Listening to the Radio in the 1950s and 1960s

Before the advent of television, newspapers and the radio were our main sources of news, information and entertainment…we had neither a television nor a record player until the late 1950s. Our radio, a large brown Bakelite set, sat on a small table on the far side of the living room. There it remained, as most radios were not portable and needed a permanent electrical connection. Our radio also needed an aerial as the reception on Norfolk's east coast was often variable and prone to interference from continental stations. The aerial consisted of a long wire that wound its way from the back of the radio along the skirting board, through the pantry window and up the side of the house. Mother turned the radio on every morning as soon as she got up and, as long as somebody was at home, it remained on until my father turned it off last thing at night. During the day it was a background accompaniment while mother did her housework, in the evening it provided all the family with varied entertainments to relax to. Most daytime programmes were of popular music…From Monday to Friday many of Yarmouth's factories played radio music through speakers to their workers, a habit acquired during the war as a means of encouraging maximum production.

…my parents and I normally listened to the BBC Home Service, the Light Programme, and, if the reception permitted, *Radio Luxembourg* – the Home Service for news, drama and big band music, the Light for popular music, situation comedy and variety shows. We hardly ever listened to the Third Programme [*established in 1946*] as we considered its content to be too 'posh' for our tastes. I was particularly fond of *Radio Luxembourg* because its programmes were teenage-orientated and consisted of current popular music, a fondness not shared by my parents. In self-defence, my father bought a radio for my bedroom, a large modern-looking brown and cream set with a row of six press buttons for pre-selected stations.

Thereafter I spent many evenings either on my bed or staring out of my bedroom window listening to my favourite programmes."

Colin Miller was born and brought up in Rollesby, a Broadland village just eleven miles north east of Brundall. His teenage experiences were typical of rural life in east Norfolk.
Colin Miller: *The Fifties Replayed: A Norfolk Youth at Leisure*
(Sutton Books, 2005, pages 31 and 32.).

All British radio programmes were provided by the government-sponsored BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) which held a monopoly of the radio waves until 1973. Commercial radio stations (those privately funded by advertising revenues) were banned in Britain but were allowed to operate from the Continent.

Radio Luxembourg (based in that small European country) became the biggest radio station in Europe and made pop and rock music popular during the 1950s and 1960s. English sponsored programmes had become a regular feature since 1946.

In 1964 the pirate radio station *Radio Caroline* began broadcasting pop music unofficially from various ships in international waters.

A typical Bakelite Radio made by Bush in 1950 (© Snellings Archive, Blofield Heath

Because of its excellent insulating properties, Bakelite was the first commercially produced synthetic resin, replacing shellac and hard rubber in parts for the electric power industry as well as in home appliances.

In the 1920s it was widely used in knobs, dials, circuitry panels, and even cabinets for radios, and it was also employed in the electrical systems of automobiles.
In the 1930s cast Bakelite enjoyed a vogue in colourful costume jewellery and novelties.

The beginning of the modern plastics industry is often dated to Baekeland's first patent application in 1907 and to the founding of his General Bakelite Company in 1910.

Roberts R300 transistor radio 1964
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