

# 20th Century Sparks!

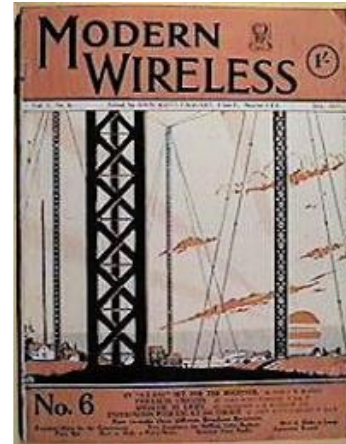
## Home

### Gramophones and radios

During the first half of the 20th century, the radio began to overtake the gramophone in home entertainment popularity.

At first not everyone could afford a radio, and many would listen to a neighbours' wireless set. Gradually radio became a mainstay in home entertainment throughout the period.

In this page and in Radio memories from the 30s and 40s, we explore memories of the age of gramophones and radios.



Modern Wireless magazine, July 1923  
<http://www.etedeschi.ndirect.co.uk/index.htm>

We learned most of the new songs from the errand boys, who would go round on their bikes whistling them.

*L. Scarborough - Backyard Brighton*

In the 1900s there was no radio, no television, not the dances, there wasn't any bingo, so we used to amuse ourselves at home. If the parents were good to you they'd play cards with you....My sister bought a harmonium...every so often we would all sit round and have a good 'ole sing-song.

*Albert Paul - Poverty, Hardship but Happiness*

We had a 'cat's whisker' radio. This was one of the first to be produced in kit form and was so called because it would only produce sounds if a fine wire made contact with the crystal valve. For a short time we sat with the earphones over our heads, but the novelty soon wore off. It was possible to hear the sound if one of the earphones was placed in a pudding basin. We soon returned to playing our old games.

*Doris Hall - Growing up in Ditchling*

During the early twenties, radio came into our lives. The first one I saw and heard belonged to Mr John Copper who lived at No 6, Court Ord. It was one mass of wires. It was an exciting day when he invited us to listen to the Oxford and Cambridge boat race. It almost seemed like a miracle. We had always been very interested in the race and some of us represented Oxford and some Cambridge. We used to buy something dark or light blue to wear on the day (as we listened).

*Margaret Ward - One camp chair in the living room*



## Home

### Gramophones and radios - continued

You were considered well off if you had a wireless. We didn't have but we did have a wind up gramophone with a big horn and about six records. The children were not allowed to touch it as it had to be wound up for every record and the grown-ups were afraid we would over wind it or drop the records and in those days they were breakable.

*L. Scarborough - Backyard Brighton*

After a while Father bought a radio. It took up a lot of space in our small room. It needed an accumulator to make it work, and had to be filled with distilled water regularly. We had to take it to the village to be recharged. It was as much as we could manage to carry. We also had a gramophone which had a huge horn shaped speaker. This took up a lot of room too. Most of the records were of military bands.

*Margaret Ward - One camp chair in the living room*

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### Radio memories from the 30s and 40s

When a wireless appeared at our home I was overjoyed. Before this happened, when the man who lived downstairs went out my mother used to allow me to go and listen to his wireless. We only had a wind up gramophone which sounded dreadfully noisy, unless you put a sock down the horn. You knew when the needle required replacing as the sound became scratchy on the record.

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On our wireless I heard the announcement on 21st January 1936, of the death of King George V and the Abdication speech of King Edward VIII on December 12th that same year. I remember my mother being very upset, as she adored Teddy which is what she always called him. We used to listen to a programme called 'In Town Tonight'. The opening music of this programme was the Knightsbridge March. My interpretation of this piece of music, gave me a visual picture of what I thought London would look like.  
*Barbara Chapman - [Boxing Day Baby](#)*



Gracie Fields  
<http://www.muzeiklijstjes.nl/Tips/FieldsGSing.htm>