

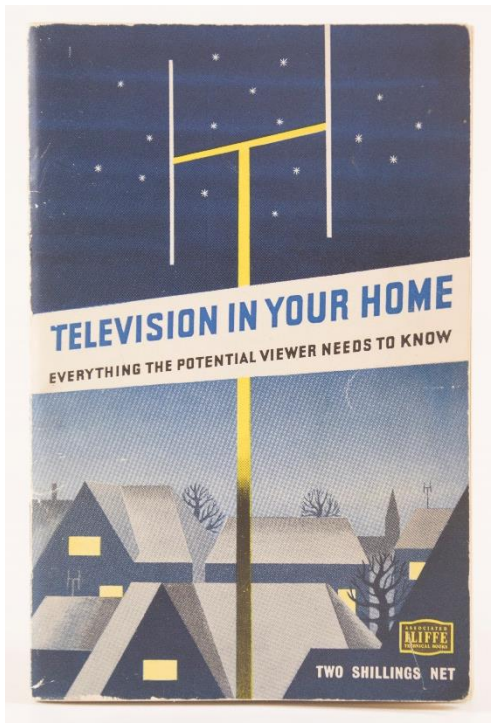
## Seeing by Wireless

By Roy Fletcher

'Seeing by Wireless' was the way John Logie Baird described what, today, we know as television.

It is difficult now to imagine life without this invention. Almost every household has at least one, even though there is a shift towards watching television on computers.

The BBC transmitted the first signals in 1929. By 1936 the BBC were transmitting an average 4 hours per day; however, this came to an abrupt halt at the start of World War 2 to avoid enemy aircraft using the beacons as guides.



At the end of the war transmission restarted, but there were still only 54000 households in the entire country with a television licence.

But television was gaining popularity. To help people who were interested a number of books were produced. The Bishops Stortford museum has an example, written by W.E. Miller, entitled "Television in your home – everything the potential viewer needs to know", dating from April 1950.

Under the heading "What it brings to you" Miller tells readers that "[television] is discussed almost everywhere people meet – in the home, in trains, in clubs and at business". Miller also tells readers that "should a breakdown occur, we are not so much annoyed, as sympathetic. We visualize our friends the engineers hard at work putting things right." As I am sure we would do today!

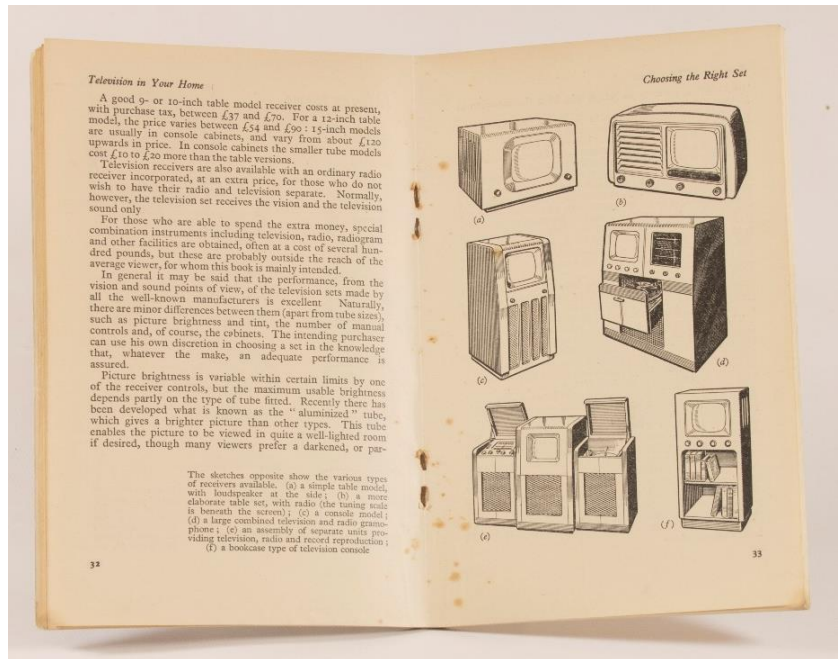
Miller also writes "One sometimes meets people who are inclined to deride television because, they say, the programmes are not good enough. What a ridiculous statement this is." If Miller was still around to see current programming, he might change his mind!

He shows the area encompassed by the transmitter at Alexandra Palace – which could transmit up to 70 miles. It would suggest that Bishop's Stortford would have received an excellent signal, but much further away a good aerial would be required to ensure a decent picture. The other transmitter in the UK was at Sutton Coldfield in the Midlands. In the book's question and answer section a question asks: "I will shortly be moving from London to the Birmingham district. Will my receiver be suitable for receiving the Birmingham Station?" The answer was "No" unless you had a receiver specially designed for two station reception.

Further transmitters were planned from 1951 through to 1954. This would still only allow 80% of the population to receive a signal.

The book gives advice on how to choose the right set, how to install the aerial and how to get the best reception. An interesting insight into what, at the time, must have been an enormous change in people's home life. Can you imagine life then without Eastenders, Coronation Street, Britain's Got Talent etc. – sounds too good. Tardis anyone?

The museum's copy of "Television in your home – everything the potential viewer needs to know" is currently on display at the Bishop's Stortford Museum in the Rhodes Arts Complex.



The Bishop's Stortford Museum is your first choice for discovering the history of the town. With a mix of local history displays, holiday activities and themed walks and talks, we have something to offer the whole family. Admission to the museum is free and is open Monday – Friday 10am to 5pm and from 10am – 4pm on Saturday's. Researched and written by Roy Fletcher.

Roy has been a volunteer at the museum for six years, spending his time cataloguing the museum's collection. Roy has an interest in the local history, particularly the last 200 years.