

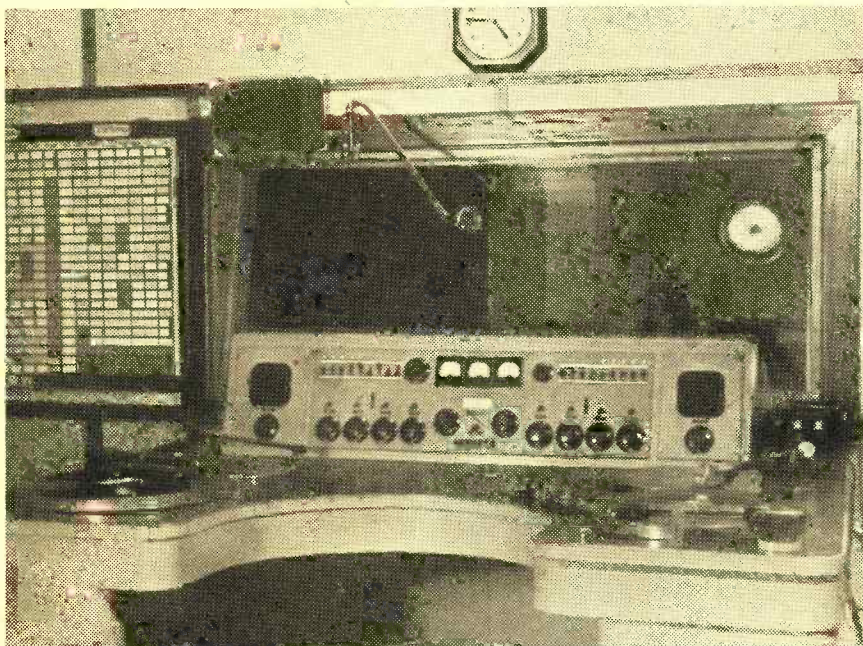


Australia's PROVINCIAL Broadcasters



● The story of the smaller broadcasting services throughout Australia is interesting, bound up as it is with the history of the many stations serving city and country areas. Each rural station has its essentially localised associations, connected directly with the interests and welfare of the surrounding country. The success of the one is dependent upon the prosperity of the other, and by virtue of the commercial broadcasting systems, country listeners enjoy news and entertainment services additionally to the indispensable A.B.C. stations. The capital city-man knows very little about the service rendered by the provincial stations; to him they are merely call signs on the list. We tell him, in this monthly series, something about these stations and in so doing provide a picture of the various communities in which they function. This is the story of station 3BA, Ballarat, Victoria; the second Provincial Broadcaster to be reviewed. Station managers are invited to forward details to the editor.

**STATION
3BA
BALLARAT
VICTORIA**



● A view of station 3BA's control room panel, looking through the window to the working studio. This arrangement is unique in Victorian Provincial radio, the usual being a combined studio-control set-up.

THE story of the Ballarat broadcasting station, 3BA, is a romantic and colourful history of how an originally small investment in an untried enterprise developed into an important undertaking and flourishing organisation.

In the city of Ballarat, Victoria, there were, prior to 1929, two amateur transmitters, Alf Kerr and Warne Wilson, who had been radiating programmes for local listeners. This was done under the then existing permission of the Postmaster-

General's Department, which permitted amateurs who so desired to operate stations around wavelengths of 200 metres at certain hours. It was from such amateur transmissions that commercial broadcasting services were developed in many instances. In the case of Messrs. Kerr and Wilson, this was one of the instances, for that year the two enthusiasts got together and decided to apply for a commercial station licence for Ballarat district. Stating that if the proposed venture had sufficient business support it would be viewed favourably, the P.M.G. indicated that the application was worth following up, and the two applicants set to in search of the necessary backing.

Newspaper Takes An Interest

BUSINESS people who immediately saw the possibilities of the ideas of the two radio enthusiasts were Messrs. J. H. Davey, H. Clogan, F. T. Davies and A. E. C. Kerr. The next step was to secure the support of "The Ballarat Courier," and with this done the company "Ballarat Broadcasters Pty. Ltd." was formed. Those mentioned, with the addition of Mr. W. A. Wilson, were appointed directors, with J. H. Davey Managing Director.

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3BA Ballarat

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The first broadcast from the station was made on the evening of July 31, 1930, and Station 3BA became the first provincial station to go into permanent operation in Australia. At this period in the history of broadcasting in Australia, the new entertainment medium was attracting the public in ever increasing numbers, and 3BA very quickly became firmly established with a high degree of popularity.

Early Location

IN the beginning the transmitter and studios were housed on the second floor of the Commonwealth Bank, at the corner of Sturt and Lydiard Streets, but in 1935 a move was made to the location where 3BA is established to-day. The present premises in Lydiard Street North were specially designed for broadcasting purposes. The power of the early transmitter was very low, being rated at 50 watts, and application was made for an increase to 500 watts. As is the policy with broadcasting stations to-day, the application was granted provided that the transmitter be located somewhere outside the city area. The modern transmitter of 3BA Ballarat is located at Cardigan. The building of the new installation at the time of the move, and the costly proposition of providing a home for it prompted the proprietors of "The Ballarat Courier" to demonstrate their faith in the future of radio broadcasting by taking over the interests of the majority of other shareholders and in making available the funds necessary to effect the move.

Progressive Broadcasting

IN 1949 Station 3BA is as modern as any other station of its size in the Commonwealth. Time on the air expressed in hours is indeed very different to the 1930 period, when the total worked out at twenty-one weekly. That made a total of 1092 yearly. To-day, the weekly hours work out at 113½, making up a total for the year of 5915. In 1930 the frequency stability of the old 3BA transmitter was correct to a variation of 1000 in one million, but now a standard is maintained at correct to two parts in a million. In those far-off days 3BA radiated one transcription programme in the week, and now, in 1949, there are more than 76 for an average week. Where there was once a record library of 500 discs, now the number is more than 10,000. The once-limited staff of two people, one engineer and one engineer-announcer . . . has expanded to 21, comprising six engineers, seven announcers two programme department members, and a general administrative staff of six.

Commercial Activities

AS most readers familiar with the difference between National and Commercial stations will know, the latter . . . privately owned and operated stations obtain their income and upkeep from revenue derived from advertising activities. Just how the station presents the commercial side of programming without undue emphasis and consequent detraction from entertainment is an attribute developed by station directors, advertising and programming staff to a high degree.

The listeners will perhaps note at the time the unobtrusive reference to the sponsor, or the goods, but will not be distracted in any way from the actual programme. The truth is that the advertising message is there in the listener's domain, sub-consciously, but assuredly. The commercial side of Station 3BA's activity is handled by the studio Manager and Secretary, Mr. E. J. W. Whykes, ably supported by Miss D. Ellis, the accountant.

Entertainment

RESPONSIBILITY for programme management and sporting commentaries is that of Trevor Negri, who has been well-known to 3BA listeners for many years. No effort is spared by him to provide listeners with a well-balanced programme, and to do this it is not, as so many listeners may think, merely a matter of picking up a recording, placing it on the turntable, and proceeding with the next. There is nothing casual about this side of the broadcasting business, for programmes must be prepared with meticulous care at least a week ahead. Listeners also, do not realise that for every record played by a broadcasting station, a royalty fee must be paid, and in addition, there are special charges made for the right to use records at all. The staff of 3BA is estimated to use about 52,000 gramophone needles in a year, so perhaps some small idea may be gleaned of what is involved.

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● This occasion made history in Ballarat. It was the first broadcast of an ordinary meeting of a Municipal Governing Body, with the Ballarat City Council "on the air" in "In Town This Week." L. to R.:—3BA's Radio Reporter, the Town Clerk, and the Mayor.



● Chief Engineer Alf Kerr (left) and Radio Reporter Ted Furlong busy with the station's wire recorder which is widely used for such sessions as "In Town This Week" and the Industrial counterpart "In Industry This Week."

3BA Ballarat

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Engineering Staff

WITH most broadcasting stations in these days, one hears very little about the technical people, the men who make things "tick." Perhaps it is because the art of broadcasting has now become part and parcel of our daily lives . . . much of the novelty has worn off. Not so long ago, however, a scant 20 years or so, there was more than an atmosphere of novelty about the new entertainment conjured out of the air by sundry collections of gadgetry which were the fore-runners of the faultless and easily handled receiver of to-day. There was an air of uncertainty about things, and the technician was somewhat of a mystery-man. He is, as much as ever, a specialist in his work, but rarely indeed is it that the public sees or hears much about him. With establishment of the 3BA transmitter at the Cardigan site, it was decided to follow the practice of the larger type of station and to place engineers on control in the city studios. Many stations, with transmitter distant from the studio, function with transmitter engineers only, and leave it to the announcer to operate various vital controls in the studio location. Better presentation is possible and is achieved by locating engineers right at the studio control room. The four engineers responsible for the technical side of 3BA Ballarat are: Chief Engineer Alf Kerr (VK3AL), Keith Ridgway (VK3CR), Chief Technician Bert Sctrine (VK3BI), and Mart Chaffer (VK3MH). The callsigns in brackets after their names are those allotted to each personally in their amateur radio activities, for each of these men is rated in the amateur category of "old timer." All have literally worked with radio through a lifetime's period.

Announcer and Publicity Man

REFERENCE to the activities of 3BA Ballarat would not be complete without a pen-picture of the station's "Radio Reporter," otherwise Ted Furlong. He combines the positions of chief announcer, publicity officer and a version of roving reporter, in which role he is widely experienced. Widely diversified spheres of interest are covered by his interviews, and among the many recorded have been the following:—

Music, Dr. Boyd Neel; art, Professor Burke; religion, Right Rev. W. H. Johnson; sports, U.S.A. Davis Cup players; travel, Baroness Von Aersson; show business, Mr. Harry Watt; literature, Westminster Librarian, Lionel McColvin; medicine, Dr. Keith Hallam; industry, Mr. Murray Stewart, Conciliation



● 3BA's recording team of Ted Furlong and Alf Kerr flew to Sydney and recorded interviews, set atmosphere, descriptions etc., on the Ealing Studios locale for "Eureka Stockade." Here is Ted interviewing Chips Rafferty.

Commissioner; social service, Food for Britain interviews; civic affairs, City Council broadcast.

Interviews have ranged in length from three to twelve minutes. Places of interview have been as varied as the Governor's private sitting-room at Craig's Hotel, and the lions' cage at Wirth's Circus. Interviews have

been obtained with ease and rapidity ranging from a few minutes spent in the studio, to a six-hour trip to Stawell and return.

Some weeks there are many visitors from whom to choose the Friday night's interviews. Other weeks the reporter is haunting tourist bureaux, hotels and newspaper offices right up to Friday, searching for news of someone interesting who "In Town This Week." So far 9.30 Friday night has always brought its quota of interest from the people interviewed by 3BA's Radio Reporter.

Some Figures and Noteworthy Broadcasts

IN 1930 there were 12,795 radio licences within 50 miles' radius. In 1935 there were 17,000, while today there are 33,488—and investigations have shown that for the majority of these listeners, 3BA is first choice.

The reason for this is obvious when it is realised that 3BA has offered its listeners these top-flight programmes—Lux Radio Theatre, Australia's Amateur Hour, Shell Show, First Light Fraser, Penfold's Musical Comedy Theatre, Atlantic Show, Music in the Tanner manner, Opera for the People, Crossroads of Life, Sincerely Rita Marsden, Nestle's National Singers, Quiz Kids, P. & A. Parade, and many others of a similarly high standard.

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● Chief Technician Bert Sctrine (VK3BI) holding one of the 833 Class B modulators at the transmitter.