which the BBC adopted was not to recognise the IBC at all and certainly not to make any official comment about its activities; it could not be seen to be discouraging a legitimate commercial activity. An oblique reference to the commercial broadcasters was made by Filson Young (*BBC Year-Book 1933*, 1933, p.61), who pointed out the evils attached to the use of advertising. The BBC's position on this

subject was paradoxical however, in that its self-righteous insistence that it would have nothing whatever to do with it, was undermined by its lucrative advertising contracts for its publications, and even the existence of its own advertising department. Upon analysis, the BBC's inconsistency over advertising originated from it having one ethos for its broadcasting activities, and another for its magazine interests: an overt and public disapprobation of advertising in broadcasting, but a tacit embracing of the commercial benefits derived from its publications. Its magazines were highly valuable to the BBC and their interest was worth fighting for. They provided both a source of income which was independent from the licence fees, and a symbol of the BBC's dominance in all things broadcasting. When the commercial interest held in its publications was threatened then the BBC was moved to take action.

In 1925, and again in 1934, Scott-Taggart and Lord Iliffe had respectively tried to mount an attack on the BBC's monopolistic behaviour, not on broadcasting, but on the programme listings in magazines. The BBC had managed to crush these attempts however, even though this involved reneging on an agreement with the wireless press not to publish technical articles, being accused of a breach of faith, as Lord Iliffe had alleged, and being charged with using its position of monopoly to gain unfair advantage, as Scott-Taggart had asserted; where the BBC felt threatened, the challenger was left bruised and bitter. These assaults on competitors were, however, conducted via personal correspondence, usually marked private, as the BBC was careful to avoid a public attack on a legitimate business.

Unfortunately, as it happened, the BBC had not identified Bernard Jones as a threat; if anything he had appeared in the light of an ally, and because of this, he had deftly side-stepped the BBC's attention. When his agreement with the Plugge's IBC was finally discovered, it was found that there was nothing that the BBC could do to prevent the alliance, because Jones was an independent publisher, over whom the BBC had no power. The content of *Radio Pictorial* is all the more interesting for the broadcasting historian because of its editor's independence from the BBC.

Jones' independence, when united with the sheer effrontery of Plugge's IBC, gave them some material advantages. There were some specific reasons however, why the IBC was able to thwart the efforts to shut it down, which may be usefully summarised:

- The BBC believed that the IBC problem would be resolved by the French Government after they had taken over Radio Paris from 1st April 1933, had halted the sponsoring of programmes from November 1933, and imposed restrictions on Radio-Toulouse from advertising transmissions in a foreign language.
- From 1932-1939 there were approximately a dozen different ministers in charge of the French PTT, all with different policies, which weakened attempts at control.
- France operated under a different system from the UK in that it during this time, there was no monopoly of broadcasting in France, and therefore no system of levying licence fees. As with many other countries in Europe, there were many privately owned stations.
- The International Broadcasting Union was also weak in that it was a Union, not an administration and its resolutions or (vœux), such as the resolution of 13th May 1933, were not binding on its members, let alone those who were not members which included Radio Luxemburg or the private stations in France.
- The activities of the IBC were an annoyance to the BBC, but were not so egregious as the potential and then subsequently real threat posed by Radio Luxemburg, with its immensely powerful transmitter, and lack of any material restrictions to its output. The IBC was therefore shielded from the full force of the BBC's ire by the very existence of Radio Luxemburg.
- The policy of the IBC's directors, Leonard and Plugge, were never simply aggressive towards the BBC. They had a vested interest in the contract of the Radio International Publicity Services (RIPS) in not entirely antagonising their client. They employed a variety of tactics, at times conciliatory, at times ingratiating, often attempting to blur the facts of their relationship, making it seem as if they were engaged in joint ventures intent to "enmesh" the BBC (Vinogradoff, 1945, p.24).
- Like Plugge, Jones appeared as both ally and competition to the BBC at different times, and while *Radio Pictorial* was critical of the BBC, it also had an interest in promoting it and sympathising with the complexities of its tasks.
- Similarly the BBC had reason to deal more delicately with the IBC because of its connection with the RIPS, on which the BBC depended for material for *World-Radio*.

Moreover, neither the IBC and *Radio Pictorial* nor the BBC was prepared to be open about the true nature of their profit-making objectives: an overt admission of pursuing commercial

opportunities did not chime with the public service ethos with which broadcasting had been endowed. The IBC would not state their commercial aims and even broadcast denials of any commercial intent, citing their primary objective as delivering entertainment. *Radio Pictorial* maintained an affectionate ‘our BBC’ attitude even while publishing articles criticising its output and printing readers’ letters complaining of the service it provided. The truth of the *Radio Pictorial’s* parasitic *raison d’être*, which was to make money off the back of the BBC, would never form the subject of an editorial. And the BBC would not openly assert its right to protect its interests, because as its lawyers warned it, the IBC and *Radio Pictorial* were legitimate businesses. As demonstrated by the internal correspondence, the BBC did not just object to their listeners being poached by another broadcaster, it also intended to maintain control of the direction which broadcasting took in the UK. Behind closed doors, of course, the BBC did respond to both the IBC and *Radio Pictorial*; the impact of the IBC’s broadcasts were sufficient that the BBC made alterations to its schedule and attempt to lighten some of its programmes, although it would not substantially alter the entrenched Sunday policy. The *Radio Times* introduced pages for women which were very similar to those in *Radio Pictorial* and discussion of the obtrusive competition sit alongside the debates over the decision to finally open the door to listener research in the BBC Written Archives at Caversham.

What has emerged from this research is that it is very difficult to obtain information about the activities of Plugge and his connection with *Radio Pictorial*. The fact that the BBC did not acknowledge the IBC is evident from the lack of extant information about the company and the driving force behind it. Even the *Broadcaster Trade Annuals* for 1935, and 1936 ignored him. History had largely forgotten Plugge until Street reasserted his place as commercial radio’s founding father, and Wallis wrote his biography. And yet Plugge’s activities were of sufficient note at the time that *The Times* covered his Continental trips and *Time Magazine* hailed him as a pioneer. So dominating was the form of the BBC over the history of broadcasting, that, as touched on in the introduction, few documents still exist from the period for the researcher of either the independent commercial broadcasters, or the proprietors of the broadcasting magazines, outside those held in the BBC’s own files, providing the BBC had a connection with the company which generated correspondence; companies did not routinely archive their papers like the BBC did. However, traces of activity independent of the BBC do remain, and studying extant sources such as *Radio Pictorial* can be very rewarding. This suggests that a fruitful strategy for future broadcasting

history research would be to actively seek out the activities which were taking place outside of the BBC; to look for the areas which were beyond the BBC's reach.

Did the content of the magazines reflect any agenda on the part of the publishers, and if so, how was this manifested?

Radio Pictorial was a new type of broadcasting "fan" magazine and it addressed itself to the audience which had formed during the inter-war years. Any potential competition to the BBC's circulation figures was not welcome, even before Jones raised the magazine's profile in his masterly alliance with the IBC. This unanticipated move turned *Radio Pictorial* into a menace to *World-Radio* and an unwelcome alternative to the *Radio Times*. But *Radio Pictorial* challenged the BBC in a number of different ways. Most obviously, it published the foreign programmes which was *World-Radio*'s province; it was a listing magazine, which was the *Radio Times*' remit, and it sold itself as a family magazine, which also trespassed into the domain of the *Radio Times*' prescribed orbit. It sold itself on the publicity it took from the BBC's staff and stars; it supported the IBC and Radio Luxembourg by printing details about their programmes and articles about their studios. Added to this, *Radio Pictorial* was freely critical of the BBC, as were the letters from readers which it published on a weekly basis. *Radio Pictorial* was like an unwelcome "Greek Chorus" commenting on everything that the BBC did.

If the *Radio Times* had been conceived as the "organ" of the BBC, through which it could relay important messages about its policy to the public, so Jones, who had a long history in the wireless press industry, had found a vehicle through which he was also able to comment on any aspect of the BBC policy. When Sheila Borrett had been dismissed in her role as the BBC's first female announcer, *Radio Pictorial* interviewed her to tell her own story; Whitaker-Wilson took the BBC to task about the lack of entertainment value in its "Morning Talks" for women; Dr Sisson Relph could write his "pugnacious" article in which he grumbled at a whole range of the BBC's short-comings. But in addition to the licence Jones had given himself to criticise the BBC, *Radio Pictorial* was a comment on everything the BBC was not, just by its *un*-"highbrow" tone, and by the fact that it addressed itself to an aspirational class of woman, in her suburban home, giving her instructions for the home and tips for enhancing her beauty. In contrast to the BBC's model of steering public taste, *Radio Pictorial* catered for the public's desires, and in doing so it provided an immensely rich

picture of the pleasures, hopes, worries and fears of lower middle and working-class British women in the 1930s. *Radio Pictorial* represented a synthesis of a number of key developments of the period; the growth of the magazine industry as a means of catering for the leisure and pleasure of all classes; the recognition that women constituted a growing market for magazines and advertisers; the growth of the new “home” magazine sector, aiming at middle- and lower-class women, who now had no servants to work for them; the elevation of the lowbrow and “popular” into a legitimate market in its own right; the development of a “fan” magazine, and finally the acknowledgment of a female daytime radio audience.

Radio Pictorial's publisher, Jones, came from the wireless press background in which listeners wrote to the magazines on every aspect of the service and reception and expected an interaction from the magazine. As has been established, *Radio Pictorial* was unlikely to have received many letters per week, certainly nothing like the numbers which went into the BBC's and *Radio Times*' post-bag. The *Radio Times* printed on average only approximately 4% of the letters it received, which gave the editors a much greater scope to choose the letters which best reflected their policy. Moreover, the *Radio Times* editors were, by their own account, prepared to manipulate the letters on their letters page. Jones had no need to adopt a policy of ignoring the key developments of the period, or some of the persistent complaints. He was an independent publisher, albeit with an interest in promoting both the Continental broadcasts and those of the BBC, as these formed his staple material. But he was not dependent on either party and could raise any topic he chose.

What can be deduced from an examination of the readers' letters about the audience's response to the specific issues dominating the broadcasting environment during this period?

It has been established firstly that readers' letters cannot be regarded as a reliable indication of a majority view and secondly that however much the readers might appropriate the letters page for a personal agenda, it still remained the property of the publication (Wahl-Jorgensen, 2006, p.312), and the editors' continue to be the gate-keepers. However, the readers' letters pages have a particular significance in broadcasting magazines because they represent the listener's means of responding to broadcasts, their conduit for the necessary reciprocity. Broadcasting represented a new form of communicating, but one which broke the embedded

rules of interaction, being entirely one way. One means of responding to a broadcast was by writing a letter.

The letters page provides a guide to the themes which interested the public during this period. By comparing the letters of two magazines published contemporaneously, it is even possible to determine the nature of the editorial filters on topic which were being applied. Being in control of the letters page, the editors could print critical letters and letters of praise; the BBC declared that it welcomed criticism and many of the letters, even those printed in the *Radio Times*, were duly critical. However, when it came to the sensitive topics, such as the BBC's Sunday Service, the BBC's refusal to be criticised on this subject is revealed by the fact that it printed no letters on the subject at all. One theme which formed a principal point of interest for the letter writers was music; predictably since it formed the majority of the output during this period. The sharp divergence between the types of music which interested the readers of each magazine was consistent with their target readership; *Radio Times* readers liked the Classical music programmes, *Radio Pictorial* readers preferred lowbrow Variety music.

Audience Research was a sufficiently recurrent topic in *Radio Pictorial* letters to suggest that it formed a topic of some anxiety for the public, which felt that it should be consulted on the programmes broadcast. On this matter, there was a notable similarity between the letters from women about programmes aimed at women, in both magazines. This is an area where the letters really speak for themselves. Broadcasting historians have written about the domestication of radio, and the acknowledgement of the female daytime audience, but to read the sentiments of the actual recipients of these programmes is arresting. The letters written to the magazines have an intrinsic interest as opinions of individuals which are not otherwise recorded or now retrievable. They were a representation, not necessarily of the publishers own views, but rather what they *wanted* to reflect back as being their views to their readers.

The Value of Studying Broadcasting Magazines

Broadcasting magazines provide a varied and, importantly, an illustrated social record of the inter-war period. They document the changing role of women as a growing market force; women struggling without servants to keep a cheerful and comfortable home, exhorted to be disciplined and charged with the wellbeing of the nation. The magazines reflect back the

worries and anxieties they experienced, but also the means by which they relaxed, with pages full of gossip, fashion, questions of etiquette, beauty products and recipes. As an indicator of how the role of women had changed during the period, and indeed, the part that broadcasting had played in achieving that, even *Radio Pictorial*, targeting a readership of lower-middle and working-class women, assumed its readers had an interest in the wider questions of the day, and duly included editorial pieces about the hard economic times, the prospect of War, even reporting from Germany having inspected “Hitler’s Broadcasting Machine”. Each week’s number was a single snapshot of what was really important to the nation’s women at the time.

When the idea for the *Radio Times* was first conceived by Reith, he saw it as the organ of the organisation, a vehicle for directing propaganda, and a means of connecting with the listeners. The *Radio Times* has provided an immensely rich and useful resource over the years for media historians, and particularly for historians of the BBC, providing, as it does the schedules of the programmes for which there is no longer any record. Similarly *World-Radio* invokes a time when hearing broadcasts in foreign languages was exotic and exciting. *The Listener*, for which the digitised catalogue is now available for research, is also a valuable record of broadcast Talks. But the one thing that these magazines have in common, important and sententious as they are, is that they were published under the auspices of the BBC, and it is not possible to form a full and accurate impression of the development of broadcasting from the publications of the principal protagonist. Accepting the truism that the winners write the history, the BBC, still today a dominating force in world broadcasting, should not be the custodian of its own history. Moreover, as mentioned previously, the BBC was not always sure what its own opinions were, hence its decision to commission the Russian historian Igor Vinogradoff to write his confidential report on the BBC’s interactions with the commercial broadcasters in the 1930s. The report is an extremely useful resource because Vinogradoff was explaining to the BBC what its own attitude was to events, and even where it could have responded differently. Similarly, the current thesis reveals how much can be reconstructed about the BBC’s true attitudes once the pieces of the jigsaw are put back into place.

It is fortunate then that a major source of extant independent evidence from the early period of broadcasting has survived, in the form of the non-BBC broadcasting magazines. The numerous titles which constituted the wireless press provide an extensive supply for the

historian of the development of broadcasting technology. But perhaps unexpectedly, *Radio Pictorial* is a particularly valuable resource for the social development of broadcasting. Because it published the schedules of the foreign programmes, in particular the IBC and Radio Luxembourg, *Radio Pictorial* has been over-looked as a source for information on the preoccupations of the domestic listener, and as a record-keeper of the private life of the BBC. With its smiling informal pictures of BBC stars and staff, pictured in their homes and with their families, *Radio Pictorial* recorded the backstage world of the BBC. It was one which the BBC allowed few glimpses of in its own magazines.

Having an overtly populist agenda, *Radio Pictorial* recorded much of the trivia and gossip surrounding broadcasting, which was not deemed worthy of record by the BBC, and which is therefore otherwise lost today. Its gossip pages primarily followed key BBC figures and even recorded their casual remarks verbatim. Identifying how much *Radio Pictorial* can recapture of our broadcasting past makes a persuasive argument for the further research of other broadcasting magazines. The magazines present broadcasting from a different angle to the BBC magazines, but they also bring another version of the truth; Captain Plugge, John Scott-Taggart, Lord Illife, Hugh Pocock and Bernard Jones, as well as many others whose careers originated in the wireless press, they all had a part to play in shaping the broadcasting magazine industry, and therefore, because the two were interconnected, they had an influence over the direction of broadcasting. As a cumulative force, they managed to stay a step ahead of the BBC, in spite of the advantages which the BBC's broadcasting monopoly gave it.

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- R43/151 Radio Times Advertisements (1923-1938)
- R43/154 Radio Times Cancelled Issue (1939)
- R43/166/1 Radio Times Make Up (1936-1937)
- R43/166/2 Radio Times Make Up (1936-1937)
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- R43/167/2 Radio Times Make Up: Memoranda (1933-1934)
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- R34/168 Radio Times Make Up: Specimens (1937-1947)
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- R43/184 Radio Times Revised Typography (1947-1952)
- R43/205 Publications, Readership Investigation Amongst Readers of the "Radio Times" and "Listener"

The Listener

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- R43/60/2 The Listener Sequence 1 (1924-1938)
- R43/60/3 The Listener Sequence 1 (1924-1938)
- R43/60/4 The Listener Sequence 1 (1924-1938)
- R34/61 The Listener Sequence 2 (1935-1954)
- R34/62 The Listener Advertisements (1928-1934)
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World-Radio

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R43/277/4 World Radio (1925-1939)
R43/277/5 World Radio (1925-1939)
R43/278 World Radio Advertisements (1925-1936)
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(Open 2006)
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E2/2/1 Foreign Gen.: Advertising in English by Foreign Stations File 1 1928-1936
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Appendix I

Hierarchy of Codes for Readers' Letters

- The gender of the letter writer
 - Male
 - Female
 - Nom de Plume
 - Could not tell
- Location
- The intended addressee
 - BBC
 - Radio Pictorial
 - Radio Times
 - Other international broadcasters
 - Other Readers
- The type of letter
 - Complaint
 - Praise
 - Request
 - Response
 - General Comment

- The Subject:

Top Level

- **Audience Research**
- **BBC Service**

Letters about the provision of the actual service:

- North/South divide in terms of programmes received
- Reception
- Timings of programmes
- PO Licence
- Interval signal
- Big Ben bells time signal

- Introduction of 24 hour clock
- General letters covering all sorts of types of output and BBC's provision
- **General Broadcasters (not BBC)**

Non-specific for some letters, other letters are either aimed at all broadcasters or at Continental broadcasters (including IBC, Radio Luxembourg and other European state broadcasting organisations).
- **Programme Content**

Letters about Programme Content makes up 629 out of the total of 1,266 letter records, or 50% of the total. Therefore, any detail concerning the subjects which were interesting to listeners was invisible. Therefore Programme Content was divided up into a second level of 11 categories. One of these was Music. This made up 305 letters or 49% of Letters concerning Programme Content/Music so was subdivided again into Classical or Variety. These figures are very interesting because of the way they differ so extremely between the two magazines,
- **Radio & Society**

This is a general category, and includes the letters which were either inspired by a programmes but which then went on to make a philosophical point, or had nothing to do *per se* with broadcasting, but had a point to make to other readers of a general nature: gardening, cyclists pulling up flowers (!). It also includes the letters – of which there was several on pronunciation.
- **RP Content**

Letters about items, articles, pictures in RP – for RP this includes letters about pictures or items which had been purchased from RP.
- **RT Content**

Letters about items, articles, pictures in RT.
- **Public Figures**

This includes letters about politicians such as Winston Church, broadcasts from Royalty, and announcers, both male and female – only one letter about female (?) check.

Second Level

- **Audience Participation**

There were a comparatively small number of letters to both RT and RP on this subject, but it was highly polemical topic and it divided listeners between those who loved it because it provided an atmosphere and those for whom it was a distraction. I kept it as a separate category because it seemed to be a highly pertinent theme to the act of listening to the radio.

- **Children's Programmes**

At one point during 1934 the ability of some listeners to receive the Children's Hour was affected by the introduction of the Droitwich transmitter. Again this seemed to be a significant moment because it called forth complaints from all the adults who listened to, and loved the programmes.

- **Discussion Programmes**

- BBC Annuals from the period use the term "Spoken Word" programmes; I didn't use this as a category because I wanted to keep visible the RP letters about women's programmes, and the news and sport as separate items. Also it might have been thought to include drama and poetry, which again I wanted to keep separate. This includes Talks, produced by the Talks Department, but also includes:

- Talks
- Lectures
- Histories
- Discussions
- Current situation including War

- **Drama (excluding revues and operettas)**

- Serious dramatic plays
- Adaptations of novels

- **Nostalgia/Scrapbook**

- Discussion of these programmes spanned both RT and RP and they were difficult to categorise, since they seemed to be a mixture of general nostalgia items, so I kept them separate.

- **Poetry**

Kept as a separate category because although there were a relatively small number of letters, this division between letters to RT and letters to RP was marked.

- **Religious Services (excluding letters on the BBC Sunday Service)**

- Morning Daily Services

- Incidental Memorial events
- Broadcasts from Cathedrals
- **Women's Programmes**
 These were programmes aimed directly at "The housewife" etc, and may have been included under discussion programmes, but they were a number of letters about them to RP (none to RT) so I wanted to keep them visible

Third Level

- Music

Source for Checking Accuracy of Codes

Paddy Scannell, 1981; in the early thirties

- Music has always accounted for the bulk of the BBC's programme output radio
- From the start 'serious' and 'popular' forms of music were segregated

The following came under the Variety Department:

- Dance bands
- the cinema organ
- operetta
- musical revues
- In the custody of the BBC's Music Department were:
 - Symphonies
 - chamber music
 - opera
 - contemporary avant-garde compositions
- The intermediate category of 'light' music, also came under the Music Department,
- The definition of light music is elusive and might slip up or down either of the two polarised categories
- The "light" category includes the lighter works of 'classical' composers and the 'pops' of a host of largely forgotten nineteenth-century composers

Vinogradoff, 1945

Sunday programmes could include: Reginald King, Albert Sandler, Mantovani

- Concerts of ballads
- national airs

- military bands
- BBC theatre orchestra
- Relays from classical continental concerts

Woman's Own, 1936

Woman's Own was launched in 1932, and was in part George Newnes Ltd.'s response to the success of *Good Housekeeping* which had first appeared ten years before. George Newnes Ltd. was also the publisher of the *Radio Times*.

“Broadcast Variety” comprises:

- Vaudeville
- musical comedy
- operetta, revue
- cabaret
- dance music
- theatre music
- “surprise items”

The study of readers' letters is a cross-sectional case study; using a tree analogy, the section cuts across the diameter rather than a plank section from top to bottom! To extract the data about the sample of readers' letters I used Sanders recursive abstraction method.

Appendix II

Results of the Investigation Amongst Readers of the “Radio Times”

By J. Walter Thompson, 1937

In a questionnaire conducted for the BBC by J. Walter Thompson Company Ltd. “What the Other Listener Thinks” was one of the principal things that the “Housewife” looked for. 3,438 people were sampled and the cities targeted were: London, Bristol, Leicester Manchester, Leeds and Glasgow. The questionnaire asked if the Housewife habitually read eight *Radio Times* regular articles:

<i>Radio Times</i> Feature	% said Yes
What is your choice this week?	29%
Both Sides of the Microphone	50%
What the Other Listener Thinks	65%
Samuel Pepys, Listener	42%
The World We Listen In	38%
A Page for the Children	47%
Women’s Page	87%
What the Regions are Planning	24%

The most popular page was the Women’s Page, and of those 65% of Housewives questioned who responded that they did read “What the Other Listener thinks”

- 85% had a favourable response to it
- 3% had an unfavourable response to it
- 12% felt neutral about it

The results therefore showed that the letter page was the second most popular among housewives of eight regular the articles in the *Radio Times*. It was beaten only by the Women’s Page, and the over-whelming majority enjoyed reading it.²⁸⁷

²⁸⁷ *Results of the Investigation Amongst Readers of the “Radio Times” and “Listener”*. 1937 [Report]. BBC WAC R43/205 Publications, Readership Investigation Amongst Readers of the “Radio Times” and “Listener”.

Appendix III

Adverts in *Radio Pictorial* in 1934

Radio Pictorial Adverts:

Adverts for Radio Pictorial concerts by the IBC's Dance Band the "Ibcolians"

Amateur Wireless

The Sunday Referee

Radio Pictorial pictures, binders etc

Wireless Magazine

Adverts Directed at Women

Amami Nail Varnish

Amami Shampoos and Wave-Set

Ambron Free-Form (corset)

Ambron Easi-Fit Corsets

Amplion "Radiolux" Receivers

Ambrose-Wilson "Corset & brassiere in one luxurious garment"

Bravingtons Renown Watches for Smart Women

Bravingtons Solitaire Diamond Rings

Celanese Slim-Fitting Cami-knickers "with crisp accents of distinctive lace"

Ciloreal Permanent tint for Fascinating eye-brows and Lashes

Corot Linen Suit

D.D.D. Brand Prescription (skin cream)

Dr Cassell's Tablets "That isn't ordinary indigestion - it's your gastric nerve"

Kitano Ointment (for treatment of spots)

Lavona hair tonic

Marlow "Deep Sea Effect" Pearls

Natex 5 for reducing "From Ugly Fat to Slim Beauty in 3 weeks"

Nestol for washing baby's hair

Nu-Wa Hair Setter "beautiful wavy hair without heat, curlers or lotion"

Orlex Compound for Grey Hair

Outdoor Girl Beauty Products – "For you, too, the beauty that captures men!"

Reudal Bath Cubes

Rileys Billiard Table "This will keep your boys at home"

Silf Brand Obesity Tablets
Smartwear “How to dress well on 10/ or £1 per month”
Sockettes for swelling and pain of the feet (for women who are on their feet all day)
Sta-Blond the Fair Hair Shampoo
Superfluous Hair removed by Electrolysis at Home
Tokalon Vanishing Skinfood (for treatment of spots)
Treatment for Psoriasis
Triumph Tablets – “Free to Ladies”
Veldeu “The Secret of Lovely Hands”
Varencourse Ointment for Varicose Veins
West Electric curlers and wavers
Widow Welch’s Female Pills (complaint for which these were a treatment was not specified)
Wincarnis Wine Jelly “Good news for tired woman”
Woman’s Filmfair Magazine
Zam-buk: Every day rub on Zam-buk to improve your skin

General/Men

Aerodyne Radios
Allenburys Throat Pastilles
Astonishing Vocal Discovery – “develop a strong, magnetic, beautiful voice by marvellous scientific silent exercise”
Berkely Superlax chair and settee
Bile Beans for Biliousness
Binoculars – disposal of bankrupt stock
Bon Marché Radio
Book to teach piano “Musical notation only used (no freakish methods)”
Braggs Charcoal for indigestion
British Institute of Practical Psychology “Don’t let inferiority complex rob you of success”
British Song Society – for publication of all lyrics and songs
Cadburys ‘Cup’ Chocolate
Café Collette Orchestra Records
Can you Write Words for Songs?
Can you Play the Piano?
Course at the London School of Broadcasting

Cystex treatment for Kidney Trouble
Currys Radios
Doge Cream “The New Marvellous Complexion Restorer”
Dr. Niblett’s cure for epilepsy (Booklet)
Ecko Radio
Elasto The Great Blood Revitaliser
Elementary Wireless Course for Beginners (Book by Bernard Jones Publications Ltd.)
Ernest Longstaff’s Stage Microphone Screen (School)
Everymans Football Pool
Everymans & Staunch Pool
Eye-Book, to re-create a perfect pair of eyes
Film Weekly Magazine
Filt Percolating Earth (for rejuvenating radio receivers)
Garston’s Shirts (for men)
Gazes Sun Parlour, Pergolas and Garden Schemes
Genuine Paraguay Tea – for suffers from rheumatism, neuritis, uric acid, obesity, hardened arteries, ‘flu, weak blood, “nerves”
Gordon Mackays Pools
Graham Farish Gramophone
Great British Football Cards
G.T.L. Tool Chest (for me
Inferiority complex eradicated
Jewel British Made Fountain Pens
KB Radios
Learn Broadcasting in your own home in own spare time
Lissen radio receivers
Littlewood Football Pool
Macbeth’s Elastic Trusses and Appliances
Maclean Brand Stomach Powder for Duodenal Ulcers
Marconiphone Radio
Microlode Moving Coil Speakers
Mullard the Master Valve (radio component)
Kotalko True Hair Grower (aimed at balding men)
Palmolive Soap

Permarec Recording Studios “Come and make a record of you Christmas Greeting”
Peps Breathable Tablets
Phosferine Tonic Wine (cured a long list of ailments, including Brain Fag and Maternity weakness)
Princess – MacFarlan Lang’s Delightful New Biscuit
Radio Talent Required
Radiolympia Programmes
Repha Matting
Rex the King of Records
Ross System for gaining height
Rubicon Cigarettes
Shredded Wheat
Silvikrin “Stop Scalp Starvation” (for men)
Soberano Piano Accordion
The Stebbing System for gaining height
Stentorian Speakers
Strang Football Pools
Strongfortism (Booklet on how to restore manhood)
“The Stuff of Radio” by Lance Sieveking, BBC Drama Director
T.B. – The Doom of 150,000 People (Book about possible cure for Tuberculosis)
Telsen All-Electric Radio Gramophone
“To Smokers – You can conquer the tobacco habit easily in 3 days. Improve your health. Prolong Your Life. No more Stomach trouble, no foul breath, no heart weakness. Regain your manly vigour, calm nerves, clear eyes, superior mental strength.”
Symington’s Soups
The Torture of “nerve” banished for ever
Trados Nose Shaper – “corrects all ill-shaped noses quickly, painlessly and permanently”
Vernon Football Pool
Vidor Radio receivers
Wills’s Captsan Cigarettes
Yeast-Vite Tablets
Zee-kol “Skin Diseases cured in a night”

Appendix IV

The Development of Wireless Technology

The complexity of operating a wireless set may have been considered a gendered issue at the time, but the diffusion of the wireless throughout society to male, female, young and old, depended on it being easy to operate. It also had already become a less anti-social activity, but in order to be truly domesticated, it had to look more attractive. Fickers also identifies that the technical skill required to operate a wireless was a limiting factor:

While early radio listening required real technical skills and needed therefore a special “tacit knowledge”, the emancipation of radio from a tinkerer or hobbyist medium to a mass medium was bound to the development of a user-friendly design of the set, transforming the electrical machine into a domesticated piece of furniture.²⁸⁸

In the early 1920s, overcoming the technical difficulties and improving operative skills were the defining characteristic of listening to the radio. Pegg comments that this was “a time when the technical problems of listening were of paramount importance, whilst programme policy or content were of secondary consideration” (Pegg, 1983, p.400). He also notes that 75 percent of listeners’ letters received by the BBC in the 1920s were concerned with problems of reception. However, from the 1920s to the 1930s wireless sets were metamorphosing. For those who could afford it, a battery valve receiver improved the sound quality and could drive a loudspeaker. If a crystal set was within about 12 miles of a transmitter it was quite satisfactory, but any further away and they were “subject to hiss and to interference from other stations” (Hennessey, 2005, p.132). Valve receivers were better at being able to separate stations, which gave them higher quality reception. They were also more powerful than crystal sets which meant that they could drive a loudspeaker (Hennessey, 2005, p.132). Many still used batteries, (known as ‘accumulators’) which could be recharged about once a fortnight: the local garage would do this for 6 pence a time. But these still needed to be attached to an outdoor aerial using 100 feet (30 metres) of wire strung up between two masts or chimneys or trees, with another wire going from the earth terminal of the set and making a good connection with the ground. In all, hundreds of feet of wire were used (Hill, 1986, p.42). In Moores’ oral history interviews in 1988, one of the interviewees painted a vivid picture of the scene:

²⁸⁸ Fickers, 2006, pp.1-2

Oh it was something out of the ordinary in them days, having this box in the living room. As I remember, there was a square piece of wood and on it was all these wires. You had to have a big pole at the bottom of the yard with a wire coming right into the set – all along the living room wall. Oh yes, all down the backs, there'd be poles everywhere. They'd use clothes props and brooms and things like that – nail 'em together. As long it was high up you'd get a better sound, d'you see?²⁸⁹

In 1926 an important development occurred with the introduction of the first AC mains-operated receiver, the Gambrell Baby Grand (Hill, 2003, p.12). The mains electricity supply to private homes was chaotic at this time, but for those who were connected, it was a considerable advance, for it dispensed with the need for batteries, and the great inconvenience of having them charged. In 1926, the Electricity Supply Act was passed, and the intention was to produce national co-ordination of the non-standard suppliers around the country (Hill, 1986, p.55). By the end of the 1920s the two types of wireless receivers which had established the British wireless industry just a few years earlier – the crystal set and the battery valve receiver with its separate batteries and external loudspeaker – had become obsolete and the mains receiver and the outdoor battery portable with everything self-contained within an attractive cabinet would predominate right through the 1930s.²⁹⁰

As familiarity with the wireless set increased and the issues with operations receded, set design rather than technical specifications became the subject of intense interest to both industry and consumer (although there was always an element of population who continued to be fascinated with the technology, as the perpetuation of a core of the wireless press testified). It was still true that improvements in the technology drove the wireless set market, and that set design had to revolve around the enhancement of the control facilities, such as clearer tuning dials and illuminated panels, and later in the 1930s the “magic eye” tuning aid which told the operator when they had tuned in to a station. While the radio sets of the 1920s were a scientific-looking collection of wires, the 1930s radio set was housed in a smart cabinet. At first, the cabinets were made of wood, and some had something of the appearance of an Edwardian wall clock, with moulded polished wood.²⁹¹ However, some firms decided to allow their designers a freer rein. A few chose to use traditional materials such as wood but others experimented with exploiting the flexibility of modern new materials like Bakelite, a

²⁸⁹ Moores, 1988, pp.28-29.

²⁹⁰ See Hill, 1986, for a highly detailed chronology of wireless technology.

²⁹¹ Such as the British 1931 Ecko RS3 five valve mains receiver designed by J.K. White pictured in Hawes, 1991,p.77.

whole new vista was revealed. Murphy employed a furniture designer; whilst Ekco employed architects (Pegg, 1983, p.56).²⁹²

The difference in appearance from the sets of the early 1920s to the early 1930s was striking. The rapid changes in the technology also provided an opportunity for manufacturers to persuade consumers of their need to upgrade. By the 1930s, wireless had established itself as an essential source of news, entertainment and companionship. But the wireless set in the home was also an object of display. The wireless sets of the 1930s were desirable and aspirational commodities. Moores describes the wireless as one of a number of “new household machines which were to become known as ‘consumer durables’” in other words, the wireless set was a fixture (Moores, 1988, p.31). For this reason, and because it was an early, and rapidly changing technological commodity, Adrian Forty considers the history of wireless design to be worthy of particular study. He argued that there is a basic grammar of design imagery: the archaic, suppressive and the utopian and the development of radio design fits into this pattern, once radios had developed beyond the “scientific contraption” phase of the 1920s (Forty, 1986, p.12).

In Forty’s model the tendency of some wireless manufacturers to house their radios in a cabinet, some of which were very ornate, almost Victorian, refers to the past or “archaic”. There followed the suppressive phase during which wireless sets were concealed within a piece of furniture which serves another purpose, sometimes disguised as a lamp, or even built into the side of an armchair.²⁹³ Finally, as the wireless became more familiar objects, they began to be placed within a cabinet which suggests that it belongs to a future and better world (Forty, 1986, pp.200-206). This has a special relevance during this particular point in history. However, this may be over emphasising the prevalence of such tendencies in the phases of radio design in order to fit the theory. For example, in the 1930s, the most popular design of wireless receiving sets became Art Deco, which was the prevailing fashion, and actually displayed elements in the design which invoked images of the ancient world – such as the Egyptian-obelisk influenced tapering shapes. This was not a futuristic design intended to

²⁹² This reached a peak in the A3, the first Murphy set designed by the architect R.D. Russell who projected modernism onto the wireless in the expression of a very severe adherence to balance and straight lines. However, this set was initially loathed by Murphy dealers and sales representatives, and was nick-named the ‘Dartmoor Super’ or ‘the prison set’ because of the bars across the loud speaker grille. Public approval did come slowly, and it began to influence receiver design (Hill, 1986, p.100).

²⁹³ Hawes reproduced a picture of a radio secreted in an armchair (Hawes, 1991, p.53).

place this piece of technology as the future today – although for radios to be using designs which were highly in vogue is significant of their aspirational image.²⁹⁴

²⁹⁴ It is interesting to note however, that even the highly desirable round bakelite Ekco, the AD65, designed by Wells Coates in 1932 came in a range of effects (Hill, 1986, p.110). It could be ordered in several bright mono-colours although the scarcity of such editions still extant implies that these were not ordered in any great number. Moreover, the range included walnut *effect* bakelite, denoting an underlying desire not to stray too far from the traditional.

Appendix V

A Sample of *Radio Pictorial* Readers' Letters

February 9th 1934

Our Woman Announcers!

“Oliver Baldwin’s article on ‘What Broadcasting Has Taught Me’ I thought very interesting, and I agree with him that it’s easy enough to take a dislike to a radio voice. I hear a lot of fuss about the B.B.C. announcers; isn’t it about time that they found some people with really good speaking voices – and no affected accents?”

“I suggest, too, that there should be more of them, to give a certain variety to the programme. For this reason, I regret the decision to do without women announcers. I think (and I know that many of my friends agree with me), that a woman’s voice is a very welcome change. But I suppose it is useless to expect the B.B.C. to take any notice of what listeners want! - *M.T., Birmingham.*

Café Collette Mystery

“Congratulations on your No. 1 RADIO PICTORIAL. This, indeed, is the sort of paper we wanted.

“Now, re Café Collette. Who is the man who announces the items? He is really in a class by himself, what personality and emotion he puts into his voice! Everybody I know says he is the main-spring of the orchestra, and how true that is! The B.B.C. should use him *more*, for the modulation of his speaking is something rare for that much abused instrument, the microphone. Enough of this mystery! Let us know his name and give praise where it is due. The Café Collette is very good, but without that announcer, they’d simply be another orchestra. Here’s hoping you’ll find out for us – and long live RADIO PICTORIAL! - *H.J., London, W.C.I.*

February 16th 1934

Our Popular Announcer

“May I congratulate the RADIO PICTORIAL on its most interesting items and pictures concerning the staff at the B.B.C. headquarters, whose voices we wait for, as we would our own family, and faces we conjure in our minds. We have started a picture gallery, and Henry Hall and Christopher Stone already adorn the wall, but the Chief Announcer, whose cheery ‘Good-night’ greeting is always waited for, from now on will hold a prominent place, and I am sure we shall see a smile flicker across, as we return his good-night.” - *E.S., London.*

February 23rd 1934

The Housewife’s Point of View

“Don’t you think we might have some music broadcast during the mornings? The B.B.C. is behind several foreign stations in this respect. It would make life more cheerful for the housewife, who forms a great part of the listening public – and a powerful one. Gramophone records could be broadcast with little trouble and would be greatly appreciated. Is this possible?” - *G.M., Shoeburyness.*

March 2nd 1934

Every Band Its Own Crooner!

“It’s great stuff, this RADIO PICTORIAL. I have tried all kinds of weekly papers, but it beats the lot. I read one of the readers’ letters last week, namely B.E., East Grinstead, which roused my blood. He states, ‘Can anyone tell me why crooning is popular? I’d like to shoot the lot.’ Now, this guy is as bad as the lot; I would like to punch him fair and square! In any

radio articles I have read, there is not a letter with a kind word for crooners. I say if a band has not a crooner it is not a band. I think the broadcast programmes are O.K. They are what the public like – a bit of everything.” – *H.W., Burnley.*

March 9th 1934

Why the Programme?

“A few lines – to criticise and applaud. Congratulations on a splendid paper. No doubt there are thousands like me who know little about the technical side of broadcasting, and (let us whisper it!) do not want to know anything about it. We are interested in the ‘social’ side, however, and I for one, have received your paper with open arms.

Today, I bought the new number and found still more pages wasted. Why do you give us ‘Plan your week’s listening in advance’ and ‘High spots of the Programmes?’ There is nothing in those two features that cannot be easily learned from the *Radio Times* – and is there one amongst your readers who does not purchase the ‘Official Organ of the B.B.C.?’ – *D.F.G., Cardiff.*

March 23rd 1934

The Technical Side

“Although the ‘Radio Pic’ gives us all the views about our favourite artists, no doubt there are many thousands of your readers who, like myself, are interested in the technical side of broadcasting and would like to have some details about the people who are responsible for the actual transmissions.

“Tell us about the engineers, show us pictures of the plant, explain some of the interesting processes. Let us peep into the numerous side shows of the B.B.C.

“Introduce us to some of the men whose efforts made broadcasting possible and popular.” – *W.A.W., Gowerton.*

Congratulations to the B.B.C.

“First of all, I should like to say how very much I enjoy your paper and really look forward to Friday. I am truly grateful to the B.B.C. and to all those who so unselfishly arrange the programmes and take part in the smooth running of them. I think the programmes all round are excellent, and if there is anything that does not suit one, then it is easily switched off. I find very little to complain about, but a tremendous lot to be grateful for.” – *L.N.D., Thornton Heath.*

March 28th 1934

Breakfast-Time Dance Music

As I am away from home all day, the only times I can listen – in are after six in the evening and before nine in the morning. I suppose this is the case with the majority of listeners; yet, oddly enough, the early morning is about the only time the B.B.C. is absolutely dead, dark and silent! This means we only get half the value out of our sets that we might do. Why cannot the B.B.C. follow the example of the Continental stations and give us some entertainment at breakfast, even if it is only gramophone records? I believe that Empire broadcasting continues most of the night; so it surely should not be impossible for staff to go on working a little longer and give listeners a little entertainment *at the time when they most want it.*” – *A.K.J., Woking.*

Stand Up for the B.B.C.

“Enough of this perpetual groaning at the B.B.C. One never reads a listener’s letter in your admirable paper, or any other periodical, without it containing streams of adverse criticism upon the broadcast programmes.

“I will admit that seventy-five percent of the material broadcast does not suit my taste; but at the same time, I am fair enough to think that what doesn’t please me personally, has an interest for someone in the British Isles. At a cost of less than a half-penny a day, I think I have excellent value for money, if I only find one hour during a day’s programme to my taste. Where else can one obtain an hour’s entertainment at such a ridiculously low price? I challenge any of your readers to state with truth, that they cannot find at least one hour’s entertainment during a day’s broadcast, even on Sundays.

Listeners should realise that the B.B.C. has a colossal task to suit everyone’s requirements, and I have the courage to put forward the opinion that the programmes are set out with a wonderful sense of variety.” - *F.G.H., St. Albans.*

An All-brass Band

“Your paper is just great and I have placed a regular order with my newsagent. To me it provides just that link between Broadcasting House and the home. I thoroughly enjoy all of its contents from cover to cover.

“You ask for suggestions. I would love to hear an all-brass band concert of gramophone records comprising marches and light music. If it was compered by our great friend Christopher Stone during his Thursday evening broadcast, it would be ideal.” - *M.P., Tottenham.*

[Stone was still with the BBC at this stage, he didn’t defect to Radio Luxembourg until August 1934, so this is therefore a request to the BBC].

Sunday Programmes

“Don’t you think the B.B.C. could make our Sunday programmes a little brighter by engaging such orchestras as Jack Hylton’s or Jack Payne’s, both of them are noted for their handling of concert arrangements of popular tunes. I thoroughly enjoyed Marek Weber and His Orchestra some time ago, when they were broadcast in the Sunday Programme.” *R.W.S., London.*

What the Public Wants

“If I had the opportunity I should like to place two suggestions before the B.B.C. The first is, why not take a really determined effort to find out what the public really needs? Besides finding out the peak hour of broadcasting, the most favourable time for news, etc., this could easily be done by sending out questionnaires to every listener covering every subject necessary to answer these questions. I admit it would be a very expensive undertaking, but would not the results of a ballot of this description be justify any expense? I think so.

“I should imagine the result of a ballot of this kind would be rather startling. In my humble opinion Vaudeville would top the list. If that is so it would be very upsetting to our programme builders who last year gave us only 3 per cent.” - *R.G.W., Ashford.*

April 20th 1934

Reply to Criticism

“If R.G.W. realised that the B.B.C. is really anxious to find out what the majority of listeners enjoy most perhaps he would complain less unreasonably. The B.B.C. is only too glad to hear others’ opinions, and always consider listeners’ letters. Also, I doubt whether vaudeville would head a ballot, a view held by several of your correspondents.

“I feel compelled to point out that D.C. of Allestree is labouring under a grievous illusion. The American Radio stations that work in conjunction with each other all have the same programme and thus it is not necessary to wait till the other stations finish as in the case of the Regionals. Also the American programmes need very little mapping out as each item scarcely ever lasts longer than half an hour; thus programmes are rarely early or late.” – *A.L. King-Herman, St John’s Wood.*

April 27th 1934

The B.B.C. as Patron

“It was evident by the results of the B.B.C.’s enormously successful poetry competition last year that a tremendous amount of good could be done by the B.B.C. taking over the task of encouraging and helping the enthusiastic amateur and the struggling professional in literature and music.

“I am sure that a great deal of talent would be discovered if the B.B.C. would devote a small part of its vast income to organising annual competitions for plays, poetry, short stories, and musical compositions.

“Not only would the B.B.C. help itself by obtaining an unlimited amount of fresh material for its programmes, but it would provide a stimulus that British art badly requires.” – *R.D. Birch, Taunton.*

More Wireless For Women

“At present, the only item of special feminine interest is the fifteen-minute cookery talk on Tuesday morning. This is to be continued, in response to a great many requests. Please will the B.B.C. develop this idea? It would be appreciated alike by newly-married women who are just learning about housekeeping, and by older women who have forgotten some of what they learnt, and are becoming a little stereotyped in their housekeeping.” – *“Housewife,” Wakefield.*

Hot Music

“Why are not the ‘hot dance music’ fans in the North catered for by the B.B.C.? Presuming we are in a minority, I make so bold as to say, so are the ‘Wozzeck’ and such-like music devotees, and one minority is as deserving of attention as another.

“The Midland Regional transmitter, unobtainable to most of us, gives the Midlands brief record recitals with Robert Treddinick at the turntable. Are we North Regional listeners so civilised, or otherwise, that hot music is above, or below us?” – *“Melody Maker,” Cheshire.*

May 11th 1934

Owning the Mike!

Some statements in the article ‘If The Mike Were Mine’ by Godfrey Winn, have roused my feelings. At times I agree with Mr. Winn, but at times I am apt to differ with him.

“Firstly, with regard to surprises. He is going to have THE RADIO TIMES full of blanks, I understand. The paper would cease to serve its purpose. The listener would find himself unable to make ordinary advance arrangements to listen in; he would be afraid to go anywhere for fear he missed anything; or he would not bother to listen.

“I approve of the following suggestions: campaigning against cruelty of all types, crusading for peace and against war, and bringing Mr. Vernon Bartlett to your microphone. Good!

“On the other hand, the B.B.C.’s time-honoured policy of repeating plays and other such items on two different nights is a great boon. It enables many to listen who might find one of the particular nights inconvenient. And it gives the artists the feeling that all their rehearsals

have led up to more than *one* performance only. It would be a bad move on your part to discontinue it.

“You may say the staff at Broadcasting House are like nuns and monks. I thought the RADIO PICTORIAL itself had exploded that fallacy. Still you know best ...

“And lastly I hope you do not feel insulted by this letter. It is written in good part by one who is proud of, and satisfied with British broadcasting and the Corporation behind it.” – *G.A. Batty, Liverpool.*

May 18th 1934

The Woman Announcer

“After reading the recent articles by Mrs. Giles Borrett on her brief stay as a B.B.C. announcer, one cannot help but feel that she has not received a square deal. The B.B.C. do not usually gratify the whims of the public so readily if taking the Bach cantatas is one instance. I feel sure they received thousands of letters crying them down. Still, we had to suffer them for months on end.

“I, for one, thought she always did her duty in an admirable manner and her voice was a pleasure to listen to.” – *H. Brown, Liverpool.*

May 25th 1934

“Radio Pictorial” Features

“A few weeks ago one of your readers wrote saying that he disagreed with the publication of Rondo’s notes and the programme for the week, saying that all this was given in the RADIO TIMES.

“Had that reader considered that there may be many people who have to toss up between the RADIO PICTORIAL and the TIMES. These people find that for the same money they can, together with the daily papers, keep up with the wireless programmes, by dispensing with their RADIO TIMES and taking a paper which will give both hints for listening and also delightful reading.

“The fault is the other way. Rondo’s notes are crowded up into too small a space. Also, no one can accuse the RADIO PICTORIAL of competing against the RADIO TIMES as a weekly issue of wireless programmes. It only gives a small part of the actual printed programmes which is considered to be the cream of them.” – *H.S.C., York.*

June 1st 1934

Give Us The Words, Please

“While listening to the excellent broadcast of the short service on the occasion of the unveiling of a memorial to the National Poet of Australia, recently from Westminster Abbey, it struck me that it could have been much more enjoyable to many people if they had by them a copy of the words which were sung.

“The hymn, ‘Let the whole creation cry’ from Songs of Praise, was unfamiliar to me, as also was the National song, ‘Advance Australia.’ The words were not distinguishable all the time, and how much better the whole thing would have been if the *Radio Times* had published even in small type, the words of these two songs of praise, on the same page as the announcement if possible, but at any rate somewhere in the issue, with a note drawing attention to the fact.

“The Bach Cantatas are always printed for us, and very useful they are, so why not recognise such a unique occasion as the one cited above, and provide us with the fullest possible enjoyment.” – *Denis Best, York.*

Gauging Public Taste

“If the B.B.C. really wanted to find out what the public wants it could be done very cheaply. The Programme Department might ring up the music publishers and the gramophone people and inquire into sales of the various classes of music, songs, etc., and then list them in the same percentage in the programme. By doing this no one could complain to the B.B.C. that they weren’t working according to public taste.” – *W.H. Dellal*.

June 8th 1934

A Woman’s Point of View

“I have no quarrel with the B.B.C. but from a woman’s point of view I do think that they should be considered more. What woman wants to hear about fat stock prices? I suggest a ‘Ladies’ Hour’ of real interest to women, preferably about seven-thirty after the children have gone to bed. I am sure a dress show by Selfridge’s or one of the big stores, with a description of the dresses broadcast by a lady, would be most interesting to women listeners.

“We could also be informed of how to get across London when we come up, the best places to stay if our income is not lordly, some reasonable beauty shops and how to get to them from Waterloo, etc., and many more interesting things.” – *“Ladies First,” Portsmouth*.

Sunday Programmes

“Surely the B.B.C. could give us better radio fare on Sunday without destroying the religious associations of that day? As things are at present, we get- from Daventry National – nothing but unrelieved dullness until the concert at 9.30. The music which is played for us by various orchestras is uniformly proper and deadly in style – classical it may be, but it is not pleasant to listen to, except for the minority who are keen on such works – we have readings from the classics, Bach cantatas and missionary talks.

“The present Sunday programmes may satisfy a very few, but the majority simply tune in to foreign stations, and so are enabled to hear something cheerful. There are so many lovely compositions which are perfectly suitable for Sunday broadcasting, and which would soothe and delight listeners. At present, Handel’s ‘Largo’ is about the only one we hear, and that, though beautiful, is in danger of being played too often.” – *N.M.G., Westward Ho*.

June 22nd 1934

Cheers for “In Town To-night.”

“I have read with interest Mr. Godfrey Winn’s article, “Secrets of the B.B.C. Postbag,” and I notice he thinks that the ‘In Town To-night’ series is the best of recent radio features. It may interest you to know that the same view is shared by a good few others, who, like myself, have never bothered to write and say so. I know that where my wife is concerned, it is the only feature in the whole programme that she has never missed.

“I would like to see this letter in print, if only to let him know that a good many more ‘cheers’ can be added to that ‘less than a dozen’ total. – *Albert J. Smith, Fife*.

Their Own Announcing

“Whilst the light orchestras provide very excellent entertainment, I find their ‘personality’ sadly lacking. Why do they not announce their own programmes, as is the case in dance bands? I feel sure that one of the prime reasons for the popularity of the latter type of orchestra is the ‘intimate, personal appeal’ achieved by their leaders in announcing their own programmes.

“Another point to be considered is that, whereas it is possible to see the complete programme published in the *Radio Times*, this is not always sufficient to enable one to identify any one

particular tune. It has been suggested that the B.B.C. announce programmes after as well as before the broadcast. – *M.J.W., S.W. 16.*

English or Foreign?

“When will the foreign station fetish be forgotten? At least fifty per cent of listeners swear by foreign stations. They cry that the programmes of their own country cannot be compared with continental broadcasts. They forget that, in their search for their own peculiar style of entertainment, they choose the cream of half a dozen stations.

“Were these dial-twisters compelled to listen to only one foreign country’s stations, the ‘swearing by’ would soon become ‘swearing at,’ and they would pine for a chance to hear English stations.” – *Albert Inman, Sheffield 5.*

June 29th 1934

Sponsored Programmes

“I feel that there is a demand for ‘sponsored’ programmes in England, but entirely separate from the present programmes.

“Therefore I suggest that when the new Droitwich transmitter opens, one of the redundant stations should be maintained as a self-supporting establishment, under the auspices of the B.B.C., which incidently [sic] would be an admirable training ground for B.B.C. officials, and transmit only sponsored programmes, news and other essential daily features.

“Even if these sponsored programmes were confined to about 10.30p.m. and onwards, and afternoon transmissions, I maintain that they would be most acceptable to the average listener and worth while to the average trader.” – *P.I.P., Sheffield.*

July 6th 1934

Three Times a Day!

I think that the B.B.C. should see that a tune should not occur more than once a day. For instance, on Wednesday last the same melodies from ‘Maid of the Mountains’ were played three times by three different orchestras, and ‘If You Were the Only Girl in the World’ was played twice on the same day.” – *M. Munden, Manchester.*

Down with F.S.P.

“I also quite agree with ‘Ladies First’. The Fat Stock prices mean nothing to women.

“I am sure that it would be most interesting to have a dress show, with the description given by Mrs. Giles Borrett, or, barring that, why not a few gramophone records with the numbers, etc., given last, so that we could have a guessing game We all, I am sure, enjoyed those that Christopher Stone held a while ago. Please, Down with Fat Stock prices.” – *Kathleen Whiston, E.16.*

July 13th 1934

Selfish?

“I was surprised to read that Sunday dance music came so high in the list of radio improvements in RADIO PICTORIAL’s recent competition. Surely dance music on six days is enough and there are always foreign programmes. But I do think that more serious-minded listeners should be allowed at least one day to enjoy British stations without fear of jazz intrusion.

“Not that I am against dance music. Don’t think it! I am as keen a Henry Hall fan as any, but the saying that jazz enthusiasts are a selfish lot does seem justified.” – *Florence E. Preston, Dalton-in-Furness.*

July 20th 1934

A Broadcasting Week

“We have Baby Weeks, Rat Weeks, etc., so why not a Broadcasting Week? During that week the B.B.C. could make a great effort to please everyone. The cream of talent could be obtained and surprise programmes and other novelties could be given.

“The announcers could be given a chance to show that they are human and not be so frigidly aloof. The news could be given to us in a more human manner and all the talks givers would be able to radiate good fellowship.

“Such a scheme, properly carried out, would not only provide us with a memorable week of broadcasting but would also provide the B.B.C. with many ideas for future programme improvement.” – *Albert Race, Sheffield.*

Copying the Continent

Copying the Continent seems a very common thing lately. We copy it with time, why not copy it with Sunday dance music?

“The majority of people entertain on a Sunday because it is the only day they are free from their work, and one can hardly switch on a service for entertainment, can they?” - *Marjorie E. Watts, Wolverhampton.*

August 31st 1934

Sound-tours

“Although, as a rule, the B.B.C. are opposed to advertisements and sponsored programmes, it seems to me that interesting items could be provided if, from time to time, short sound-tours of various factories were broadcast, each having a commentary on the machines and finishing with a description of products and their respective merits. The cost of such tours would, of course, be borne by advertisers and not by the B.B.C.

“The broadcasts would be like the films we see at the cinema called ‘An Addition to the Programme,’ and as these are always interesting films, I see no reason why similar broadcasts would not be just as interesting.” - *T.R. Lawrence, New Malden.*

September 7th 1934

The Woman Listener

“I do not think that any housewife wants any programme in the morning hours. Most of us have far too much to do from nine to one to be able to listen with either enjoyment or intelligence; and frankly we have had enough of the silly talks on how to provide a dinner for six people for 1s. 1 ½ d., or make a dress for an average sized woman out of 2 yards of 36-inch material. The only time we have (with luck) for a slight rest is perhaps from 2 to 3.30 – when we would like to hear of the latest novels, contents of current magazines, and a little light music – the kind you rarely get in the other programmes; not dance or classic or the everlasting operas.

But to have the wireless on as a background to work or talk or half-sleep is to spoil true listening - and those who do this are the first to shout about ‘rotten programmes.’” – *A Housewife, Gloucester.*

Christopher’s Tune

“Signature tunes are all the rage nowadays. So why hasn’t somebody suggested one for Christopher Stone? After all, his recitals are eagerly awaited by both highbrows and lowbrows; and it would be nice to have a definite tune with which to associate him.

“As I understand he is affectionately known as ‘Polly,’ how about ‘Pretty Polly Perkins?’” – *Vera E. Dawney, Upminster.*

October 5th 1934

Is it Worth it?

“Over £3,000,000 a year is contributed by listeners, mostly the working man, in the hope of getting an hour or two of refreshing entertainment from his wireless set after his day’s work in the City. What does he get? Five evenings of the week he arrives home in time to hear the Fat Stock Prices. For the next hour and a half he has the choice of one programme only, all the Regionals taking the National. At 8 o’clock he finds a repetition of the previous evening’s broadcast changed about from National to Regional or vice versa.

“He is feeling dissatisfied with the stereotyped dishing up of programmes he has heard for months past. He waits for the final news, then twiddles the knobs until 10.30, when, at last, for one brief half-hour he is assured of a cheery finale to his evening’s labour. Deep down in his chair, he stretches out his legs ... after all he is glad he has paid his 10s. if only to hear that half-hour from Poste Parisienne, and the soothing strains of the ‘Goodnight Melody’ ringing in his ears as he climbs the stairs to bed.” - *F. Barratt, Birmingham.*

Critics Wanted

“There is one improvement I want to see in ‘Radio Pic.’ I want B.B.C. artists to be criticised so that we can get an accurate idea of their performances. In many publications we read that this, that and the other radio artist is ‘perfect,’ ‘amazing,’ or a ‘top-line star.’ Can’t somebody speak out in our ‘Radio Pic’ and tell us really when an artist is good or when he or she fails to come up to the expected standard? A little more criticism would result in some better broadcasts.” - *E.D.A.N., Bristol.*

October 12th 1934

For the Ordinary Woman

“I would like to say how I enjoy the morning programmes, especially the records when I am doing my washing; I have the wireless in the kitchen and I get through my work much quicker.

“Might I suggest that instead of having these ‘Wonder Women’ broadcasting each week about how well they manage money, husbands, and their homes, wouldn’t it be nice to listen to an ordinary woman, who goes to pictures, tea-parties, buys a 6d. Packet of cigarettes a week, and manages to keep out of debt, etc., on a normal income.” – *G.G., Palmers Green.*

October 19th 1934

The National Anthem

“It seems strange to me that the B.B.C. has not adapted the idea of ending their programmes every evening at midnight with the national anthem. Surely it would make a better finish, if it were only a record, played by one of our military bands. It would only take two or three minutes to play and wouldn’t mean inconvenience, whether played before or after midnight. Nearly all the continental stations end their programmes in this way, so why not our stations in England.” – *N.H.Allen, Birmingham.*

October 26th 1934

My Opinion of British Broadcasting! – What about you?

“Here are a few comments about the service of the B.B.C.:

“1. In common with many others, I cannot settle down to listen until about 8 o’clock. For this reason I very seldom hear a cinema organ or the outside cinema ad music-hall orchestras. Why not a special late broadcast?

“2. Northern listeners repeatedly enjoy outside music-hall and concert-party items. My set does not get them any too well. Is there nothing in the south that London Regional can give

us? If not, let us have National broadcasts of these items and let the Regionals give an alternative. That ought to suit most people.

“3. Why on earth give us dance records prior to the dance music proper; 10.30 till 12 for dance music should be enough for anyone, and if there must be records after 10 o’clock, why not a mixed bag?

“4. The Sunday programmes are hopelessly dull. Whatever light music there is is spoilt by too many vocal interludes, usually dismal stuff in a foreign language. Too many “band” concerts are 75 per cent vocal. Why not outside relays from hundreds of band concerts in the parks during summer (witness Kalundborg) and organ recitals from the many cinemas who feature them round about tea time? Surely the B.B.C. realises that the majority of people listen to the sponsored programmes from abroad on Sunday, and it certainly strikes me as very amusing that a body which frowns so much on radio and advertising is definitely forcing us to support that type of programme.” – *G.A.J., Major, Guildford.*

November 2nd 1934

What We Are to Expect

“The B.B.C. have such a large and varied public, that it is essential that they should give full details of the type of play that is to be broadcast, and also what type of listener it is likely to suit. *Rampa* was an example; by the notes in *The Radio Times* and by the tone in which it was announced, one would imagine that it was a gentle satire on the ways of man and the ways of animals. Instead of which it was a psychological study of the effects of loneliness and sacrifice set in a grim mad atmosphere rather like a bad waking dream. Several of my friends who enjoy good satire, listened to it in error and had their mental outlook clouded for some days.

“Another example was Ibsen’s *Ghosts* some months ago. Very little warning of the unusual nature of this play was given. The majority of listeners are not familiar with Ibsen’s work, and I know of two very homely families gathering together around a roaring fire, as is the custom in the winter to hear a good old-fashioned ghost story on the wireless.” – *Alan R. Thomas, Cardiff.*

Enough As It Is

“In connection with D. Sisson Relph’s article, ‘I’m Not Grumbling But - ’ I have a few remarks to make.

“I’m not in favour of early morning broadcasting as I think that we have quite enough wireless as it is. Duty should come before pleasure, and I consider that wireless ought to be a relaxation and a pleasure after the day’s work, in the same way as the theatre or cinema, and not used as a background to the day’s activities.

“In the matter of presentation of programmes when the announcer tries to be very jocular it sounds rather self-conscious and not sincere – which proves that they have not got the knack of being human and friendly. They ought to take lessons from Radio Luxembourg for that.

“As I know from my own experience when in the studio, the studio attendants treat one in the same rather officious manner lacking in cordiality.

“The psychological point of view is worth taking into consideration. It stands to reason if you are listening alone or feeling tired and highly strung, you do not feel like having your news and entertainment dictated in a rather officious manner.” – *Irma M. Mollet, Chiswick.*

November 16th 1934

Listening to Holland

“Many listeners in this country tune-in to the programmes broadcast by Huizen and Hilversum from 7.40 a.m. until the commencement of the morning transmissions from the

B.B.C. The Dutch programmes contain mostly English records and provide the only morning concerts that are free from interruptions caused by physical jerks and news bulletins, etc., and between 9 and 10 a.m., Huizen and Hilversum are the only stations transmitting regular music programmes – consequently they have a large English audience.

“Would it be too much to ask the Dutch to include English announcements at this time of the day and to use their maximum power? The high-powered long-wave station at Kootwijk does not transmit the programme until 3.40 p.m.

I know that the Dutch announcers are masters of the English language and I think that if they knew how their morning programmes were appreciated, they would be only too pleased to increase their friendship and contact with English listeners.” – *Basil S. Williams, Hants.*

November 23rd 1934

This Audience Nuisance

“I have one abomination – the persons who are permitted to be present at broadcasts and spoil the pleasure of millions. I refer to those who applaud before an item is finished. Quite often a song item is ruined by the ill-judged applause that drowns out the final note and accompaniment.

“It is bad enough having to tolerate those who laugh at the comedian before he speaks and the ones that pander to a watching audience, but to have this further evil is going beyond bounds and the offenders should be eliminated for, after all, it is the millions who provide their entertainment not they who provide for the millions.

“An audience may provide atmosphere but it can also be a nuisance.” – *Albert Race, Sheffield.*

December 14th 1934

A “Gourmet”

“A few days ago on returning home from the City, I was aware of a most penetrating and appetising smell of cooking, with a definite ‘Continental touch’ about it. When supper was served I expressed to my wife my surprise and pleasure at being treated to a real ‘meridional’ dish in a small suburban house of London. I was then told how it had come about; the new wireless set was in very good working order and my wife had switched it on to Radio – Toulouse, where a worthy ‘chef’ of the town was broadcasting recipes *pour les gourmets*.

“Very pleased that my wireless set should be put to such good use, I made my way home the next evening in high spirits, and wondering what appetising dish was to be served that night. Supper time came, and with it a slice of cold beef and boiled potatoes! The reason for this contrast with the day before was simply that my wife had been out all day, and the cook had preferred to switch the wireless on to the B.B.C. dance orchestra and spend a lazy evening by the fire.

“This leaves me wondering whether my wireless set is to be a blessing or a curse, where my supper is concerned – for I am a ‘gourmet’ and come from Southern France!” – *B.B., S.W. 7.*

When Louis Broadcast

“Congratulations, RADIO PICTORIAL, on a wonderful broadcast when you secured Louis Armstrong for the Paris microphone. I happened to be listening in on Wednesday (November 28), and, as a hot-music enthusiast, I want to say that I think this was one of the finest dance-music programmes ever given. I am now a confirmed listener to the RADIO PIC. ‘Celebrity’ Concerts for I don’t want to miss another last-minute scoop like this.” – *J.F.T., Margate.*

December 21st 1934

Our Gift Album

“Many thanks for Gift Album received quite safe this morning. I think the photos are very good. I have taken the RADIO PICTORIAL from the first copy and I intend to have them bound later. I look forward to every Friday morning.

“Wishing your paper and the B.B.C. every success.” – *E.T., Cheltenham.*

Music Hall Versus Jazz

Mr. Oliver Baldwin, in his usual lucid entertaining manner, describes an ideal programme for the three classes of listener. Now, one has only to scan the *Radio Times* to see how little the *average* man is catered for. Why, ninety per cent. of the stuff is undoubtedly highbrow. And I would like to repeat that the majority of sets are purchased for light entertainment. Even practically all the musical items played by official B.B.C. bands and orchestras are highbrow. Compare the lilting, swinging (and better played) numbers we get relayed from the halls! Hear the Commodore, the Birmingham Hippodrome, Granada, etc., and then listen to a B.B.C. orchestra!

Admitted that the jazz stuff is admired by the younger fraternity (until they head the old music hall numbers!) the middle-aged artisan listener (and there’s quite a lot of “him”) sees red when the cornet and other instruments start making weird noises. I consider that a nice attractive bar is often spoiled by these silly interpolations.

I take the liberty of suggesting what sort of stuff is welcomed in working class homes (after a hard day’s work!)

Sunday, November 25

10 p.m. Fred Hartley (National).

Monday, November 26

10.45 a.m. Western Studio Orchestra (Mai Jones piano) (Regional).

12 noon. Tom Jenkins, Cinema Organ (Regional).

4.30 p.m. Hotel Metropole Orchestra (National).

8 p.m. Old Music Hall (Regional).

Tuesday, November 27

12 noon. Joseph Muscant (Troxy) (Regional).

1 p.m. Birmingham Hippodrome (National).

9 p.m. Best Sellers (National).

7.15 p.m. Café Collette (Regional)

Travel talks, astronomy, workers’ talks, adventure, etc. - *W.T. Lowe, Leyton, E.17.*

January 4th 1935

The Difference

“Mr. Symington is to be congratulated on running such an interesting Film Star competition.

“It was, of course, an electrical recording. Yes, but did you think that the first time you heard Mr. Symington from Radio Normandy? In what respect was this recording different from the usual we hear? Was it not those few whispered remarks from the 1st prize winner to Mr. Symington which gave the impression the party were in the studio facing the microphone at that very moment?

“Quite a definite advancement in this form of radio entertainment offered by the I.B.C.

“Perhaps our good friends the I.B.C. could let us have a programme consisting of electrical recordings and artists in the flesh in order to test our powers in this direction. – *C.N., Perthshire.*

January 11th 1935

Some Calculations

“I am writing to refute the statement made by Mr. W.T. Lowe of Leyton, in your issue of December 21. He writes that 90 per cent. of broadcast music is undoubtedly highbrow. This cannot pass unchallenged. I have been through the programmes starting December 14. and this is what I find.

“Out of a total of 183.5 hours broadcast by the National and London Regional transmitters between them (the alternative programmes for Mr. Lowe’s region) during the week, 39.5 hours were of undoubtedly highbrow music, which is 21.38 per cent. of the total time. On the other hand, 92.82 hours of undoubtedly lowbrow music were broadcast, a percentage of 50.66. This is excluding children’s hours, news, all talks, services, some musical programmes of a doubtful nature, and even *In Town To-night* and *Music-Hall*

“Concerning the technical quality of official B.B.C. bands and orchestras, may I point out that Mr. Lowe betrays his lack of musical knowledge by his remark concerning cornets in dance bands containing cornets in existence to-day.” – *C.F., Cartwright, Walsall.*

Announcers’ Names

“A few weeks ago, in an article in the RADIO PICTORIAL, S.P.B. Mais mentioned the fact that the N.B.C. announcers announce themselves by name, and he felt it was a great privilege to be allowed to listen to them. I am sure that it is a great privilege to listen to our B.B.C. announcers, but could not they, too announce themselves by name? At the moment they are just voices. It would make the programmes so much more interesting to know who is announcing them, not just to hear a voice without knowing to whom it belongs.” – *“Hopeful,” Muswell Hill, N.10.*

February 1st 1935

A Big Mistake

“As a radio serviceman I have, perhaps a better opportunity than most people of gauging public opinion of B.B.C. programmes, with the result that the B.B.C have my deepest sympathy in their efforts to achieve the almost impossible task of pleasing everybody.

“A big mistake that most radio critics make is to compare wireless programmes with other forms of entertainment. But the poor B.B.C. has to cater for both - and the listener who likes neither.

“But I have one serious criticism of the B.B.C. – that is that they have quite lost the spirit of Capt. P.P. Eckersley’s ‘Alternative Programme Scheme.’ This, you will remember, aspired to give listeners in every region two alternative and *contrasted* programmes – i.e., heavy music and talks on one wavelength and light and dance music and vaudeville on the other. The present programmes are the very antithesis of this idea – especially on Sundays. Hence the tremendous popularity of the I.B.C. broadcasts. It may interest you to know that almost invariably, on demonstrating a new set, the first question asked us ‘Will it get Luxembourg?’” – *John Bland, Hampstead, N.W.3.*

March 29th 1935

What Listeners Think

“Congratulations to the good old I.B.C. for their latest addition to listeners’ entertainment! All of us at home wouldn’t miss for the world the hour of music broadcast from Radio Luxembourg every evening between 6.30 and 7.30 p.m.

“We felt we had to write to RADIO PICTORIAL about it, in case any other readers have not been listening in at this time. Just to show you how we enjoy it, I must tell you that we have moved the wireless set into the dining-room so we can hear it at dinner.

“Incidentally, I appreciate this programme from the mother’s point of view, too. We start dinner at 6.30 and since Luxembourg has been sending us this music everybody is on the dot. You’ve no idea what a godsend it is to me – domestically and musically.” – *Gladys Poulsen, Norwich.*

June 21st 1935

Why They refuse

“As a reader of RADIO PICTORIAL for the past eight or nine months, I would like to add my thanks to those of your other readers for your useful and most entertaining weekly. The I.B.C. programmes are a boon to all listeners. I am entertained by your *What Listeners Think* column and would like to know what listeners and the B.B.C. think of one of my ideas. Why not have the views of the people who still refuse to buy a receiving licence? If they were invited to state why they refused to pay, something helpful might be learned. They might even award a prize for the most helpful letter.” – *P.E. Goofen, Harwich.*

Sunday on the Long Waves!

“How you can publish such ‘tripe’ as the article, *Why Have Sponsored Programmes* by W. Wilson is beyond my comprehension. As the organ for the I.B.C. and Luxembourg programmes you should know better than to antagonise your readers in this way. Your correspondent Wilson states that those who prefer brighter programmes on Sunday are in the minority.

How does he know?

And has an official ballot ever been taken?

We are not interested in the narrow-minded views of Sir John Reith nor in such ridiculously sweeping statements as those in this article.

“If Mr. W. Wilson likes to visit me I can take him to a dozen or more radio owners within 300 yards of my house (and we are a small community) who spend most Sundays on 1,304 metres.” – *L.C. Sprague, Westbay, Bridport, Dorset.*

Hackneyed Material

“I think the Continental people would do well to delete from their Sunday programmes hackneyed numbers that are sent over by the B.B.C. all the week, sometimes two or three times daily. No matter how good a number may be, it becomes very wearisome when it is inflicted on one day after day and night after night.

“I get the Luxembourg programmes all day every Sunday. They are, of course, of a very fine standard and it is a pity that people mar them here and there by including hackneyed items in their otherwise excellent lists.

“Another thing I would suggest is that some of the dance bands tone down their ‘effects’ somewhat. A number of exceptionally tuneful items are now being burlesqued out of recognition by comedy saxophoning, blatant trumpeting, and maniacal drumming.

“I suppose there *are* people who look upon it as music. Such people would probably look upon a dog-fight as quite a melodious contingency and consider an orchestral rendering of the ‘Lily of Laguna’ as a mere ‘also ran.’ They are in the minority however. Why pander to them?” – *Harry McCalla, St John’s Wood, Stockwell, S.W.9.*

July 19th 1935

Sponsored Programmes Must Come!

“Recently Mr. Whitaker Wilson opposed all thoughts of the introduction of sponsored programmes. He gave his reasons. They were convincing reasons. But Mr. Whitaker Wilson is wrong.

“We were given the views of Sir John Reith, director of the B.B.C. Candidly, I was astounded at the short-sightedness of those ideas. Sponsored programmes were not necessary *because there was little fear of the standard of the B.B.C. dropping!*”

“So that is the attitude of the B.B.C.! As long as the present standard is maintained, they are satisfied. There is, then, no thought of going from strength to strength, continually with the goal in view of providing the best possible service to listeners. What we get now is good enough. Truly, such as complacency is overwhelming!

“But we are told that advertising matter is objectionable and degrading. Does Mr. Whitaker Wilson ever listen to Luxembourg? And, if so, does he find the programmes so unbearable? Moreover, he must bear in mind that, from this station, sustaining programmes are extremely rare. We are met with a continuous succession of advertisers – and still we like it!

“It stands to reason that a series of shows, each backed by the separate financial interest of different national advertisers, would be made far more ambitious than a similar length of times used for programmes all paid for from the exchequer of the B.B.C. Probably, each advertiser would spend on his own show as much as the B.B.C. could afford to pay for the whole evening. That is why we want sponsored broadcasting!” - *E.P., Cardiff.*

August 2nd 1935

Step by Step

“It is generally accepted that listeners are in two distinct classes – the ‘high’ and the ‘low’ brow. Now the B.B.C. has strived to instill into us lowbrows that we are missing much by not adopting “serious” music. With that end in view, we are supposed to have been gently led by the hand (or is it ear) over a succession of lessons that will eventually (the B.B.C. highbrow element hope) lead us to the more peaceful pastures of heavy music.

Contrariwise, the same B.B.C. have now started to educate the highbrow into becoming a dance band enthusiast. But are the highbrows led gently by the hand (or ear). They are not. Every record is of the hot type – in the North Regional programme to-night, 7 p.m. entitled *Keep in Time*. Why isn’t the dance lowbrow given a fair break in the eyes or ears of a highbrow? Not 25 per cent of ‘lowbrows’ care a hoot for strictly American hotted rhythm which is only a blaring succession of trumpet or sax screeches! Couldn’t the B.B.C. have introduced the subject more kindly by placing over a few melodious tunes which is the ‘lowbrows’ idea of a feast, i.e. *melody* coupled with a swinging tempo, not something that no one can dance to. Tunes like *Easter Parade*, *Pop Goes Your Heart*, and *Stay As Sweet as You Are* are an ideal means of leading up the ‘highbrow’ to the plane of the lowbrow (or degrading him, just as you will have it.)” – “*Lowbrow*” *Wirral*.

August 9th 1935

At 8,15!

“How many thousands of the world’s workers are worried daily by this dread doubt while vainly endeavouring to cram down a breakfast from which they turn with revulsion, to the ruin of digestion and the nervous system to run for that train at the imminent risk of heart failure and a life cut prematurely short? Such is our anxiety to be in time at the office that we breed an instinctive distrust of the most reliable timepiece. And in nine cases out of ten the platform is reached at exhaustion point five minutes before that train is due.

“The biggest boon conferred upon anxious humanity by broadcasting is contributed by the International Broadcasting Co. from Radio Normandy at 8.15 a.m. in the shape of a bright concert with Greenwich time at intervals of every two or three minutes. This is a decided step in progress. It is just wonderful to eat one’s breakfast in perfect peace and know there is ample time as well to smoke that best of cigarettes of the day and stroll to the station instead of competing in a marathon.” – *James Matheson, Wighthurst, East Withering Sussex.*

Sunday, Day of Dreariness!

“B.B.C. programmes *have* improved out of hand these last few years. But in one important respect the B.B.C. is almost as hidebound as ever. Sunday broadcasts are still dreary and – in their outsideness – a disgrace. Sunday should be the very day on which programmes are longest and most varied, since it is the day on which the vast majority of people can listen most. Yet what do we find? The programmes begin when half the day is over and finish childishly early. There is a sad lack of alternatives (one religious service is no alternative to another!). Above all, without going into details, the programmes are unrelievedly and sickeningly reformed and goody-goody. The B.B.C. know full well the enormous amount of tuning-in to the Continent from English homes on Sunday but pursues a policy of lofty aloofness to the demand for brighter programmes. Alas, there is nothing one can do about it – except to let off steam!” - *N.D. Snaith, Park Street, Kendal.*

October 4th 1935

Just a Suggestion

“I think I am voicing the opinion of many people in suggesting that we have an English service on Western Regional say one Sunday morning in a month, as a change from Welsh, which we do not at all understand. Also, there is the matter of Radio Normandy early morning broadcasts, which, by the way, I get very well. But I find them nerve-wracking so early in the morning; why not something more restful than dance music of the type of ‘Tiger Rag’?” – *I.M., Hill Street, Cwmbran, near Newport.*

October 25th 1935

Continental Broadcasts

“First and highest praise should, I think, be allotted to Radio Luxembourg as a good all round English speaking variety station, especially the lady and gentlemen announcers, whose jovial, homely voices everyone seems to enjoy listening to. Well-varied, jolly programmes are provided without any delay between (which other stations should copy). All due praise must be given to the dear little “Ovaltineys.” I always look forward to their little half-hour and join in singing their little goodnight song.” – *Mrs. F.M. Andrews, Aldingbourne, Essex.*

Lunch-Time Too!

“Now that the I.B.C. provides us with break-fast time, tea-time and evening concerts, why doesn't it complete the day with a lunch-time concert?

“I am sure one broadcast between 12 midday and 2 p.m. each week day would be welcomed by nearly everyone.” – *Mr. G. Bun, Balmoral Road, Hitchin, Herts.*

Appendix VI
A Sample of *Radio Times* Readers' Letters
'What the Other Listener Thinks'

January 5th 1934 (1st page)

Newfoundland

'A.B.G.'s mild protest regarding the pronunciation of 'Newfoundland' did not surprise me, as during the News Bulletin which followed the Newfoundlander's talk, I heard in imagination the angry scratching of innumerable pens! The announcer in question had my sympathy at the time, His was an awkward predicament. Not possessing Aladdin's lamp, he could not summon the Advisory Committee before the News to ask its permission to alter what is, no doubt, its ruling. All he could do, therefore, was to carry on as before and nobly shoulder the blames for something he could not help, even though, being the efficient and perfect announcer he is, he probably took the first opportunity of bringing the matter to the notice of the committee concerned. – *'A Member of the Royal Society of Teachers'*.

Peace Permanent (1st page)

As you remark, the use of broadcasting as a factor in the attainment of world peace 'is the utmost importance, and it may well help to make peace permanent. Your fine motto: 'Nation shall speak peace unto nation' is a sheet-anchor in these days of turmoil and distress, and the recent play, *The Path of Glory*, which revealed the utter insanity of war must have exerted a most powerful influence towards the end in view. – *Francis J. White, North Harrow.*

Ether Vapourings (2nd page)

I sit at ease – alone – but am content;
A mighty power is mine – I am a King –
A very god – I am omnipotent.
The lightest, faintest touch from me will bring
The music of the world, my soul to fill
With pleasure and with joy. Untrammelled – free,
I pick and choose, controlling as I will,
Those magic, ghostly strains poured out to me.
No dictates do I heed – my will alone
Is first and final arbiter of worth;
I am the judge of style, and form, and tone;
My jurisdiction spans the globe's vast girth;
I reign supreme – none may approach my throne;
I am an autocrat – ruling the earth. – *'W.J.A'. Sale.*

January 12th 1934

Companionship (2nd page)

I can never feel anything but deeply indebted to all those who, singly or collectively, made endurable what might have been the dreariest Christmastide of my life. With a very sick relative in a nursing home nearby, I had all the long, lonely evening in a chilly bed-sitting-room to face; but with my trusty portable wireless I was neither lonely nor dull, and I would like to thank all the talented folk I heard over the air during the Christmas week, for giving such solace and pleasure to an otherwise *'Lonesome Woman'*.

Perfect French (2nd Page)

I must write a word to say what *intense* pleasure hear French so *perfectly* sung as by Mr Cuthbert Smith, on December 29; exquisite phrasing, beautiful sympathetic voice, and, what is so rare, absolutely perfect pronunciation and enunciation of French. Thank you! And what a thrill the Empire chain of greeting on Christmas Day! Wonderful! When one has dear ones in India, it brought them so ear. I wish you would broadcast from Calcutta! Do! – ‘*Ross-on-Wye*’.

January 19th 1934

Poetry and Prose (1st Page)

It is not an easy task, but it would be ingratitude if the attempt were not made to express our thanks for the readings generally and the recent series, ‘Poetry and Prose’ in particular. It is due to the B.B.C. that poetry is regaining its hold in the country, and that a growing number of people are realising the magic of the spoken word. On behalf of all these, we also take the opportunity of thanking Mr. Robert Harris for the very real pleasure he has given us, and the beauty his reading has revealed. May we end with the wish that he will continue to read to us in other series of the same kind? *C. Pile, Leeds, S.E.12.*

Ironical (2nd page)

Some evenings ago I and a few other motorists were sitting in the bar of a parlour of an inn near Leeds. We were stranded. Outside visibility was about two yards. Imagine our feelings when the News Bulletin announced the fact that a feature of the say’s news was the total disappearance of the fog! – *J.N. Gladish, Welburn.*

January 26th 1934

Peter Warlock (1st Page)

There is one (to me) extraordinary omission in Mr. Percy Scholes’s article on British Music in our century. While the compositions of such composers as Coleridge –Taylor, Dale, Cyril Scott, McEwen, O’Neill, Gibbs, Boughton, Berners, and finally, Fogg, receive mention, the name of Peter Warlock (the late Philip Heseltine) is conspicuously absent. Why? Does this imply that Mr. Scholes’s scholarly taste considers Warlock’s music as of less with than that of the above, or even of N. Gatty or C. Rootham, whose names he nevertheless charitably contrives to squeeze into a footnote? If so, I can only state that I (and perhaps many others) can but consider Mr. Scholes’s taste very peculiar indeed. For it has been my good fortune to hear such different composers as Delius, Bax, Lambert, Bliss and Ireland praise Warlock’s music. In his capacity as musical critic, Mr. Scholes must have heard the Three Carols for Chorus and Orchestra Capriol, The Curlew, some of the part songs, and several of the many beautiful songs. I take it that Mr. Scholes therefore has his reason for what else must strike many of us as a very odd vagary of taste, and I trust that the author of ‘The Listener’s Guide to Music’ will guide us in the matter. Let us hope that if it be a vagary which dictates this omission, it is a vagary which does not reflect the intentions of the B.B.C. at the London Festival in May. - *Robert Nichols, Winchelsea.*

[Mr. Scholes writes: ‘The difficulty of remembering everybody when writing a birds-eye view article like the one in question is considerable. One always forgets somebody, especially if in the effort to keep the article readable one is trying to avoid letting it degenerate into a catalogue. Mr Nichols, as a writer himself, and a former University Professor of English Literature is certainly aware of this! ‘Peter Warlocks output though slender, was marked by a delicate beauty, and a word or two of reference to it would certainly have been quite in place. No London critic welcomed The Curlew more warmly than I did, and the official description of it in the handbook of the Carnegie Trust’s Publication Scheme is by me.’]

Indictment (1st page)

Permit me to congratulate you; you have certainly got 'Old Moore's Almanack' beaten to a frazzle. Take January 10 for instance, on page 40 I find the Aubrey Mather last broadcast in 'The Road to Ireland' on July 26 and 28 *this* year. Would you be a real sport and ask him to let me know in strict confidence who won the Derby this year? I really must get the needful to renew my licence somehow or other. - *P Lambert, Gunnersbury Park. London.*

February 2nd 1934

Winston Churchill (1st page)

I should like to thank Mr Winston Churchill for his fine talk on January 16. It is a rare and inspiring experience to hear a speaker who knows what he is talking about, deals in plain facts rather than vague hopes and pious aspirations, and, last but not least delivers his message in a clear voice and straight forward manner that can be really heard and understood; who, in short, speaks 'as one having authority, and not as the scribes' ! Let us, please, have more speakers like Mr Churchill- if any such can be found- and fewer or the muddle-headed sentimentalists, the highbrow intellectuals, and the half-educated jacks-in-office, who bleat and blether about their hearts and their souls in a vain endeavour to hide the patent fact that they have neither the knowledge nor the ability to say anything more to the purpose, with whom we long –suffering listeners have been so persistently plagued in the past.- *Madge Dudgeon, Isle of Mull.*

I am disappointed; Mr Churchill did not scintillate; he was dull, and not only dull but parsonical. At the beginning of his talk I discerned a certain 'puckishness' –a sprinkling of rhetorical questions, half seriously asked, reminiscent of the Bright Sixth Form Boy at the school debate. I became hopeful. But as he went on, losing his way in the somewhat turgid vapours of his own supposed eloquence, there crept upon me, as I sat by my fireside, the sensations of being in an obscure country church on a Sunday morning listening to a newspaper- ridden parson, trying, for want of other matter, to sermonise political sentiments, which had been acquired at the breakfast table. The Empire hard won and kept by our virtue – the precious traditions of our island kingdom –support the League of Nations, but arm- all the old, well-worn, sentimental, muddle-headed points were there. But where the Churchillian wit, the pretty intellectual caters for which Hansard had titillated our palates? I expected champagne; I got roast beef and Yorkshire pudding; and I found it indigestible. –*Dennis Holmes, London.*

One More (2nd page)

My little girl, just seven years old and a dance band fan, was executing some dance steps in the corner of the room, when she called out to her mother: 'Look, Mummy! I'm the ninth Step Sister' –*F. Perritt, Grimsby.*

February 9th 1934

Please Note (1st page)

If you're thinking of writing to Broadcasting House
With a compliment, query, suggestion, or grouse-
Gentle listener, listen, I pray-
Please remember, the letters received by us here
Number something like one hundred thousand a year,
Or two hundred and fifty a day.

It isn't the trouble- we never mind that;
We just love to see letters piled up on the mat;
It's a pleasure, of course, to receive them.
We could easily deal with five hundred a day,
We're delighted to read what our listeners say-
Were not always obliged to believe them.

But there's one little matter we'd like to make clear,
If you'll pardon the liberty, listener, dear-
Don't think it's a bee in our bonnet;
If you want to know who, what, where, when, or why-
If your letter, in other words, needs a reply,
You must send us a stamp to put on it.

Not an envelope, mind you- we've plenty of those
Of the size into which our own notepaper goes
(Every room in the place has a stack of it);
If we don't know the answer we'll hazard a guess,
Provided you send us your name and address
And a stamp, with some gum on the back of it.
'FANFARE'

The Moon and the Artists (2nd page)

I admire the staff of artists that you have gathered round you to illustrate your journal. Especially do I marvel at those illustrations which accompany the announcements of plays. The artist skillfully gets into his picture all the main themes or episodes of the play. Will you, however, please give a word of caution to those artists who think of introducing a crescent moon into their illustrations? Artists are as a rule, keen observers or natural phenomena but the crescent moon seems not to be fully understood as yet. For example, on page seventeen of your issue of January 5, we have five little drawings entitled 'The Effects Man gets to Sleep'. He is shown leaving Broadcasting House, presumably *after* the evening's programmes. Yet the moon shown in one that you would only see at about 5 a.m. before dawn. Two other pictures show the effects Man tossing and turning in his sleepless bed. The moon (seen through the window) has not moved in the meantime- and it does move, believe me. The shape of the moon is satisfactory- it is its arrangement in the sky that is wrong. The line joining the 'horns' of the crescent should lie in a NE-SE direction and not NW-SE as shown. Sherriffs makes no mistake on page 63, where he shows Cinderella off to the ball. The moon there in settings in the western sky, and it is yet early evening. Good! Then she has the whole evening before her. – *Sidney B. Matthey, F.R.A.S., London, S.E18.*

Explained (2nd page)

It catches one's breathe to think of the possibilities of wireless in the future. Human beings can now, apparently, be transmitted in batches though the ether. On January 10 The Radio Times announced: 'Jack Hylton with his Band broadcast From the studio tonight between 8.0 and 9.0.' On January 11 Jack Hylton and his Band gave a concert at the Grand Theatre, Bordeaux, and the *Continental Daily Mail* the same day reported the success of Jack Hylton, with his Band, at Cannes the previous day. I think it's marvellous. – 'Listener', Bordeaux. [The solution is, of course, that Jack Hylton's continental show lasted longer than he had been anticipating and Billy Cotton broadcast instead. – *Editor, The Radio Times.*]

February 23rd 1934

Roused to Great Wrath (2nd page)

I am a person of an obscure country church. I am proud of it, proud of my work, proud of my parishioners, I am roused to great wrath by the unwarrantable rudeness of Mr. Holmes's letter in your issue of February 2. I am sorry he was unable to digest Mr. Churchill's admirable talk on January 16, but I can well understand why! It must have been a long time since he forsook his fireside for the Church of which he writes; for I do assure him that the parsons, who today get more criticism than commendation are neither newspaper-ridden nor so foolish as 'to sermonised political sentiments acquired at the breakfast table'. I have not yet met the person who thought so little of his parishioners and his work. Nevertheless, I protest against the unnecessary rudeness which is becoming increasingly evident in 'What the Other Listener Thinks'. Miss Dudgeon's letter of the same date is another instance. Her appreciation of Mr. Winston Churchill is spoiled by her abuse of other broadcasters who have neither pleased nor interested her: 'muddleheaded sentimentalists, highbrow intellectuals, and the half-educated jacks in the office . . . who bleat and blether'. Is there any need for this outburst, any purpose served by it? Is it criticism or merely the vulgar display of an ill-governed temper? —A. R. Ladell, *Abbots Bromley*.

[The drawing reproduced above is by the Rev. A. R. Ladell himself.]

March 2nd 1934

Whither the Intellectuals? (1st page)

No one can deny that the picture of a world threatened with wars of terrifying magnitude and economic collapse of which H. G. Wells and G. B. Shaw drew in their recent talks is a perfectly true one, but the well-earned reputations of these writers cannot conceal the fact that the question 'Whither Britain?' conduced them nearly as much as the average listener. Those who are suffering in the crises and those who may be victims of these coming wars deserve (even in brief talks like these) at least a little optimism and faith in human nature, instead of Wells' defeatism and despair, and courageous analysis of facts is preferable to the delightful tomfoolery of Shaw. Then an examination of the economic experiments of Russia, U.S.A and Germany would not have been out of place. These talks were further evidence that the mental and physical conflict of the workaday world of today is bringing conflict into the world of letters. It is asking the vital question 'Whither the Intellectuals?' Some literary men, like Barbusse, Rolland, Upton, Sinclair and Maxim Gorky have already answered this question by ruthlessly over-hauling their ideological stock-in-trade and, fully conscious of their task, are marching fearlessly with those who are fighting for a new age of security and peace. Others are standing still, but may soon be treading the road to reaction and the ideals of the Middle Ages. Shaw and Wells, it seems, in their indecision, are groping along a middle path of compromise, but in these troubled times this may lead to sterility. —R. M. Sivier, *Hitcham, Nr, Ipswich*.

Romani in Britannia (2nd page)

Salve! Peto paulum spatii tui pretiosi ut gratias agam de fibula Romanorum Devae. Agricola fortis sapientissimusque erat, et omnes homines visi sunt vivere. Nunc, quidem, intellego bene vitam militum Romanorum in Britannia. Tristissimus eram cum fibula finisset, sed tempus fugit. Impatiens exspecto opera plura de fluminibus Britannicis. Vivite B.B.C. et L. Du Gardius Peachius. Vale! —*Puer Britannicus, In Schola Urbis-Novae, Damnomiorum*.

March 16th 1934

Thank You! (2nd page)

'Nobody ever takes any notice of what we say', such critics of despair are often repeated in the columns of 'Both Sides of the Microphone' (a happily-invented heading). May an intermittent listener, but regular reader, offer a little warm comfort to the broadcasters, whoever they may be? 'To me, the greatest marvel of The Radio Times' production is its apt compromise between 'blue bookish' officiousness and Fleet Street 'magazinishness' - Perhaps this marvel may be in part explained by The Radio Times always commencing with 'Both Sides of the Microphone', a hearty meal of entertaining and inoffensively gossipy information, and illustrated but Arthur Watts, too, that adorable draughtsman who could sneeze felicitous humour out of a Royal Society thesis. What glutton could want more? When the great Archangel Statistician plays her last trump and counts the readers, oh broadcasters, into her book of gold, may this name lead all the rest. – *George Kerley, Fulham, London.*

No Name (2nd page)

I should like to express my appreciation of Mr Filson Young's article. This foul transatlantic barbarity- jazz- which apparently has its roots among the semi-civilised Negro population, may possibly suit the needs of the modern dance floor, since animal noises from blatant brass and maudlin bleatings of amorous vocal drivel serve merely as a background, but that such decadent stuff should be poured out nightly for every home to listen to calls for protest. – 'S. L', *Forest Gate London.*

April 6th 1934

Disclaimer (2nd page)

I see that you have a letter in The Radio Times of March 16 signed with my name. I did not write this letter, neither did I authorise anyone to write it for me, and I would be glad therefore if you would publish a disclaimer. – *H. P. Huggill, Principal, Liverpool City School of Art.*

[The letter in question was received by us from Liverpool, signed 'H. P. Huggill', and was published in good faith; but it appears that someone unauthorised used Mr. Huggill's name. We much regret any inconvenience caused thereby to the Principal of the Liverpool City School or Art. – *Editor. The Radio Times*]

April 23rd 1934

Personal (1st page)

Why is it that The Radio Times, product of a great modern science, and representative of an ultra-modern building in Broadcasting House, very often looks like a Victorian copy of *Punch* and is so old-fashioned in its format? – *I.L. James, Birkenhead.*

No name (1st page)

Might I suggest that if the B.B.C. ever repeats this programme of modern American music it might be a good idea if it puts on three orchestras at once, with an augmented male voice choir, and rendered the words of the four composers simultaneously. It would be a great saving of time, and the effect should surely be extraordinary enough to please all four composers represented. By the way, although Miss Stein seems to have qualified every noun in the dictionary with the word 'Capital', she left out the word 'Punishment'. Still, we got it, nevertheless. – *W. T. Archard, London.*

April 27th 1934

Query (2nd page)

Why is it that we have the 'Wireless Singers' and the 'Wireless Military Band', but The Radio Times? I note the 'B.B.C Orchestra', but Belfast has a 'Wireless Orchestra' and a 'Radio Quarter'. My mind may work in a perverse fashion, but I cannot help looking for singers and a military band who are complete with wires. With all gratitude to you, whether wireless or not, though I prefer radio. – *J.G. Worth, London.*

May 11th 1934

From an Old Friend (2nd page)

When you very kindly published a letter of complaint from me last year, my playful pose of a frugal fellow who enjoys access to his neighbour's set and borrows his Radio Times drew much indignation upon me. One letter commenced, 'Dear Shylock'. Another correspondent sent me a copy of The Radio Times for my very own! This time I write in all humility to offer my grateful and very sincere thanks for the charming broadcasts of *Frederica*. They would surely put radio pirates (and even non-subscribers to The Radio Times) to the blush. Such fare is worth the cost of the annual licence for one evening alone. At the conclusion of the Tauber broadcast on April 23, I turned in curiosity to see what was provided in the alternate programme for Scottish listeners. The main items were 'Mixer-Maxter – a variety of folk frae Aiberdeen awa', followed by 'The Darvel Burgh Band'. With the lovely strains of *Frederica* still echoing in memory, I was filled with admiration for the thoroughness with which the B.B.C. caters for conflicting tastes. – *A Scottish Listener.*

May 25th 1934

Melita (1st page)

In reply to Mr. Sharman's complaint that the hymn tune 'Melita' was used in the singing of the 'Hymn to Liberty' in *The Dorsetshire Labourers*, I must admit that this was a mild anachronism due to the impossibility of discovering any satisfactory alternative. Tradition has it that the hymn was sung to the tune 'Madrid', but examination shows that this tune will not fit the words. It would be interesting to hear if any listener can suggest a better alternative. I must add that although Loveless in his pamphlet 'The Victims of Whiggery' claimed to have composed the 'Hymn to Liberty' himself, there is evidence that the hymn was being already sung at the great reform meetings of the Birmingham Political Union two or three years before the Tolpuddle incident. Tunes, unfortunately, do not seem to live as long as verses. – *R.S Lambert, London.*

Mustn't (2nd page)

I wish speakers on the air wouldn't say 'isn't' and 'didn't'. Often it is only the context that shows that a negative is meant. Such expressions may be all right in print. I have never noticed an announcer sin in this respect. But some speakers whom I have recently heard seem to think it is a crime to use the word 'not'. It isn't. – *'D.J.K.', London.*

Coughing Macaw (2nd page)

I have never written to you before, though I have been a listener for many years. I cannot speak too highly of your programmes; there is always something interesting on each evening, whether music, talks or plays. The first London Music Festival Concert from the Queen's Hall was exceptionally good. I listened with great interest to the really from the Zoo today, and was specially interested when the Macaw was broadcast. We had a macaw here. It may interest Elizabeth and Mac to know that our Macaw talks quite often; winter-time, when the

households have colds, he copies our coughing and sneezing. With every good wish to broadcasting in the future. – *W.E.L*, *Southampton*.

June 1st 1934

Scrapbook for 1914 (1st page)

For several years I have been listening with the greatest interest and pleasure to the programmes from England. I have subscribed to *The Radio Times*, which I find in itself, aside from the announcement of the programmes, a most interesting paper. But I have never yet written and expressed my appreciation. Recently, however, on the National programme, I had my greatest thrill in my whole experience of being a listener. Your ‘*Scrapbook for 1914*’. Written and arranged by Leslie Baily and produced by Charles Brewer, held me spellbound and reduced me to tears. Not only was it a magnificent and artistic piece of work, but it was much more than that: it was a great accomplishment in the cause of peace, for which I have devoted the last 19 years of my life. When the broadcast closed on the last beautiful phrase, I said to myself that radio would certainly be the most powerful peace worker in our times. And it was a satisfaction to me, as an English-speaking American born, to feel that the Anglo-Saxon people were able to take such a stand. Nowhere in all of Europe have I heard anything to compare with it. – *Clara Guthrie d’Arcis, President, The World Union of Women for International Concord, Geneva*.

Whitsun Number (1st page)

On several occasions in the past I have been moved to protest and scold you on account of the diabolical designs and hideous colourings which have been splashed all over the front covers of your holiday numbers, and I have been dreading the arrival of the Whitsun issue, wondering what new ghastly mess it would produce. It is, therefore, with no little surprise, but with immense pleasure and relief, that I find myself writing now actually to congratulate you on the artistic, original, and thoroughly pleasing design which adorns the cover of the number. I sincerely trust that your artists have permanently recovered from their attacks of liver, love-sickness, indigestion, or whatever complaint has been troubling them in the past, and that in future your holiday covers will have as their object an artistic desire to please instead of an unholy desire to frighten innocent and sensitive children. As for the inside, as usual I have nothing but praise; one of the best twopennysworth on the bookstalls. – *Norman Hamber, London*.

July 13th 1934

Motion (1st page)

In order to avoid confusion the heading of this page should now read ‘What the Grateful Listener Thinks’, which would be far more consistent with its contents. As I am one of ‘the other listeners’ I am wondering whether other listeners have noticed it. – *L. Dribble, London*.

Gender (1st page)

On June 29, according to *The Radio Times*, page 943, the following were respectively the first items in the 12.00 Regional and the 15.30 National programmes: -

March, *La Reve passé* (The Dream passes) Krier

March, *Le Reve passé* (The Dream passes) Helmer and Krier

May I suggest, with my tongue very much in my cheek, that if it be found necessary to broadcast the same tune twice in one day, the spelling should at least be the same? Having done my day’s bad deed, permit me to continue to marvel at the all-round excellence which you maintain in selecting programmes for all tastes, every day all the year. It’s almost a treat to catch you out. – *Frederick J. Callis, Barnes, London*.

[Thank you Dream in French, of course, is masculine - *Editor, The Radio Times.*]

July 20th 1934

Our New Feature (1st page)

As an admirer of the B.B.C. and the pleasant entertainment I hear over the air, may I be allowed to express my greatest approval of the pictures and explanation below of 'People you Hear' and 'People you Don't Hear' in the last few numbers of *The Radio Times*. Please give us more about these personalities and don't forget your announcers that we always wait to hear, but never see. Best wishes to the B.B.C. - 'H. K. A.', *Edinburgh*.

[Portraits of leading B.B.C. Announcers appeared in our Easter Number. - *Editor, The Radio Times.*]

From Sir Landon Ronald (1st page)

I find that there were certain errors and omissions in the analytical notes which were printed in *The Radio Times* against the items in the concert I conducted in the studio of July 4. May I ask you to publish the facts for the benefit of those who listened? It is incorrect to state that William Wallace's 'Villon' was produced in 1909 at the Proms. Actually it was produced on March 10 1909, for the first time, at the Queens Hall, at one of the Symphony Concerts given by the New Symphony Orchestra and myself, with the composer conducting; and it was repeated at the same concerts a month later, when I conducted it. The note on Sir Edward Elgar's 'Falstaff' was, considering that I was conducting it, incomplete in one important particular- important, that is, to me- for it omitted to state that this work, was written for and dedicated to me by the composer, who was my very dear friend. I suggest that it would be useful for future reference if these small corrections were to be made. - *Landon Ronald, Guildhall School of Music, London.*

July 27th 1934

Plays and Plots (1st page)

With other listeners, I suggest that when the B.B.C. treats us to a play you should print a summary of the plot to save us bewilderment and irritation. This *Beauty and the Jacobin*, for example- what was the denouement? After much too protracted an argument between Eloise and Valsin, interrupted by long bursts of quite unnecessary laughter, the adjoining room is opened- a room with four stories from the ground and with no secret means of exit- and Louis and Anne had disappeared! What on earth has become of them? And what happens to Eloise? Similarly in *The Calendar*, the hero, having written a letter confessing that he has 'pulled' his horse, is warned off the turf, but none of us could make out why he should have written such a letter or whether he gets back to the turf again, or how. Yet all seemed to end happily. It is not altogether easy listening to these plays, and we should be grateful for either a printed summary of the plot or an explanation from the showman at the end. - *R. Knight, Eastbourne.*

Below we publish replied from the producer of Beauty and the Jacobin and the adaptor of The Calendar. Our reason for not giving the plots of plays in the programme pages is that it would take away much of the element of surprise and so spoil the suspense -Editor, The Radio Times.

I am afraid Mr. Knight did not appreciate either the plot of the subtleties of *Beauty and the Jacobin*. Louis and Anne had not disappeared. They came into the room from the bedroom, Louis disguised in woman's clothes; and Valsin sent them off to the *Jeune Pierrette* and safety, in the pious certainty that Eloise and Louis would lead a dog's life; in other words, a very pretty revenge. All this was clearly stated. The play, like any play that is worth listening

to, needed a certain amount of careful attention. But I got my children's nurse to listen to it, giving her no previous explanation. She missed no point in the plot and very few of the subtleties. – *Jack Inglis, Producer.*

I am sorry Mr. Knight found it difficult to follow the plot of *The Calendar*. As only two points seem to have confused him, let me explain. Captain Garry Owen, being pressed for money, decides at a weak moment to pull his horse, and then, hearing that Lady Wenda Panniford is going to back it, tells her of his intention in a letter to save her from losing her money.

Mr Knight's difficulty here seems to arise from his conclusion that Garry had already pulled the horse and the race was over, but it is not easy to see how he could have reached such a conclusion. For, as the play showed, Garry changes his mind and tells Lady Wenda so – this time in a message written in indelible pencil on the back of a bank-note he has won for her. Everything that follows hinges on this. To suit her own purpose later on in the play, she suppressed the second message and makes public first, with the result that Garry is had up before the stewards, and is warned off the turf.

Mr Knight next says: 'None of us could make out why he should have written such a letter or whether he gets back to the turf again or how.' Did he listen to the end? For what other reason did Garry riddle Lady Wenda's safe and recover the bank note than to obtain proof of his innocence?

The Calendar is a racing melodrama, its purpose to thrill, and this type of story, from Nat Gould to Edgar Wallace, has always claimed a certain amount of licence. It has a complicated plot and had to be condensed for broadcasting, but most listeners seem to agree that with a reasonable amount of concentration it was crystal clear. – *Barbara Burnham, Adaptor.*

August 10th 1934

Contented Listener (2nd page)

Thank you for including in the programme for July 8 some delightful pianoforte playing by Raie da Costa. Cannot we have a similar programme every Sunday, say, for half-an-hour or an hour at dinner time? After all, dinner on Sunday can do with a little musical aid as on Saturday or Monday. And may I say how much I have enjoyed listening to Howard Marshall on the Test Matches. He is a delightful speaker, and his commentaries really make one feel almost in that little box with him. – '*A Very Contented Listener and Reader of THE RADIO TIMES*', *Guildford.*

August 17th 1934

Canadian Tercentenary (1st page)

This broadcast was extremely interesting, but there are a few points one would like to raise: (a) Why do your elocutionists sound so ill and melancholy? (b) What excuse have you to offer for the wanton misquoting of Gray's *Elegy* and the 72nd psalm? Do the speakers imagine that they can improve on the master writers? (c) Why miss the opportunity of introducing the Canadian boat song 'Row, Brothers, Row', to its beautiful music? (d) The verses towards the end about Canadian soldiers in war time were impossible to listen to on account of the funereal tone of delivery. I may add that much of the verse and serious literature in your broadcasts is entirely spoiled by tones which suggest that the speaker is very ill or at the bedside of a dying friend. Is this the only modern elocutionary method of being serious? – *A. A., Sheffield.*

Tunnel (1st page)

I have just been listening to 'Tunnel' and wish to thank all concerned in arranging this most interesting broadcast. I would, however, like to point out two errors in the production: (1) The Mersey Tunnel Railway, opened in 1886, ran from James Street Station, Liverpool, to Green Lane Station, Birkenhead, and not, as stated, from Liverpool Central to Rock Ferry- these extensions following some time later. (2) In the record of the London Mersey Railway in action, the starting bell was much in evidence, also the closing of the pneumatic doors. The Mersey Railways use neither. The doors swing inwards on hinges, and the trains are started by the guard with a map at underground stations and a flag at open stations. – *Hampton Luke, Sherwood.*

Mr. D. G. Bridson who presented this programme writes: ['(1) Peccavi; (2) Mr. Luke has got the matter all wrong. What he mistook for a starting-bell was actually the guard's repeater watch striking at two o'clock: and when the guard waved his flag-- as I'm sure he did- Mr. Luke just didn't happen to hear it! And even the best hinged doors in the world occasionally feel a trifle pneumatically. Or is that more than Mr. Luke can conscientiously concede?']

August 31st 1934

Depressingly Male (1st page)

When the B.B.C. is compiling its winter programmes of debates and special talks, I do sincerely hope that women will be given a 'fifty-fifty' chance. In previous years these special talks and debates have been practically all depressingly male. For example, in all the talks on 'Whither Britain?' series last winter, there was only one woman contributor. The continued male point of view became horribly monotonous. There are so very many women today who are doing all sorts of splendid public work, and their point of view on current topics and social problems would be of extreme interest and value to listeners. - '*Fifty-fifty*', *Mill Hill.*

Putting it Mildly (2nd page)

I have listened very patiently to your Saturday night broadcast from Radiolympia. I can only say that, as a result, I am very disappointed. That is putting it very mildly indeed. Practically all the acts were simply a re-hash of former broadcasts. All was dreary and flat. The whole show this evening was to my mind, devoid of all interest. I forecast no showers of praise for anyone connected with the production of the show. – *A. W. Palmer, Grantham.*

September 7th 1934

A Mystery Solved! (1st page)

A.J. Alan, of course, is a retired dry-salter who now divides his time between Broadcasting House, a lightship in mid-Atlantic, and an Elizabethan cottage in Peckham. His real name is Hobblehodge, his hobby is drawn-thread work, and he is rarely to be seen without his pet canary. Brunhilde, whose cage is wheeled along in a truck at his heels by a Samoan retainer of the name of Albert. A.J. Alan first thought of broadcasting while sitting in a puddle in Jermyn Street waiting for an airship to take him to a party; and he has since adopted many novel disguises to conceal his identity, including those of a fourteenth-century crwth-player and a Professor of Eurhythmics at Wisconsin University. It is useless your denying this, I happen to know. – *J. E. Healey N.10.*

[This correspondence is now closed. - Editor, The Radio Times.]

September 14th 1934

A Warning (1st page)

In the interests of owners of wireless sets in need of repair, would you kindly publish in *The Radio Times* a warning to the effect that there is a man posing as an expert, who after calling at the house and leaving a false name and address, takes the set- presumably to his workshop- and forgets to return with it? In the case of my own radio, it was a home-built machine with some technical defect that I could not place. The police agree with me that this man- whether alone or with confederates we do not yet know- is probably working this dodge all over the north-west district of London. They are anxious to hear of any similar cases, and agree with my suggestion to writing to you, as the one paper that is patronised by all wireless enthusiasts. Anything you can do to safeguard working people like myself will be widely appreciated. – *V.R.*, *Camden Town*.

September 21st 1934

Another Glimpse (2nd page)

I listened this morning to the talk on the air by the liftman's wife, who is supposed to do every-thing for twelve people on £4, 10s, od, A week (excluding rent). I got a bit mad when I heard her talking about her perfect doings and I wondered what she would do with the wages of colliers or other put men about here. They sometimes get three days- 7s. 6d or 8s, a day- and dole (if they have their waiting days in) or four days and no dole or perhaps a spell of two days and dole. Another time the husband will come home and declare two days 'play'. They could not tell you their exact income as it is precarious. Why if they had £3 coming in they would think they had a share in the pit. The wife has not to think what she can get for this or that meal, but how she can get it over the cheapest and what they can do without, I listened hoping to learn something but after it was over I thought to myself that everything is so perfect, and her children such models. The children could never have been ill in their lives or they would have had to be absent from school sometime. I once put down in a book my husband's wages every week, and at the end of the year averaged, them up, and they were just short of £1, 1s, od, and I had three children then, I have had twenty- nine years of it, so I know. It would be an eye-opener if some of the colliers wives could tell over the microphone how they manager – *E.D.*, *Nr. Wigan*

September 28th 1934

Henry Ford of Music (1st page)

The display of temper by Mr. Hill in his recent article was neither edifying nor seemly. If Bach never wrote a note of bad music, he must be unique among great composers- which is absurd. Bach was music's Henry Ford. He standardised mediocrity. He could be counted on to produce reliable music by the yard. Now and then he was inspired and produced music as great as any that has been written. Now and then the machinery went wrong. Much of Bach's work is musical 'Cat Cradles', mere tune spinning admired for its slickness and enjoyed by an analytically- minded generation that likes to 'see the works'. But any criticism of Bach (take your hat off please) is 'highbrow bunkum' (whatever that may be) whether it be the measured criticisms of E .N. or the flippancies of – *W. Morland, Lamberhurst*

October 12th 1934

British Kitchens (1st page)

The article by Miss Elizabeth Craig, published in your issue of September 7, under the title of 'What's Wrong with the British Kitchen?', has given much offence to many hotel and restaurant proprietors, since it abuses them in terms which they regard, not only as unfair, but unmannerly. They do not accept as accurate the description which Miss Craig gives of the

state of cooking in British hotels, as they believe it to be as misleading as it is untrue to argue that what may be typical of a few is typical of all. In London and the provincial centres the standard of cooking in the leading hotels and restaurants is in their own opinion, very high, and probably unsurpassed in any country in the world. In many of the lesser establishments both in London and in the country, an equally high standard is maintained. If, as Miss Craig suggest, the standard of cooking abroad is so very much superior, it is remarkable that visitors to this country should not find out cooking inferior. On the contrary, there are many visitors, including among them hotel proprietors of other countries, who have publicly stated that they could find no fault with the standard of cooking in this country.

Only recently Mr. Joseph Hergesheimer the American author wrote 'Everywhere in England I had delicious, widely varied good; and I wondered how the uncomplimentary legend about the British board had started. It was nonsense.' It is not difficult to see in what way such a legend of British inferiority arises, if articles of the kind Miss Craig has written are published to innumerable readers. Hotel and restaurant proprietors do not resent criticism if it is justified, but they do not think that it is helping a great British industry to declare publically that it does not know its business. – *Hugh Wontner, General Secretary, Hotels and Restaurants Association of Great Britain, London.*

Helen's Babies (1st page)

We notice in the issue of The Radio Times for September 21, that in the section 'What Shall I Read?' the first book which Mrs Belloc Lowndes was good enough to recommend is 'Helens Babies', by John Habberton which is stated to be out of print. May we please inform you that this book is neither out of print nor in danger of being so. Its price is 7s. 6d. Net. - *Chatto Windus, London.*

[We understand that Ward, Lock and Co also publish an edition at 1s. 6d. –*Editor The Radio Times*]

Disturbed and Grieved (1st page)

On a recent issue of The Radio Times, on what is supposed to be the Children's page, there was an effusion by H.G Hodder describing the doings of Freddie Bennett. Freddie breaks nine of the dozen fresh eggs his mother has given him for his offering at the Harvest festival and with a shilling given to him to replace them he buys at a grocers, nine Danish eggs, and three pennyworths of mixed fruit balls for himself. The story ends 'So it all ended most satisfactorily'. No right minded parent would endorse that. I protest most emphatically against the moral of this story. I am sincerely grieved and disturbed over the matter. – *Florence E. J. Hardisty, Malton.*

October 19th 1934

Mosaic (1st page)

From Sir Henry Davies: - I usually hope that others will write to the B.B.C. for things that particularly please me; but I cannot risk the indolence of anyone else over this. I really was spellbound by the exquisite elocution of all the readers, the delightfully played music, and the daintiness of the whole conception. I trust that we shall have it again and that it may be recorded for the gramophone. – *Henry Davies, Exeter*

Untrue to Life (1st page)

I have listened to as many as possible of the 'How I Survived on £_ ' talks. Would it not be possible to arrange a series of talks by less provident people, the sort whose husbands can do no repairs about the house, who do not help with the housework, who are dreamers, who do not pay bills when they should and spend money on well- what does a man spend money on?

I should be interested to know (and I expect there are many others like me) how the housewife manages who sometimes thinks profane thoughts on cooking, housework, children, husbands etc, and who dashes out and spends money she cannot afford on a new hat , dress, or even a meal; the housewife who sometimes entertains her friends or relatives when she should be working or studying her household budget: the housewife who sometimes shops extravagantly for the mere pleasure that reckless spending sometimes gives me. In short the housewife who loathes cooking and housework but who has to do it as efficiently as possible, but who sometimes to save her reason has to go all blah - *Lilian M. Everson, London.*

We housewives are tired of hearing paragons of virtue like 'The Wife of a Constable', etc. Cannot you give us 'The Confessions of an Extravagant Wife' or 'The Mistakes of an Untrained Wife' to point out what we are not to do? You know that the model girl in school was never the most popular one! - '*Knotermotle*', *Burry Port.*

October 26th 1934

Poverty in Plenty (1st page)

In the talk on October 8 on Poverty in Plenty, Mr Graham Hutton challenged his hearers to answer the question 'What is the Economists job?' I venture to suggest this as an answer: The Economists job is to devise (1) means to use the agents of production to secure the greatest possible degree to Plenty, and (2) means to distribute that Plenty. Unfortunately Mr Graham Hutton merely talks of Buying and Selling and Profit, after the usual fashion of economists of the schools. If a pitifully small output of rubber or coffee takes place and causes a commercial (not real) glut, he tells us that too much capital has been invested, and avoids the questions why hundreds of millions need but cannot get much more rubber and coffee than is produced in the alleged 'glut'.

Let me apply my definition to the invention of radio. The true economist, seeing the splendid possibilities, would set up a public body to use the given means for the entire nation, He would say: A tiny subscription by all-say, 2d, a week- would put the would before you,, Do not be so silly as to leave it to capital investment and dividend hunting. Do not abuse a great and glorious idea by bringing it to 'market'. An 'economist' who thinks only in terms market is like an engineer who thinks only in terms of donkey-power and refuses to contemplate the nature of energy. No wonder that the lady retired puzzled! -*Sir Leo Chiozza Money, Bramley.*

The Law and the Child (1st page)

Professor Winifred Cullis recently pointed out the disastrous effects upon a child of an unhappy home. Surely we all agree, but what tremendous problems Professor Cullis raises. Many mothers living under terrible mental strain and very unhappy conditions have the further agony of watching the effect of all this on their children. But in nine cases out of ten the man is the breadwinner and the woman cannot attempt to remedy matters. When will we reach that state of affairs when the law will have a humane view of these inharmonious households and take the child's life into accounts? And when will all mothers be encouraged to continue their professional or business careers after marriage in order to be in a position to free themselves should marriage turn out to be not what was anticipated? - '*A Freed Mother*', *London.*

December 7th 1934

Woman Roused (1st page)

In her recent article 'Can Women Create Great Art?' Miss Sidonie Goossens's answer to this question might not have been more conclusive if pursuing her arguments had not seemed to

much like following a recipe for an omelet- with the eggs left out. For Miss Goossens does make emissions with – as in the case of the omelet- results that are somewhat insubstantial and unconvincing. In assessing woman's claims to creativeness in music, no account is taken of a name familiar to us all, and eminent among living composers- that of Dame Ethel Smyth. No reference is made to the poetic genius of Elizabeth Barrett Browning; nor, among other names famous in the world of letters, is mention made of Jane Austen, whose art has surely the elements of greatness, or is could not be so vital after more than a century. Instead, we are given copious examples of woman's inspirational achievements which, however skillfully they side track the issue, leave the original question without a satisfactory answer, except as supplied by the omissions to which I have drawn attention. –*Mary Woolacott, Porthcawl.*

January 11th 1935

To Those Who Worked (1st page)

I should very much like to send a big thank you to all the kind friends who worked so hard to give me pleasure over the Christmas holidays, I am a very lonely person and was especially lonely at this time. I cannot tell you how much my little portable wireless has meant to me! It is a great joy at all times, but its joys were greatly multiplied during Christmas week. –*Jessie B. P. Foreland, London*

Before, retiring please allow me to thank you all at the B.B.C. (artists included) for a splendid day's broadcasting: your punctuality and the spontaneous fun and tuneful music were something all Britishers can be proud of and a remembrance to the nurtured. Again thanking you, and wishing you all a prosperous New Year. –*J. D.W., Wimbledon.*

Collecting Boxes for Appeals (1st page)

What would the B.B.C. think of a suggestion to ask the Postmaster-General to allow a collecting box to be placed in ever Post Office to receive contributions to the Week's Good Cause from people (like me) who have not much to give, and are too lazy to buy a postal order and address an envelope? The Appeal that was recently broadcast by an unknown blind man will, I feel, prove too much for my habitual inertia- but I owe so much to wireless that I know I should drop a copper or two into such a box even if I had not heard the weeks Appeal. And I know of others who feel as I do. –*'Bone Lazy', Edinburgh.*

January 18th 1935

Strong drink (2nd page)

With reference to the otherwise admirable talk on sport during 1934 by Mr. Howard Marshall, on December 29 many who heard it like myself deplore and regret his reference in it to intoxicating drink. There are a very large and happily increasing number of people in this country intensely interested in all manly games who are connected with Sunday School Cricket and Football Clubs, to whom the reference would be vey objectionable and as one who followed his commentaries on the Test Matches between the English and Australian cricketers in the summer of 1934. I hope he will never again when broadcasting mix up imbibing strong drink with manly sport. –*J.W. Ibbotson, Sheffield.*

[I n his talks on December 29 Mr Marshall said 'If an argument between cricketers can't be settles by a friendly talk over a glass of beer, we'd far better give up Test Matches altogether.' – *Editor, The Radio Times.*]

Canned Horses (2nd page)

We were delighted with the new horse acquired by the B.B.C. to draw 'The Cart of Death'. We particularly notice his habit of snorting through his nose every now and then as he went

clip-cloppity along. If we might venture a guess at his breed, we should say his is by 'Electrical Recording; out of 'Genuine Animals', whilst his predecessors have always been unmistakable by 'Manual Dexterity' out of 'Coconut'. A great advance in realises and we thank you for it. – *M. R. I., London.*

Appendix VII
Bibliography of Broadcasting Magazines Launched Prior to the Second World War

Title	Publication Location	Dates
Gramophone (The)	London	1923
(English Mechanic)	London?	1865-?
(Electrical Review)	London	1892-d
Marconigraph	London	1911-13
Pianomaker (The)	London	1913-67
Wireless World	London	1913-83
Wireless Mail (The)	Not Known	1914-14
Herbert Jenkin's Wireless (The)	London	1919-40
Journal - Wireless Society of London	London	1921-22
Popular Wireless Weekly	London	1922-34
Amateur Wireless and Electrics	London	1922-28
Wireless World and Radio Review	London	1922-32
Broadcast Weekly and Amusement Guide (The)	Glasgow;	1923-23
Radiogram and Wireless Answers (The)	London	1923-23
Wireless Review and Science Weekly	London	1923-24
Sound Wave, the Gramophone Journal and Wireless Times	London	1923-25
Wireless Bulletin	London	1923-25
Journal - Radio Society of Great Britain	London	1923-26
Wireless Weekly	London	1924-26
Gramophone, Wireless and Talking Machine News	London	1923-29
Wireless Trader (The)	London	1923-29
Modern Wireless	London	1923-33
Talking Machine and Wireless Trade News (The)	London	1923-35
Radio Times (The)	London	1923-d
Broadcaster (The)	London	1922-36
Radio	London	1924-25
Popular Wireless and Wireless Review	London	1924-26
Wireless Constructor (The)	London	1924-34
Radio Mail (The)	London	1925-25
Wireless League Gazette	London	1925-25
Children's Radio Magazine	London?	1925-26
Irish Radio Review (The)	Dublin	1925-26
Radio Supplement (The)	London	1925-26
Radio Trade Journal (The)	London	1925-26
Radio Trade Journal (The)	London	1925-26
The Radio Supplement	London	1925-26
Wireless	London	1925-26
Wireless Dealer and Manufacturer (The)	London	1925-26
Wireless Times (The)	London	1925-27
Wireless Export Trader (The)	London	1925-29

Radio News Service	London	1926-26
Wireless Dealer and Radio Trade Journal (The)	London	1926-26
Wireless Dealer and Radio Trade Journal (The)	London	1926-26
Irish Radio and Musical Review (The)	Dublin	1926-27
Journal of the Institute of Wireless Technology	London	1926-29
Popular Wireless	London	1926-34
World-Radio	London	1926-39
Irish Radio Review (The)	Dublin	1927-28
Music Seller and Small Goods Dealer (The)	London	1927-36
Scottish Radio Dealer (The)	Glasgow	1928-29
Amateur Wireless and Radiovision	London	1928-35
Irish Radio News	Dublin	1928-48
Gramophone Critic and Radio Critic (The)	London	1929-29
Talking Machine World & Radio-Music Merchant (The)	New York	1929-30
Vox: The Radio Critic and Broadcast Review	London	1929-30
Gramophone and Radio News	London	1929-31
Wireless and Gramophone Export Trader (The)	London	1929-36
Wireless and Gramophone Trader (The)	London	1929-36
Ulster and Scottish Radio Dealer (The)	Glasgow	1929-39
The Listener	London	1929-90
Radio Trade Review (The)	London	1930-33
Radio Trade Review (The)	London	1930-33
Practical Radio	London	1931-33
Sound Wave and Wireless Times	London	1931-41
Hobbies and Practical Wireless	London	1932-32
Radio Corner News	Colchester	1932-32
Hobbies and Wireless Supplement	London	1932-33
Wireless Magazine	London	1932-36
Practical Wireless, etc.	London	1932-d
Broadcast Pictorial (The)	London	1933-33
Wireless Pictorial (The)	London	1933-33
(Gramophone Review (The))	London	1933-53
Radio Magazine	London	1934-34
Boys Broadcast	London	1934-35
Radio Contact	London	1934-35
Wireless and Television Review	London	1934-36
Popular Wireless and Television Times	London	1934-37
National Broadcast (The)	London	1934-39
Radio Pictorial	London	1934-39
Batteries and Radio	London	1935-35
Radio Interference Bulletin	London	1935-39
Wireless Trader (The)	London	1936-37
Wireless Engineer (The)	London	1936-56
Radio Review and Television	London	1937-37
Stone's Radiolympia News	Swansea	1937-37

Philco News	London	1937-40
Wireless & Electrical Trader (The)	London	1937-65
Radio Fun	London	1938-61?
Practical and Amateur Wireless	London	1939-39
Practical Wireless	London	1939-39
Radio International	London	1939-39
Electrical Trading and Radio Marketing	London	1939-45
(Forces Radio Times)	London	1945-46