

‘Did Anglians Dream of Electric Screens?’

A history of broadcasting in Norfolk and East Anglia from 1923-1960.

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PhD Thesis

University of East Anglia

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Date of Submission: March 2017

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Abstract

This thesis re-examines broadcasting history in Britain through the lens of the experience in Norfolk and East Anglia rather than via the nation state as has usually been the case in prior academic investigations. Using a combination of archival sources, secondary literature and selected extracts from original oral history interviews it aims to introduce a greater level of nuance into the historiography of broadcasting in Britain. These archival sources include the BBC Written Archives, the ITA Archives, Hansard and the archive of the most popular newspaper in Norfolk – the *Eastern Daily Press*.

The first half of the thesis concentrates on the BBC's policies towards the region in respect of both wireless and television broadcasting before the outbreak of war and in the immediate aftermath of the war's end, highlighting the short and long term legacies of these policies and the reaction of the press and public in the area. The second half of the thesis includes a discussion of the opening of the regions first permanent television transmitter in 1955, a detailed and original analysis of the applications for the East Anglian ITV programme station contract in 1958 and an analysis of the arrival of both Anglia Television and a BBC Television local news bulletin during 1959.

Utilising the results of this investigation it becomes possible to assess the extent to which the history of broadcasting in East Anglia both fits into, but also deviates from, the accepted historical timeline of British broadcasting, particularly in relation to supposedly pivotal events such as the 1953 Coronation and the launch of ITV in 1955. It also raises questions about how this new knowledge might change existing theoretical understandings of the relationship between broadcasting and society, specifically with respect to the idea of television and public service/the public sphere.

Contents

Abstract.....	2
Acknowledgements.....	7
Introduction.....	8
The Case Study: East Anglia.....	10
The Objectives of the Study.....	11
Literature Review, Research Aims and Method.....	12
Introduction.....	12
Non-Historical Investigations: Critical Theory.....	12
Prior Historical Investigations: Broadcasting Institutions.....	14
Prior Historical Investigations: Politics.....	14
Prior Historical Investigations: Events and Personalities.....	15
Prior Historical Investigations: The Nation and the Local/Regional.....	16
Research Aims.....	18
Sources and Methods.....	18
Chapter 1: Broadcasting in Norfolk: 1923-1939.....	21
Introduction.....	21
Getting Started.....	21
The Sykes Committee Report.....	22
Another investigation.....	25
‘The Regional Plan’.....	27
The Regional Plan becomes a Regional Scheme.....	29
Time for one more investigation.....	32
A Parallel Development.....	34
Television: The First Three Years.....	38
Launch Time.....	38
Growth.....	39
Conclusion.....	46
Chapter 2: All regions are equal but are some regions less equal than others?	47
Introduction.....	47
Preparing for Resumption.....	47
A Temporary Boost.....	55
The BBC’s Expansion: Sound and/or Vision?.....	58
The Midland Television Transmitter Opens.....	61
Conclusion.....	62

Chapter 3: You Can't Always Get What You Want.....	64
Introduction.....	64
The State of Broadcasting in Norfolk.....	64
Wireless.....	64
Television.....	66
The Beveridge Committee: The beginning of the end?	69
The BBC makes its Case.....	71
The Final Report.....	72
Reception to the Report in Norfolk.....	74
A Crowning Glory?.....	76
The Coronation in Norfolk: Who saw what and when?.....	78
The Experience.....	81
Conclusion.....	83
Chapter 4: The End of a Monopoly	85
Introduction.....	85
The Origins of Dissent.....	85
The Immediate Political Reaction to the Minority Report.....	86
Driving Forwards.....	87
Reaction in Norfolk.....	90
A Campaign begins.....	92
The Pressure Mounts.....	95
Decision Time.....	100
No such thing as a free lunch.....	101
Conclusion.....	103
Chapter 5: More Asymmetries and Inequalities?.....	105
Introduction.....	105
A new Act, a new Authority; Same old East Anglia?.....	105
Where to start?	106
Television as a Talking Point.....	109
Saving the Date.....	110
1955 – Tacolneston First.....	112
Testing, Testing.....	115
The Launch.....	116
A Popular Medium?.....	117
A Competitor Arrives.	119
If a Television Station starts, but nobody is there to watch, does it make a noise?	120

Growth, Change and the Absence of Choice: 1956-1958.....	122
1957.	127
The Invisible Impact of ITV.....	129
Conclusion.....	130
Chapter 6: Knights in Shining Armour?.....	132
Introduction.....	132
Early Interest and Applications.....	135
Were Anglians dreaming of Competition?	137
Behind the Scenes.....	138
Advertising a licence to print money?	139
Just who does apply for a licence to print money?	142
Requirements for Applicants.....	143
(i) Lord Townshend and Associates.....	144
(ii) Alliance Television.....	146
(iii) Norfolk News, East Anglian Daily Times and Others.....	147
(iv) Viscount Alexander of Hillsborough and Associates.....	149
Assessment of the Applications.....	150
The winner takes it all.....	151
Decision Time.....	153
Conclusion.....	154
Chapter 7: You wait for a bus and then two come along at once.....	155
Introduction.....	155
A Rivalry Forms?.....	155
But not everyone was happy.....	157
Who was right?	158
An excuse to publicise: The National Radio Show.....	159
Public silence, private pressure.....	159
All I want for Christmas is.....	162
New Year, New Possibilities?.....	165
Television Licence Ownership before the arrival of Anglia.....	167
A spanner in Anglia's plans.....	167
On your marks.....	169
Get Set.....	170
The end of the strike.	173
Go!	175
Opening Day.....	176

The Aftermath.....	178
Summary.....	180
Conclusion: Mind the Gap.....	181
The History: Pre-1950.....	181
The History: Post-1950.....	182
Critical Theory and a Final View of the ‘Public Sphere’.....	185
Final Thoughts.....	187
Publications that arise from the thesis.....	188
‘Imagined Communities, Media Events and Ritual Celebration: Understanding the local and national experience of the 1953 Coronation.’	188
‘Co-Operating over Coax – Lessons from the Losers? A case study of Viscount Hillsborough’s Application for the initial ITA East Anglia Contract.’	189
‘“Despotism tempered by Assassination” – a comparative analysis of the applications processes for the first ITA regional contracts for commercial television and Ofcom’s L-DTPS scheme.’	191
‘Watching the World go by? The geography of participation in the public sphere.’	193
Other.....	194
Bibliography	196
Primary Sources	196
Secondary Sources	198

Acknowledgements.

I never thought that someone like me could earn a Doctorate. I now know that they can but they do so because of the support of others. I owe a debt of gratitude to many people and, as always, there are too many people to thank in too little space. Please forgive me if I unintentionally overlook the contributions of anyone.

Without funding from the School of History and continuous support from the Faculty of Arts and Humanities and the Postgraduate Research Office at UEA this project would not have been possible.

Dr Richard Maguire, Prof. John Street and Richard Deswarde have all provided invaluable guidance throughout my time at UEA. In particular I owe a huge debt of gratitude to Richard Deswarde who became my primary supervisor at a difficult time. He went above and beyond what should be expected from any supervisor and alongside Prof. Street encouraged me over the finishing line whilst remaining amazingly tolerant of both my ‘informal’ approach to final deadlines and my insistence that training to run my first marathon whilst trying to submit the thesis was a good idea. I cannot describe how much I appreciate your efforts and the faith shown in me and I hope we are now friends as well as colleagues.

My research involved accessing material from various archival sources. Louise North at the BBC Written Archives Centre, Ian Marsland at the ITA Archive at Bournemouth University, the staff of the East Anglian Film Archive and the librarians at Norwich Millennium Library all tirelessly responded to my queries and requests.

Staff within local media organisations also helped to promote the project and recruit interview participants. Thanks go to Paul Hayes, Thordis Fridriksson, Stephen Bumfrey and Matthew Gudgin at BBC Radio Norfolk, James Bush at ITV Anglia and Ian Clarke, Amanda Griffiths and Tom Vince at Archant Norfolk/Mustard TV.

My gratitude also extends to all those interviewed for the project. Although their words may not feature explicitly, the experiences they told me about have informed my approach to the research and reaffirmed that the topic was an important one to look at.

Dani and Dave have been ever present friends who resisted the temptation to punch some sense into me at numerous times and helped me keep a tenuous grip on my sanity. You are both heroes.

My flatmates Casey, Dominique, Iulian, Cathal and Sophie, alongside James and the marshal team at Snetterton, as well as Anna, Lisa and Nick at the Dean of Students’ Office all helped me to remain grounded and maintain a sense of perspective.

Mary, I’m sorry that you had to put up with me during the final crunch period, you were an amazing source of support and encouragement and I hope to repay you one day.

Finally, none of this would have been possible without the support of my family. June, Stephen, Simon, Jen, SJ and Joy, I know that we have been through some difficult times but hopefully this begins to make up for some of the trouble I have caused. I am sorry that I could not finish this before Carol and Jock were gone, this is as much for them as it is for everyone else who helped.

Introduction.

There was no need for a long obituary when the final analogue television transmitter serving the United Kingdom was switched off at eleven thirty pm on the 23 of October 2012. In the style of Dr Who, one of its most enduring characters, this was not a death but the regeneration of a ubiquitous technology for a digital era. Regardless of the public and press reaction to this event, its existence, like all deaths and anniversaries, provides us with a scholarly opportunity to assess the history and consider whether anything has been overlooked or whether there is another lens through which to view the medium specifically and broadcasting more generally.¹

In the seventy-five years that have passed since the BBC began broadcasting its 'high definition' television service much has changed. The surprise of seeing an image of Adele Nixon performing at the opening on November 2 1936 had been replaced by the thrill of the arrival of a commercial television channel in 1955, the technicolour glory of colour television from 1967, the arrival of another model of public service broadcasting in 1982, and the market liberalisation of the British broadcasting environment from the late 1980s onwards.²

During its history television has exhibited an ability to act as a cultural touchstone on both a national and international level. The imagery of events such as the 1953 Coronation, the assassination of John F. Kennedy in 1963, the World Cup of 1966, the moon landing of 1969, the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989 and the 9/11 terrorist attacks of 2001 were viewed by countless people through the medium of television, bringing versions of events from near and far into the privacy of the household and allowing individuals to feel part of globally significant events. As McLuhan suggested, television, alongside other mass media, has helped to create a 'global village'; a world in which the distance between nations and individuals had been contracted by advances in communication technology.³

Given the ubiquity and potential influence of television it is unsurprising that a substantial amount of academic attention has been focused upon the medium in terms of studies on effects, technology, institutions, production and content, as well as investigations into the history of the medium. The result has been a multiplicity of work which on the surface might misleadingly suggest that there is little scope for further original, innovative study.

For the television historian interested in the early era of television in Britain this impression will be reinforced when considering the works of authors such as Asa Briggs and Bernard Sendall. Their comprehensive nature, Briggs produced five volumes detailing the history of the BBC, whilst Sendall, and latterly Jeremy Potter and Paul Bonner, produced six volumes

¹'Switching off ... analogue television comes to an end', *The Daily Telegraph*, 24 October 2012, p. 14. <<https://www.nexis.com/docview/getDocForCuiReq?lni=56WG-DG51-JBVM-Y0X8&csi=242772&oc=00240&perma=true>> [accessed 09/03/2017]

² ITV began broadcasting on 22nd September 1955, Channel 4 was launched on 2nd November 1982 and elements of market liberalisation can be traced back to at least as far as the launch of *Sky Television* and *British Satellite Broadcasting* (BSB) in 1989. More recently relaxation of restrictions on the ownership of ITV companies were featured in the Communications Act 2003 (2003 c21).

³ Marshall McLuhan, *The Gutenberg Galaxy* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962).

on Independent television, suggest that there are few gaps for which current media historians can take advantage of.⁴

Fortunately this is not the case. Helen Wheatley concisely highlights some of the most ‘significant problems or hurdles facing television historians’ in the UK context and in doing so also identifies some of the gaps in knowledge that scholars need to successfully address. Specifically, she suggests that there is a ‘problem’ of ‘national specificity; there is an over-privileging of ‘institutional histories of television’; there are problems associated with nostalgia and ‘the need to confront the connection between popular and academic histories of the medium’, and finally that there are also challenges in respect of ‘access to, and survival, of material that shapes our sense of television history’.⁵

It is the problem of ‘national specificity’ that this study most clearly attempts to address, although not in the way that Wheatley proposes. Wheatley argues that the solution to the focus on the national lies in a ‘reassessment of the national boundaries drawn up in a television historiography, and for a move towards comparative histories’. Whilst this is a sensible solution to the problem it must be recognised that to do so privileges what could be described as a ‘macro’ view of the history of television, a view which sees the smallest object of study as the nation and which aims to compare experiences across the globe. Whilst there is much to be gained by doing this, this study approaches the problem from a different perspective and in doing so identifies a related, but different gap in the existing historiography.⁶

Rather than expanding outwards from the experience of the nation state as the object of study, this thesis argues that an approach of looking inwards at potential variations *within* the nation state is equally valid and adds some valuable nuance to existing historical accounts of television in Britain. This is in fact an approach that was advocated by Briggs over thirty years ago, but which has since remained relatively unexplored. Assessing the limits of his own history of the BBC, and the possibility of writing a single volume on the history of British broadcasting, he identified that consideration of the ‘economic, social and cultural factors’ which influenced the evolution of broadcasting was something missing from his existing work and that this would require the examination of ‘local, regional and national orientations’.⁷

Adopting this ‘micro’ approach to the study of the history of broadcasting in Britain is to acknowledge the unevenness and asymmetries of experience that existed within the country during the first half of the twentieth century. In fact, one of the core objectives of this thesis is to demonstrate that even though the United Kingdom is a relatively compact area and was served by only two major broadcasting organisations for much of the twentieth century, the history of broadcasting is more complicated than has previously presented and in peripheral

⁴ See Asa Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom* Vols. 1-4 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961, 1965, 1970 and 1979); Bernard Sendall, *Independent Television in Britain* Vols. 1-2 (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1982 and 1983); Jeremy Potter, *Independent Television in Britain* Vol. 3-4 (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1989); Paul Bonner and Lesley Aston, *Independent Television in Britain* Vol. 5-6 (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1998 and 2014).

⁵ Helen Wheatley, *Re-Viewing Television History: Critical Issues in Television Historiography*, (London: I.B. Tauris, 2007), p. 8.

⁶ *Ibid.* p.9

⁷ Asa Briggs, “Problems and possibilities in the writing of broadcasting history”, *Media, Culture and Society*, no. 2 (1980): pp. 11-12.

geographic regions can deviate substantially from the accepted, nationally orientated, historical record.

A parallel can be made here with Massey's criticism of the rhetoric on globalisation and its impact on everyday life. She argues that more nuance is required. That the emphasis on large global trends and overestimating the impact of technical and political changes risks overlooking that 'much of life for many people, even in the heart of the first world, still consists of waiting in a bus-shelter with your shopping for a bus that never comes'. Similarly, the current academic histories of broadcasting in Britain similarly fails to acknowledge that for people living in areas distant from the main metropolitan locations the benefits and detriments of broadcasting during the middle of the twentieth century may have had relatively little impact on their daily lives.⁸

The Case Study: East Anglia.

Some form of authorial interest inherently informs and stimulates academic research, in this case my own identity as an East Anglian collided with a scholarly interest in media history. This personal interest led to the recognition that mentions of East Anglia in the 'official' histories of the BBC and ITV, as well as in the work of other media scholars, were either almost completely absent or extremely brief and failed to capture any significant detail of how and when broadcasting arrived in the region and how the local audience related to it.⁹

East Anglia is therefore an ideal area to serve as a case study for this thesis. On the most basic scholarly level its absence within the existing literature means that any research undertaken and information generated will be both 'original' and 'significant', but because it is also a largely rural, peripheral area of the United Kingdom it serves as a counterbalance to scholarly work that has often seemed to have been subconsciously biased towards the experiences of urban metropolitan populations.¹⁰

As with all case studies certain limitations have been placed on its scope for reasons of expediency and manageability. In this instance the timeframe of the study covers a period from the mid-1920s (the start of the BBC) until the middle of 1960 (just after the launch of Anglia Television) and it should be noted that throughout the thesis attention is often focused on Norfolk specifically rather than East Anglia. It is not intended that the experience of broadcasting in Norfolk during the period of study should be seen as representative of the entire East Anglia region although it may act as a bellwether.¹¹

⁸ Doreen Massey, "A Place Called Home?", *New Formations*, no. 17, (1992), p. 8.

⁹ As an example see Potschka and Golding's comparison of regional television in Britain and Germany in which *Anglia Television* only receives a single mention and cites Wallace in describing it as a 'middle-sized licensee' which 'specialised in wildlife programming and became a leading player in this genre'. Christian Potschka and Peter Golding "The Structural Developments of Regional Television in Britain and Germany", *Media History*. No. 18 (2012) p.450.

¹⁰ Interestingly David Morley recognised that he had 'accidentally' found himself interviewing a 'particularly stable group geographically' when undertaking his seminal *Nationwide* study in South London, although he saw this as a strength rather than as a weakness. See David Morley, *Family Television: Cultural Power and Domestic Leisure* (London: Comedia, 1986: 11)

¹¹ Explanation of why Norfolk is often the focus of the study is included within the methods and historiography section of the thesis.

The Objectives of the Study.

As mentioned previously a significant aim of the study is to generate a history of broadcasting told from an East Anglian perspective and in doing so demonstrate that broadcasting history across Britain is far more heterogenous than has previously been presented. In doing so it initially focuses on the pre and immediate post-war periods and highlights how policies originating from institutions such as the BBC, the ITA and the Government influenced the relationship of the region with broadcasting in both the short and long term.

Following this is an analysis of the way that people in the region experienced events that are well established in the historiography of British television, including the 1953 Coronation and the launch of ITV in 1955. This analysis serves to demonstrate that there are significant moments when the history of television in Norfolk deviates from the existing accounts and explores what the consequences of these deviations are both for the people of Norfolk and East Anglia and for our understanding of television in Britain more generally.

In concluding the presentation of the history of broadcasting in Norfolk and East Anglia the thesis features an in-depth analysis of the period when both the BBC and ITV began broadcasting content from the region.¹²

Finally, each of these periods is considered, individually and the collectively, in relation to the idea that broadcasting, and television particularly, in East Anglia could be considered as a ‘window on the world’ and as allowing access to a ‘public sphere’ or ‘cultural public sphere’. Further discussion of these ideas can be found in the following literature review section of the thesis.¹³

Together these elements create a substantial addition to the existing understanding of the history of television in Britain, building upon the strength of knowledge contained within the historiography but strongly arguing that there is much to be gained by challenging the orthodox way of viewing historical events. By making the periphery the centre of academic attention it is possible to see broadcasting from a whole new perspective.

¹² The latter addresses what Johnson and Turnock identify as a comparative paucity of academic research relating to the history and role of ITV within the historiography of British television. Catherine Johnson and Rob Turnock, *ITV Cultures* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2005), p. 8.

¹³ The idea of television being a ‘window on the world’ is first suggested by Thomas Hutchinson whilst the concepts of the ‘Public Sphere’ and ‘Cultural Public Sphere’ originate with Jurgen Habermas and Jim McGuigan respectively. See Thomas H. Hutchinson, *Here is Television Your Window on the World* (New York: Hastings House, 1946); Jurgen Habermas, “Further Reflections on the Public Sphere” in *Habermas and the Public Sphere* ed. Craig Calhoun (Massachusetts: MIT Press, 1996); and Jim McGuigan, “The Cultural Public Sphere” in *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, No.8 (2005; pp. 427-443).

Literature Review, Research Aims and Method.

Introduction.

Given the ubiquity of mass media in contemporary life it is not surprising that the scale of body of work devoted to broadcasting and related issues and phenomenon is fearsome and impressively comprehensive. This of course creates both problems and opportunities when undertaking a literature review of the field, it is clearly not possible to summarise the entire field of study, instead the literature considered is only that which is of direct relevance to the research aims and which highlights the existing gap in the knowledge.

It is also important to state that in order to present the literature review in a concise manner an artificial taxonomy of sorts has been created. In truth academic work on media often defies such attempts at taxonomy, there are very few examples of academic literature within the field that are entirely discrete in respect of their topic, a monograph or article on an important individual within broadcasting might also heavily feature discussions of the institution for which they worked and a historical investigation into any aspect of broadcasting could be framed in such a way that it could be categorised as a discussion of theory more than a narrative record of events.

Within the following chosen categories there is an inevitable overlap between historical and non-historical work as well as between different categories of history. The judgement is entirely subjective but allows for the academic history of broadcasting to be presented as clearly as possible and for the intellectual gap in the literature that is filled by this thesis to be identified.

Non-Historical Investigations: Critical Theory.

A considerable proportion of western scholarly work on broadcasting, including this thesis, has been influenced by ‘critical theory’. As Kellner explains, this approach originates in the Frankfurt School who ‘were the first social theorists to see the importance of what they called the “culture industries”’. Although not always explicitly focused upon radio and television, the work of scholars such as Benjamin and Adorno and Horkheimer advanced a view that the mass production and dissemination of culture could have negative consequences for the intrinsic value of culture and the author as well as impacting upon the prospect of developing genuinely democratic societies.¹⁴

The concern that mass media could play such an influential role in society, and that it could have such a negative political and cultural impact, can be seen in the work of more recent scholars as well. Postman argues in *Amusing Ourselves to Death* that television in particular could be seen in ‘Huxleyan’ terms, reducing rational thought through a burlesque presentation of culture fundamental to television as a medium.¹⁵

¹⁴ Doug Kellner, ‘Critical Perspectives on Television from the Frankfurt School to Postmodernism’, in *A Companion to Television*, ed. by Wasko (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. 30; Walter Benjamin, ‘The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction’, in *Illuminations*, (London: Fontana, 1973); Theodor Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, (London: Verso, 1979).

¹⁵ Neil Postman, *Amusing Ourselves to Death: Public Discourse in the Age of Showbusiness*, (London: Heinemann, 1986).

This negativity towards television specifically can also be seen in the research of Putnam. In his attempts to explain what he believes is the collapse of the American Community he argues strongly that television is a key factor in the reduction of social capital and civic engagement that are an essential part of a healthy, functioning democracy. Although as Gitlin points out, Putnam's controversial claims regarding the negative influence of television have not been unchallenged within the academy, notably on the grounds that the emphasis he places on the role of television is too great and also due to the fact that American society may not in fact have 'collapsed' at all.¹⁶

In fact other scholars, have long argued for a more positive, or at least neutral, assessment of the impact of broadcasting on society. Scannell has suggested that the development of radio and television brought into reality a culture common to the whole of the British population, whilst Hall argued that the BBC had actually produced the British nation rather than simply reflected it. These are arguments synthesised and refined into Anderson's concept of nations being 'imagined communities' in which national identity is formed at least in part through representations in the mass media.¹⁷

Such studies also clearly relate to the idea of the 'public sphere', an idealised space within social life in which the public is able to rationally discuss political and social matters free from the pressures of the economy and the state, that was first advanced by Habermas. Originally writing in respect of bourgeois coffee houses during the 18th century, scholars such as Fraser critiqued the concept on the grounds that Habermas failed to recognise that the sphere he described excluded large sections of the populace. Yet media scholars still use the idealised concept as a prism to view and assess the role of broadcasting in society and to ask to what extent broadcasters achieve the potential of an idealised public sphere via their programming and commitment to ideas such as 'public service broadcasting'.¹⁸

The general idea of the public sphere, and how broadcasting might be part of it, has been further developed by scholars. Dayan and Dahlgren have argued that the idea of multiple public spheres and micro public spheres might better reflect the reality of the role that broadcasting plays within society. Further, McGuigan has argued that Habermas's initial emphasis on rational discussion within the public sphere risks undervaluing the role of 'affective' discussion, particularly those which occur in popular television formats and that the existence and role of the 'cultural public sphere' must be taken seriously.¹⁹

¹⁶ Robert Putnam, *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community*, (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000); Todd Gitlin, 'Public Sphere or Public Sphericles?', in *Media, Ritual and Identity*, ed. by Tamar Liebes and James Curran, (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 170; Nicolas Lemann, 'Kicking in Groups', *The Atlantic*, April 1996, <<https://www.theatlantic.com/magazine/archive/1996/04/kicking-in-groups/376562/>> [accessed 25/03/2017]

¹⁷ Paddy Scannell, 'Public service broadcasting and modern public life', *Media, Culture and Society*, Vol. 11, (1989), 135-166; Stuart Hall, 'Which public, whose service?', *All Our Futures: The Changing Role and Purpose of the BBC*, (London: BFI, 1993); Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, (London: Verso, 2006).

¹⁸ Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society*, (Cambridge: Polity, 1989); Nancy Fraser, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy', *Social Text*, No. 25/26, (1990), 56-80.

¹⁹ Daniel Dayan, 'Particularistic Media and Diasporic Communications', in *Media, Ritual and Identity*, ed. Tamar Liebes and James Curran, (London: Routledge, 1998); Peter Dahlgren, *Television and the*

Prior Historical Investigations: Broadcasting Institutions.

The most obvious place to begin when looking at the history of broadcasting is at the broadcasting organisations. Within the canon of literature on the history of broadcasting in Britain work by Briggs stands out as particularly influential in this regard. As Scannell points out, this work, ‘the earliest scholarly history of broadcasting’ has been ‘immensely influential’.²⁰

Briggs’ multi-volume history of the BBC, and the equivalent work by Sendall in regards to the Independent Television Authority and ITV, offer comprehensive insights into the internal workings of each organisation and the policies by which they worked. The fact that they are ‘official’ histories of the institutions has both positive and negative consequences. On the positive side it means that they are incredibly useful reference guides for any media historian, but it also means that they tend to emphasise the ‘official line’ of the institutions and are often written in the language of the institution resulting in a ‘top down history’. Whilst this is not a fatal flaw it does show that there is considerable scope to provide historical accounts of broadcasting from alternative perspectives.²¹

Alongside these official histories more general historical overviews of broadcasting can be found that include histories of the broadcasters. Jenkins provides a useful analysis of the original ITV contractors, and Curran and Seaton’s *Power without Responsibility* outlines a general history of both the press and broadcast media within the United Kingdom, discussing both in relation to the power that they have historically been able to exercise within society and situating their actions within the context of attempts at political control. The latter is a topic that has also been the explicit concern of numerous other scholars.²²

Prior Historical Investigations: Politics.

Further investigations of broadcasting policy can most obviously be seen in Freedman’s historical analysis of the Labour Party’s policies towards television, his work on media policy in the United States and the United Kingdom, as well as Whale’s general account of the politics of the media and the work of Franklin in summarising Britain’s policy approach to television by political parties of all ideologies.²³

Public Sphere – Citizenship, Democracy and the Media, (London: Sage, 1995); Jim McGuigan, ‘The Cultural Public Sphere’, *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, Vol. 8, Issue 4, (2005), 427-443.

²⁰ Paddy Scannell, ‘Television and History’, in *A Companion to Television*, ed. by Janet Wasko, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), p. 52.

²¹ Asa Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom, Volume I: The Birth of Broadcasting*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961); *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom, Volume II: The Golden Age of Wireless*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1965); *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom, Volume III: The War of Words*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1970); *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom, Volume IV: Sound & Vision*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979); *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom, Volume V: Competition*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995); Bernard Sendall, *Independent Television in Britain Volume 1: Origin and Foundation, 1946-62*, (London: Macmillan, 1982); *Independent Television in Britain Volume 2: Expansion and Change, 1958-68*, (London: Macmillan, 1983).

²² Clive Jenkins, *Power Behind the Screen*, (London: MacGibbon & Kee, 1961); James Curran and Jean Seaton, *Power without Responsibility 6th Edition*, (London: Routledge, 2003).

²³ Des Freedman, *Television Policies of the Labour Party 1951-2001*, (London: Cass, 2003); Des Freedman, *The Politics of Media Policy*, (Cambridge: Polity, 2008); John Whale, *The Politics of the*

In addition to these overviews of broadcasting policy, the intersection of politics and broadcasting also manifests itself during discussions of specific events. In the period that is the focus of this study this is most apparent in literature related to the arrival of commercial television during the 1950s. Both Wilson and Paulu assessed the political processes which influenced the breaking of the BBC's monopoly over broadcasting when writing in the early 1960s, whilst Johnson and Turnock have more recently reassessed the same events and subsequently framed them in relation to the influence of 'One Nation Conservatism' that existed during the time.²⁴

Of course, the analysis of specific events and the role of individual figures or interest groups is not restricted to those interested in the politics and policies of broadcasting.

Prior Historical Investigations: Events and Personalities.

Alongside the battle for, and eventual arrival of, commercial television another significant event during the period being studied was clearly the 1953 Coronation. Generally this is considered to be the moment in British broadcasting when television established ascendency over radio, a view often advanced by the BBC itself. The events in the build up to the ceremony, as well as the day of the Coronation itself, have been the subject of considerable scholarly as well as popular assessment. In the case of Ziegler this is in the form of an overview of the events which features some discussion of the role of television, whilst Örnebring frames analysis of the Coronation explicitly in terms of the television audience and its role in the adoption and domestication of television within British society.²⁵

Notable events such as these, alongside more prosaic ones, are also detailed in the accounts of those present at the time. Biographical and autobiographical works provide a useful alternative voice to 'official' histories, acting as a bridge between the 'top down' approach of scholars such as Briggs and Sendall, and 'social history' from below. Although the most obvious examples of texts such as these are in the form of the biographies and autobiographies of figures of national importance and fame such as Lord Reith, Hugh Carlton Greene and Grace Wyndham Goldie, the experiences of other figures are more relevant to this study.²⁶

For example Eckersley's account of his time working as the BBC's Chief Engineer is a useful alternative account of the formative years of broadcasting and provides different explanations of why decisions regarding the expansion of the wireless network were made.

Media: Political Issues of Modern Britain, (London: Fontana, 1997); Bob Franklin, ed., *British Television Policy: A Reader*, (London: Routledge, 2001).

²⁴ H. H. Wilson, *Pressure Group: The Campaign for Commercial Television* (London: Secker & Warburg, 1961); Burton Paulu, *British Broadcasting in Transition*, (London: Macmillan, 1961); Catherine Johnson and Rob Turnock, eds., *ITV Cultures: Independent Television Over Fifty Years*, (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2005).

²⁵ Phillip Ziegler, *Crown and People*, (London: Collins, 1978); Henrik Örnebring, 'Writing the history of television audiences – The Coronation in the Mass-Observation Archive', in *Re-viewing Television History: Critical Issues in Television Historiography*, ed. by Helen Wheatley, (London: I. B. Taurus, 2007), pp. 170-183.

²⁶ John Reith, *Into the Wind*, (London: Hodder, 1949); Hugh Greene, *The Third Floor Front*, (London: The Bodley Head, 1969); Grace Wyndham Goldie, *Facing the Nation: Television and Politics, 1936-1976*, (London: The Bodley Head, 1977).

Although it should be noted that his assessment of the BBC might be marred by an acrimonious departure from the organisation following an extra-marital affair.²⁷

Memoirs from those involved in broadcasting within East Anglia have also been utilised in the project, helping to fill in the gaps that exist within the official histories of broadcasting. The autobiographies of Dick Joice and Forbes Taylor are particularly useful sources of information on life in the region and given the absence of a detailed written archive, provide important information on the development of Anglia Television and the experience of working for the company. These are sources that have not previously been fully explored by media historians.²⁸

The lack of investigation of such regional sources of information can be explained to a certain extent by the fact that the object of study within the historical canon of British broadcasting has often been at the level of the nation state, something which has often been repeated in the canons of other countries written by scholars who have been influenced by Brigg's initial history of the BBC which 'set the benchmark for subsequent histories of broadcasting in other countries'.²⁹

Prior Historical Investigations: The Nation and the Local/Regional.

It is not difficult to find examples of broadcasting histories from around the world that consider broadcasting in respect of its relation to an individual nation or bigger geo-political blocks. Sinclair has written on the development of commercial television networks in Latin America and the comparative lack of involvement of the state within those countries. Xhao and Guo have explored the historical relationship between television and the state in China, whilst the development of television in Japan, and its initial position as an 'open air', public medium rather than as a domesticated one as was the case elsewhere across the world, is discussed by Yoshimi. From a European perspective histories of broadcasting in individual nations also exist in standalone form alongside scholarly comparisons of nations and discussion of the joint history of the European Broadcasting Union.³⁰

Although not problematic *per se*, the emphasis that has been placed on the nation as the object of study within many histories of broadcasting has the unintended effect of suggesting that experiences of broadcasting, and the impact that it has, are experienced homogenously regardless of any geographic or cultural differences within the country. This risks ignoring the role that regions play in constructing national broadcasting systems and also fails to consider how location in particular might alter the role that broadcasting plays within

²⁷ Peter Eckersley, *The Power Behind the Microphone*, (London: The Scientific Book Club, 1942).

²⁸ Dick Joice, *Full Circle*, (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1991); Forbes Taylor, *Toy Town Telly and Stone Age Filming*, (Cambridge: Vanguard Press, 2013).

²⁹ Paddy Scannell, 'Television and History', in *A Companion to Television*, ed. by Janet Wasko, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), p. 52.

³⁰ John Sinclair, 'Latin American Commercial Television: "Primitive Capitalism"', in *A Companion to Television*, ed. by Janet Wasko, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005); Yuezhi Zhao and Zhenzhi Guo, 'Television in China: History, Political Economy, and Ideology', in *A Companion to Television*, ed. by Janet Wasko, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005); Shunya Yoshimi, 'Japanese Television: Early Development and Research', in *A Companion to Television*, ed. by Janet Wasko, (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005); Christina Adamou, Isabella Gaillard and Dana Mustata. 'Institutionalizing European television: the shaping of European television institutions and infrastructures', in *A European Television History*, ed. by Jonathan Bignell and Andreas Fickers, (London: Wiley-Blackwell, 2008).

society; broadcasting might play a very different role in an isolated rural community compared to in a metropolitan centre.

This is not to suggest that historians and media scholars have not previously considered this idea, indeed work from non-British countries illustrates the additional insight that can be gained by refocusing on the regional rather than the national. Hutchison's analysis of early American local television and its role in constructing ritual and community specific to regional areas highlights the fact that programmes only intended for regional audiences can be as equally important as those syndicated to the entire country and which often dominate the historical canon of television. Further Von Hodenberg's article on the arrival of television in the West German countryside during the 1950s and 1960s advances the case that the medium accelerated the process of the 'modernization, nationalization and politicization' of rural society.³¹

Lelia Green's PhD thesis on the topic of the remote television service in Western Australia and its role in helping to construct and re-construct community, although non-historical, demonstrates that the study of a specific region can be of comparable value to those which treats the nation as a whole, highlighting the very specific ways that broadcasting can serve regions that have traditionally been isolated from other communities as is the case with Western Australia.³²

The lack of attention paid to the regional has been an enduring weakness in the historiography of British broadcasting and the history of television in particular. There are however signs that this is beginning to be addressed. Medhurst's work on the history of ITV in Wales is a positive attempt to address the absence of significant discussion of the smaller, regional ITV companies within the existing historiography and has recently been joined by doctoral studies by Wallace on Independent Television in the Midlands from 1950-2000 and Groom's analysis of the infrastructural development of Southern Television.³³

Whilst these are extremely positive additions to the academic canon, the fact remains that a focus on the regional is still uncommon and a number of areas of Britain remain curiously absent from the existing historical literature. Medhurst, Wallace and Groom have ensured that Wales, the Midlands and Southern England are now more fully included within scholarly literature but East Anglia in particular is noticeable for its absence within the existing literature. It is barely mentioned within any of Briggs official history of the BBC, Sendall's second volume of the history of Independent television dedicates only ten pages to the launch of Anglia Television and its first two years of broadcasting. Further neither Norfolk or East Anglia feature in Hajkowski's recent work on the BBC's role in

³¹ Phillip J. Hutchison, 'Magic Windows and the Serious Life: Rituals and Community in Early American Local Television', *Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media*, Vol. 56, Issue 1, (2012), 21-37; Christina von Hodenberg, 'Square-eyed Farmers and Gloomy Ethnographers: The Advent of Television in the West German Village', *Journal of Contemporary History*, Vol. 51, Issue 4, (2016), 839-865.

³² Lelia Green, 'Communications and the construction of community: consuming the Remote Television Service in Western Australia', (Phd Thesis, Murdoch University, 1998).

³³ Jamie Medhurst, 'Piecing together 'Mamon's Television'', in *Re-viewing Television History: Critical Issues in Television Historiography*, ed. by Helen Wheatley, (London: I. B. Taurus, 2007), pp. 127-141; John Wallace, 'A sense of region?: independent television in the Midlands, 1950-2000', (PhD Thesis, University of Leicester, 2004); Elinor Groom, 'Serving the South: television infrastructures and the development of regionality during the emergence of ITV', (PhD Thesis, University of Nottingham, 2016).

constructing national and regional identities from the 1920s to the mid-1950s and Potschka and Golding's comparative analysis of the structural developments of regional television in Britain and Germany includes only a single sentence to Anglia, describing it only as a 'middle-sized license' which 'specialised in wildlife programming'.³⁴

There is therefore an obvious intellectual gap in the understanding of the history of television in regards to how television and broadcasting was experienced in East Anglia. Not just in respect of considering whether Anglia Television was just a wildlife programming specialist – it was not – but also in uncovering a more detailed history of what television was like in East Anglia prior to the arrival of Anglia. The existing literature assumes that the history of television in the East of England was the same as in the rest of the country, but this thesis aims to demonstrate that whilst there is continuity with the existing historical accounts, the East Anglian experience of television also provides an opportunity to challenge the orthodox understanding of the role of certain pivotal events in British media history.

Research Aims.

The goals of this research are clear. The first aim is to produce a historical account of broadcasting from 1923-1960 that is told from the perspective of East Anglians. This involves analysing closely how the region was treated by the BBC in respect of radio broadcasting initially and subsequently with regards to television. The research seeks to demonstrate that in the case of East Anglia the history of television cannot be fully understood without also fundamentally recognising the impact that the BBC's regional radio policy had on the region specifically.

In doing this it aims to show not only how the BBC and Government approached the region but also how individuals and institutions from East Anglia reacted to the ambiguous and constantly evolving provision of broadcasting services in the area. In doing this it further seeks to cast light on the reasons why the region often seemed to be at least one step behind the rest of the nation when it came to television, explaining how the situation developed in respect of decisions taken by national institutions and the existence, or absence, of local pressure.

Having developed a significant and original historical account of television and broadcasting in East Anglia, that is able to sit within the existing historiography, attention is focused on considering whether the East Anglian experiences during this period suggest that broadcasting was playing a role in the creation of any form of public sphere in the region, and if not, to consider how this might impact upon how we describe the relationship between national public service broadcasters and the public sphere concept during this time.

Sources and Methods.

A number of primary sources and methodological approaches are used within this research project in order to generate a history of broadcasting in East Anglia. Given the forensic level of detail contained in the histories of Briggs and Sendall it is no surprise to find that they are both cited regularly within the thesis. Their works continue to act as useful maps for any

³⁴ Sendall, *Volume 2: Expansion and Change*, pp. 11-21; Thomas Hajkowski, *The BBC and National Identity in Britain, 1922-53*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2010); Christian Potschka and Peter Golding, 'The Structural Developments of Regional Television in Britain and Germany', *Media History*, Vol. 18, Issue 3-4, (2012) 450.

historian of media in Britain and all academics benefit from ‘standing on the shoulders of giants’ at times.

The project also heavily uses independent archival research undertaken specifically for the project. Documentation relating to the BBC’s approach to East Anglia specifically and the regions more widely has been assessed in the BBC Written Archive Centre (WAC) in Caversham, including a number of files that had not previously been accessed. When accessible the BBC’s own Audience Research files were also consulted.

Analysis of BBC documentation has not however been limited to the BBC’s own internal documentation, a systematic examination of publicly available BBC documents from the time has also been undertaken, mainly focusing upon the Corporation’s annual accounts and report alongside the BBC Handbooks published from 1928-1959. Some analysis of the archives of the BBC’s *Listener* magazine was also undertaken at the beginning of the research period, but the results uncovered were not found to be of relevance to the projects research aims.

Visits were also undertaken to the Independent Television Authority Archive at Bournemouth University. Again it should be emphasised that many of the files consulted during these visits had rarely if ever been accessed by a scholar before, including those that contained correspondence and applications for the initial contract for the East Anglia ITA region. The analysis of the information contained within them is genuinely unique.

In addition to looking at documentation from the broadcasters and regulatory authorities, attention has been paid to sources of archived Government materials. Focus has been given to the reports produced by the various Broadcasting Committees that were established. These have been examined in respect of the impact that their recommendations would have on regions of the United Kingdom and East Anglia particularly. Efforts have also been made to establish whether any confidential Government responses to the Committee’s reports exist by searching through the Cabinet Papers held online by the National Archives.

A search of Hansard’s record of Parliamentary debates was also undertaken in an attempt to discover whether any local MPs made significant contributions to the key debates on broadcasting, specifically those surrounding the 1954 Television Act, but also to see whether they had made any other interventions on behalf of their constituents to advance the arrival of television to the region. For time reasons searches of Hansard were only made in reference to MPs from Norfolk rather than East Anglia as a whole, but covered all Norfolk constituencies from 1929 to 1966.

Attempting to find sources which represented the experiences of people in the region during this period was more difficult as no existing archive exists. From an early stage of the study it had been proposed that a series of oral history interviews would be undertaken in an attempt to generate a ‘social history’ of broadcasting in East Anglia that would complement and challenge existing ‘top down’ narrative. As Howarth suggests such interviews are a good way to get material that ‘cannot be obtained in any other way’ and prior experience of the method indicated that they could be an illuminating source of information.³⁵

³⁵ Ken Howarth, *Oral History: A Handbook*, (Stroud: Sutton Publishing, 1998), p. VIII.

Ethics approval was sought and approved and a media campaign involving appearances in the local press, on BBC Radio Norfolk and on Anglia News was undertaken. As a result eleven interviews took place to complement existing interview work undertaken during a previous project. However, as the scope and focus of the project evolved it became apparent that although the interview recordings contained a great deal of detailed information they could only be applied to the project on a very limited basis. Unfortunately this has meant that excerpts from the interviews only feature in one chapter of this thesis, although they may prove invaluable in future publications.

The experiences and voices of the region are therefore represented via another source, the archives of the *Eastern Daily Press*. Articles from the newspaper are featured heavily within the project and although it is not intended to suggest that the editorial line adopted by the newspaper was necessarily always representative of everyone in the East Anglia region, it does provide some access to the attitudes and thoughts of the region. As a historian of the newspaper claimed, during the 1940s and 1950s the *Eastern Daily Press* was ‘the major publication of the country areas to which long-established farming families would turn for authoritative information and comment’.³⁶

Clearly relying so heavily upon a single source of information is not entirely satisfactory, but in the absence of any alternative, using the newspaper as a proxy for the experiences of broadcasting in East Anglia, and particularly Norfolk, at the time is preferable over a continued absence of any insight. Equally it has been possible to mitigate against some of the weaknesses of this reliance by attempting to include within the thesis correspondence from the newspaper’s readers on topics related to broadcasting. Although this does not remove editorial bias entirely, after all the editors made conscious decisions about which letters would be of interest to their readers, it does ensure that a number of local voices from the time are heard.

It should also be noted that by undertaking an analysis of all the editions of the newspaper published from 1927 to 1969 (as well as selected editions before this period) it has been possible to chart the role that the *Eastern Daily Press* played in supporting the regions claims that it had a right for broadcasting from both the BBC and the ITA. This was an unexpected bonus resulting from a suboptimal situation.

As this literature review has shown, a study of the emergence and development of broadcasting is long overdue and much needed. By beginning by looking at the origins of radio before discussing television it will be possible to show that, in the case of East Anglia at least, policies regarding the former were highly pertinent to the timeframe of the establishment of the latter and created a framework which would influence broadcasting in the region for many years.

³⁶ Tony Clarke, *Pilgrims of the Press: A history of Eastern Counties Newspapers Group 1850-2000*, (Trowbridge: Redwood, 2000), p. 25.

Chapter 1: Broadcasting in Norfolk: 1923-1939.

Introduction.

The structural shape of broadcasting in both the United Kingdom as a whole, but East Anglia in particular, was highly influenced by decisions taken early in the twentieth century. Choices taken in respect of the BBC's wireless system during the 1920s and 1930s greatly influenced the expansion of television, creating an enduring situation whereby East Anglia and Norfolk in particular struggled to find a place within the BBC's plans.

In order to understand why broadcasting in East Anglia evolved in a separate and distinct way to the rest of the country it is necessary to analyse the recommendations contained within the early Broadcasting Committee reports and consider how they affected the provincial areas of the United Kingdom and how they played a role in guiding the BBC's regional policies. Doing this highlights the fact that although the BBC had clear policies towards the regions, at no point in the pre-war period did East Anglia feature within them. In asking why this was the case one must inevitably begin to question the extent to which the BBC's service was ever truly national during this time and the impact that this might have on the idea of the BBC playing a role in the East Anglian public sphere.

Getting Started.

Although the existence of radio dates back to the late nineteenth century and received attention from both commercial concerns and enthusiastic amateurs in Britain during the opening two decades of the twentieth century, it is with the establishment of the British Broadcasting Company in 1922/23 that our period of interest begins.³⁷

The government of this period, and in particular the General Post Office (GPO), were greatly concerned with how they should 'allocate the limited number of wavelengths available between commercial broadcasting stations, experimenters, ships at sea, wireless telegraphy companies, and, above all, the Services'. Such concern was not entirely unfounded, the GPO had dispatched a representative, E. J. Brown, to the USA in 1921-22 to observe the American model of broadcasting (at the time considerably more developed than that of the UK). The system he witnessed was one consisting of a large number of competing broadcasters and the GPO concluded that in the UK 'It would be impossible to have a large number of firms broadcasting. It would result only in a sort of chaos, only in a much more aggravated form than that which arises in the United States'.³⁸

Yet despite this concern both the government and the GPO seemed hesitant to take responsibility for the day to day management of broadcasting in the UK. This was a view evinced by the fact that the Postmaster General (PMG) of the time stated 'I do not regard it as desirable that the work should be done by Government, and I do not contemplate a condition of things under which the Post Office will be doing this work'. Instead they favoured a solution that involved the existing commercial broadcasters (and manufacturers of radio equipment) coming together to create a single company that would be responsible

³⁷ Briggs, *The Birth of Broadcasting* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1961), pp. 25-90.

³⁸ Briggs, *Birth* (1961) p.96; *Hansard*, vol. 152, col. 1869, 2 Apr. 1922.

for arranging broadcasting in the UK. An idea that resulted in the formation of the British Broadcasting Company.³⁹

As Briggs points out, even before the company had been formed the fact that it would be the monopoly provider of broadcasting in the UK had been suggested when the GPO's Engineer-in-Chief corresponded with the would be first Chairman of the company, saying that 'There will be no competition as it will be the only Broadcasting Company in this country.'⁴⁰

The idea of a monopoly controlling broadcasting did not however go unchallenged and the potential problems of excess profit and power were challenged when in April 1923 the Postmaster General, William Joynson-Hicks, indicated that the government felt that there were questions to be answered in regard to the level of control that the company wielded. Joynson-Hicks suggested that he was 'not at all certain that agreement with the company gives them a monopoly licence for broadcasting' and expressed the view that a policy of collecting what were in effect compulsory taxes 'for the purpose of giving half of them to broadcasting companies' was unlikely to be deemed acceptable by parliament or the nation. These issues were used by Joynson-Hicks as evidence for the need to formally investigate the future of broadcasting in the UK. Thus he announced the intention to establish a Committee of experts to 'consider the whole question of broadcasting'. This Committee, which was appointed on 24 April 1923 under the Chairmanship of Major General Sir Frederick Sykes, would take the first steps towards creating an institution that would dominate British Broadcasting throughout the first half of the twentieth century.⁴¹

The Sykes Committee Report.

The initial scope of the Sykes Committee was broad, the terms of reference were to consider:

- a) Broadcasting in all its aspects.
- b) The contracts and licences which have been or may be granted.
- c) The action which should be taken upon the determination of the existing licence of the Broadcasting Company.
- d) Uses to which broadcasting may be put.
- e) The restrictions which may need to be placed upon its user or development.⁴²

The Sykes Committee were clear in their recognition of the potential power of this nascent form of mass communication, identifying that it might grow into something hugely influential, not just for those in urban areas but for everyone across the nation. As the report itself suggested:

It can carry speech and melody into every home. It can bring isolated towns and villages into close touch with the great centres of population and thereby alleviate

³⁹ *Hansard*, vol. 155, col. 774, 16 June 1922; Briggs, *Birth*, p. 107.

⁴⁰ Briggs, *Birth*, p. 123-4.

⁴¹ *Hansard*, vol. 162, col 2442, 19 April 1923; *Hansard*, vol. 162, col 2444, 19 April 1923.

⁴² HMSO, *The Broadcasting Committee: Report* CMD. 1951 August 1923.

one of the severest drawbacks in rural life... It may be that broadcasting holds social and political possibilities as great as any technical attainment of our generation.⁴³

There is a striking parallel between this description of the social and political functions and the concept of a public sphere. The Sykes Committee believed that wireless broadcasting had the potential to act as a conduit between different populations enabling ideas and culture to be shared between groups that may otherwise have little contact. They also recognised that broadcasting might have a bigger impact on rural life than urban existence, although this was framed in terms of bringing the rural in touch with the 'great centres of population' rather than introducing those centres to rural life, culture and ideas. The concept of metropolitan areas broadcasting to, or perhaps more accurately, *at* provincial areas is a central theme within East Anglia's overall experience of broadcasting that was established at a very early stage.

It is important to note that from an early stage East Anglia did have some kind of relationship with broadcasting. The region was not full of country bumpkins or luddites who resisted the advance of this new medium. The *Eastern Daily Press* carried an article on 15 November 1922 describing how an 'amateur wireless receiving station' in Brundall had heard the official news broadcasting at 6pm the previous evening and that 'the speech was clear, and the items were heard distinctly and appreciated.'⁴⁴

This however was obviously not a regular activity for 'normal' people within the region. Whilst those listening into the broadcast are described as 'amateurs' twice within the article, the use of the phrase 'wireless receiving station' does suggest that the equipment required to receive the broadcasts was not the preserve of the masses at this stage. Rather it was the preserve of the 'enthusiastic amateur', a view reinforced by the lack of coverage of broadcasting in the newspaper during the following four months. It is not until 16 April 1923 that an article about wireless broadcasting was next published. The *Wireless Notes* article appears to have been written by an 'enthusiastic amateur' and mentions a 'recent meeting of the Norwich and District Radio Society' during which problems of reception were discussed and the content of broadcasts praised. The existence of a local society interested in radio suggests that whilst still a minority activity, there was a growing curiosity within the region about the potential of wireless.⁴⁵

The presence of adverts for wireless receiving equipment in the *Eastern Daily Press* also provides some credence to the view that interest in wireless was rising amongst the general population of East Anglia at this time, although their general tone suggests that it was still necessary to persuade people of the value and reliability of wireless broadcasting. Two adverts from the spring and summer of 1923 best exemplify this. The first, Fig. 1, originates from 12 May 1923 and advertises the fact that Jarrolds, a department store in Norwich, was offering 'Complete installations' with guaranteed results.

⁴³ *The Broadcasting Committee: Report* CMD. 1951 August 1923, para 4, p. 6.

⁴⁴ 'Broadcasting Begins', *Eastern Daily Press*, 15 November 1922, p. 4.

⁴⁵ 'Wireless Notes', *Eastern Daily Press*, 16 April 1923 p. 12.

Fig. 1

Jarrolds EDP Advert, 12 May 1923.⁴⁶



The second advert, Fig. 2, is from Mann Egerton, a local retailer with interests in the aircraft, automobile and automotive sales sector as well as electrical retailing, offered onsite demonstration of wireless at 'garden fetes', 'shows' and 'bazaars'. This suggests that as a medium wireless had not yet been fully incorporated into the domestic environment and could still be sold to the general public on the grounds of it being a spectacle that would draw a crowd.

Fig. 2

Mann Egerton EDP Advert, 5 June 1923.⁴⁷



These types of advert were not simply 'one offs'. The themes presented in each were repeated in adverts during the winter of 1923. Mann Egerton toured the region in a 'scarlet and gold van' and gave special demonstrations 'in any part of East Anglia by appointment'.

⁴⁶ 'Jarrolds Advert', *Eastern Daily Press*, 12 May 1923, p. 8.

⁴⁷ 'Mann Egerton Advert', *Eastern Daily Press*, 5 June 1923, p. 7.

Jarrolds promoted their Wireless Department by claiming that wireless offered ‘Endless Enjoyment and No Bother’, allaying the fears of any potential purchasers by stating that ‘Once the receiving set is properly installed it need give no further bother than would a gramophone, and its enjoyment would necessitate no more scientific knowledge’.⁴⁸

Whilst it seems clear that adoption of radio was not widespread within East Anglia at this stage, it is also evident that even from this very early stage the possibilities of wireless that the Sykes Committee had identified were being explored in East Anglia, some eager listeners were keen to access the ideas and culture of the metropolitan areas that they had been physically separated from for so long.

Another investigation.

Despite the successes of the British Broadcasting Company, or rather because of them, the government announced its intention to convene another investigation on the future of broadcasting. The Crawford Committee’s full terms of reference were announced in August 1925 and were more precise than had been granted to the Sykes Committee two years earlier, requiring them:

to advise as to the proper scope of the broadcasting service and as to the management, control and finance thereof after the expiry of the existing licence on 31st December, 1926. The Committee will indicate what changes in the law, if any, are desirable in the interests of the broadcasting service.⁴⁹

Whilst the Committee undertook their investigation, the popularity and reach of broadcasting continued to increase, partially stimulated by the establishment of a high power longwave broadcasting station at Daventry intended to serve as much of the country as possible and replacing an experimental station with the call sign 5XX located in Chelmsford. The development of this new transmitter did not go unnoticed in East Anglia and listeners from the region attempted to tune in to the signals with considerable enthusiasm.⁵⁰

On 19 July 1925 a letter from ‘L. Plummer’ was published detailing his experience of near electrocution by his wireless equipment during stormy conditions and on the 24 July 1925 an article described how ‘loud and clear’ reception of tests from the new Daventry transmitter had been ‘heard in Norwich yesterday by the staff of Mr. A. J. Rudd’. This article also provided a useful insight into the reception problems that blighted parts of East Anglia, as it pointed out that ‘Many places which had been blind spots when Chelmsford was transmitting were blind spots no longer’. Perhaps the clearest sign that wireless had established a firmer grip on the region was the fact that the *Eastern Daily Press* began printing daily programme listings for the British Broadcasting Company’s London Programmes at this time. They clearly believed that a higher enough proportion of their readership were now interested enough in wireless to allocate it space within the newspaper on a routine basis.⁵¹

⁴⁸ ‘Mann Egerton Advert’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 25 October 1923, p. 3; ‘Jarrolds Advert’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 20 November 1923, p. 6.

⁴⁹ *Hansard*, vol. 187 col. 1710, 7 August 1925.

⁵⁰ Norman Tomalin, *Daventry Calling the World*, (Whitby: Caedmon, 1998), p. 7.

⁵¹ ‘Wireless and Lightning’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 19 July 1925, p. 5; ‘New Broadcasting Station’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 24 July 1925, p. 9; ‘To-days B.B.C London Programme’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 22 July 1925, p. 9.

The questions that the Crawford Committee tackled were therefore of more than just abstract interest to East Anglians, the suggestions that the committee recommended would be relevant to not only the long-term future of broadcasting within the region but also the present situation.

When the Crawford Committee report was published in the spring of 1926 the recommendations moved beyond those of the Sykes Committee. The members of the Crawford Committee clearly shared their predecessors view that there was an inherent danger in allowing broadcasting to be subject to the whims of the free market due to the way in which it could ‘impact on the education and temperament of the country’ and that given the expansion of its reach and its commercial foundation the British Broadcasting Company was no longer able to act according to ‘national requirements or responsibility’⁵².

Like their predecessor the Crawford Committee rejected the US system of uncontrolled transmission, or free competition, as unsuitable for the UK. It instead suggested there were only four suitable methods available: the State took responsibility, that the British Broadcasting Company had its licence renewed, that a new company be formed on the analogy of the British Broadcasting Company, or that a public corporation be set up to ‘act as a Trustee for the national interest in Broadcasting.’⁵³

The Committee’s preferred choice was the final option, which would create a ‘British Broadcasting Commission’ that would have status and duties that ‘correspond with those of a public service, and its directorate should be appointed with the sole object of promoting the utmost utility and development of the enterprise’ and would be funded by revenue from the existing licence fee mechanism for a period of ten years, but that after this a future government might choose to alter their approach to broadcasting in light of changes in technology, society or ideology.⁵⁴

Although, as Briggs points out the government’s response to the report was not instantaneous. The Postmaster General was generally receptive to the recommendations in it. A cabinet memo from the Postmaster General stated:

I hope the Cabinet will accept the principle of a single authority so constituted. The State must continue to exercise control over certain matters, such as hours of working, wave lengths, power and location of stations, in order to prevent interference with Government and other wireless service, but with these exceptions I think it is important to emphasise that the authority will be free to work out its own policy and, in particular, will have unfettered control of its programmes.⁵⁵

Ultimately the Cabinet decided to implement a variant of the Crawford Committee’s recommendation. At the suggestion of the General Post Office they incorporated an organisation to control broadcasting under a Royal Charter, thus creating the British Broadcasting Corporation. They imbued it with an independence from Government and a

⁵² *The Broadcasting Committee: Report, Cmd. 2599, March 1926, Para 2, 3, p. 4.*

⁵³ *The Broadcasting Committee: Report Cmd. 2599 March 1926: Para 4, p. 5.*

⁵⁴ *The Broadcasting Committee: Report Cmd. 2599 March 1926: Para 5, p. 5.*

⁵⁵ The National Archives: Cabinet Papers, CAB 24 179 11, 15th March 1926 Para. 2.

responsibility to treat broadcasting as a public good that should be a benefit to everyone in the United Kingdom starting from 1 January 1927.⁵⁶

On the eve of the official opening of the BBC as a corporation the *Eastern Daily Press* marked the shift in organisation, noting that although listeners would be ‘quite unaffected by the change in control’ it represented ‘the passing of control of this great feature of present day life from private hands to that of the Government’. It should of course be pointed out that the newspaper had clearly misinterpreted the detail of the change. Broadcasting was emphatically not under the direct control of the state, that was an option that had been rejected by the Crawford Committee and the Cabinet. The new Corporation would need to work alongside Government departments such as the General Post Office and would be beholden to spending limits imposed by licence fee revenue and Treasury policy, but it would have responsibility for proposing how broadcasting should expand across the nation and therefore the decisions it made would have profound implications for East Anglia.⁵⁷

‘The Regional Plan’.

The transition of the British Broadcasting Company to Corporation rather than the creation of an entirely new entity allowed the ‘new’ organisation to continue with the expansion plans that it had already started during its previous incarnation. When the Company began broadcasting in 1922 it did so from stations located in London, Manchester and Birmingham and during 1923-24 a network of ‘relay’ stations were established to increase coverage. This expansion of the network meant that whilst when the service opened just over 40% of the total population were within ‘uninterrupted service range of a station’ and able to receive the service on cheap crystal receivers, by the end of the first full year of broadcasting this had increased to over 53% and by the end of September 1925 it was claimed that nearly 80% of the population were within range.⁵⁸

Whilst an undeniably impressive achievement it still left one-fifth (20%) of the British population outside of the range of the service, a fifth largely made up of the ‘isolated towns and villages’ that the Sykes Committee Report had already identified as potentially benefiting the most from access to broadcasting. The model of expansion that the BBC had adopted for wireless was focused on reaching the largest amount of people, as fast as possible and for the lowest cost.⁵⁹

The limitations of the scheme in regards of the inequality between urban and rural areas were known to the BBC. In 1924 they acknowledged that although they had a service that ‘brought 75 per cent. of the population within a *B Service area* of some one station, but gave a service, in fact only to the urban but not the country districts’. Reaching country districts such as those in East Anglia, and the question of how exactly the network would evolve,

⁵⁶ The National Archives: Cabinet Papers CAB 24 179 11 15th March 1926 Para. 6.

⁵⁷ This is of course not factually correct, the Royal Charter was intended to ensure that broadcasting was not under the direct control of this, or any other, government.

⁵⁸ BBC, *BBC Handbook 1928: B.B.C – The Old Regime*, p. 39

⁵⁹ The 1928 *BBC Handbook* makes reference to the fact that all of the twenty-one stations, except for one, were ‘based upon the idea of serving an urban area’. BBC, *BBC Handbook: B.B.C. – The New Regime*, p. 47.

were issues that exercised the mind of one individual in particular, the BBC's Chief Engineer P.P. Eckersley.⁶⁰

Having achieved the initial goals of arranging a transmission that was 'free from interference', 'a faithful copy of the original' and capable of being 'picked up on cheap and simple receivers', Eckersley shifted focus onto his next ambition: 'to give listeners a choice of programmes which could be equally clearly heard and likewise picked up on simple sets'. Although he claimed that it took only two minutes in 1924 for him to formulate the idea of how this ambition could be delivered, it would take the next five years for it to be put into action and for the first iteration of a 'Regional Scheme' to become reality.⁶¹

Eckersley recognised that the BBC had a 'duty to serve the rural as well as the urban areas of Britain'. He also knew that 'the problem of filling up all the country areas not served by main and relay stations with good service broadcasting was by no means easily solved'. The existing series of medium wave stations only had a range of 'ten or twenty miles' and increasing the power of main stations would have risked overpowering many of the receivers the public were using. Instead Eckersley proposed the use of an alternative system using long waves, which he felt would have a much greater range. By locating a high-power station in a central location of England and Wales he believed the BBC would be able to reach the rural areas that had previously been poorly served. The transmission station established at Daventry proved that this hypothesis was correct and helped create a starting point for an entirely new broadcasting plan.⁶²

Eckersley set out his proposal for the 'Regional Scheme' to the BBC in June 1927 but faced opposition to its implementation. The plan was not just an attempt to bring broadcasting to rural areas but also an attempt to bring an element of choice to listeners. Eckersley suggested that there was considerable resistance to this idea from certain sections of the BBC who 'didn't see why listeners wanted alternative programmes at all', although this was ultimately overcome due to the support of the Director General.⁶³

The scheme also required changes to be made to the public's receiving equipment and it was feared that despite the fact that the general public would end up with a 'better' service overall, the growing pains involved in doing so might result in a backlash against the BBC. In order to mitigate against this the BBC chose to not rush through the changes that had been proposed, to make certain that switchover was as painless as possible.⁶⁴

The implementation of the scheme was also affected by external political factors. BBC plans of this scale required approval from the Post Office. It needed to balance the needs of the BBC with the concerns of the Military Services about interference and the fact that any decision about the future use of radio in the United Kingdom could only be made after the allocation of specific wavelengths for individual nations had been settled at the 1927 World Wireless Conference in Washington.⁶⁵

⁶⁰ BBC, *BBC Handbook 1928: The Regional Scheme*, p. 60.

⁶¹ P.P. Eckersley, *The Power Behind the Microphone* (London: J Cape, 1942), pp. 115-6.

⁶² *Ibid.*, pp. 76-77.

⁶³ Briggs, *The Golden Age of Wireless*, p. 294; *BBC Handbook, The Regional Scheme*, p. 59; Eckersley, *Power*, p. 116.

⁶⁴ Briggs, *Golden Age*, p. 298.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 303.

The BBC also needed to adopt a financially pragmatic approach to any expansion of its network. The scheme that Eckersley had proposed was at the cutting-edge of technology at the time and was therefore likely to be expensive. The previous ‘relay station’ policy had in contrast been comparatively cost effective in ‘increasing coverage at a time when the BBC wished to increase licence revenue yet could not employ large amounts of capital.’⁶⁶

Whilst the decisions taken during the initial expansion of the BBC’s wireless network, and the subsequent delay of Eckersley’s ‘regional plan’ naturally affected all regions of the United Kingdom, the impact on East Anglia was particularly acute. It had been left outside of the original expansion of the ‘relay stations’, the nearest station to Norfolk and Suffolk was the station in Chelmsford, and the slow rollout of the ‘regional plan’ meant that throughout the 1920s and early 1930s the region continued to be isolated from the ‘national’ service in a manner unlike any other.

The Regional Plan becomes a Regional Scheme.

The basic structure of the Eckersley’s Regional scheme was completed in 1933. After the experimental station at Daventry was built sites at Brookmans Park, Moorside Edge, Westerglen and Washford Cross were chosen as places for the new stations. This meant that the BBC had effectively divided the United Kingdom into five regions: London and the Home Counties, Birmingham and the Midlands, the industrial North of England, Scotland and the West of England and Wales. The creation of the Regional scheme clearly had benefits in regard to expanding the service further than ever before and providing a degree of choice (between the ‘national’ and ‘regional’ services) for audiences, but the manner in which it was implemented and the attitude of BBC executives towards the individual regions meant that it also created a problem – centralisation.⁶⁷

Although Eckersley approached the expansion of the network from an engineer’s perspective, he was not unaware of the cultural aspects that might also be involved. Just prior to leaving the BBC in 1929 he authored the *Report on the Proposed Regional Scheme* in which he suggested that the Regional Scheme existed ‘to give certain Regions programmes having Regional significance, or to put it another way, local culture’. However, this was a minority viewpoint in the higher ranks of the BBC. As Briggs points out the accepted viewpoint during the 1920s was that London was the ‘cultural metropolis’ of the country and the place ‘from which ‘the best’ was most likely to come’.⁶⁸

This was reflected in the way the BBC approached the Regional Scheme. Financial resources were directed primarily towards London and regional stations were encouraged to ‘take from London what you cannot do better yourself, and do yourself what London cannot give you’. In an article published in 1930 the Director General outlined that the purpose, and policy, of the BBC was to make the ‘amenities of metropolitan culture’ available to ‘those who live in circumstances of the greatest physical isolation equally with those who inhabit

⁶⁶ Ibid., p. 294.

⁶⁷ Eckersley, *Power*, p. 118.

⁶⁸ Eckersley, *Report on the Proposed Regional Scheme* 1929, p. 8, BBC WAC R53/213/1; Briggs, *Golden Age*, p. 306.

the great centres of population' and that is aspired 'to bring to the maximum number an appreciation of all that is best in every sphere of human endeavour and achievement'.⁶⁹

Although this approach followed the view of broadcasting that had been initially advanced by the Sykes Committee, namely that broadcasting could link metropolitan areas to rural ones it failed to embrace the possibility of the inverse being true. The prospect of the regions producing distinctive content that could be shared beyond their administrative borders was therefore low but for East Anglia the situation was perhaps more bleak than anywhere else. Whilst each of the BBC's regions faced challenges of being underfunded, undervalued and underutilised they did at least have an opportunity to have programmes and news from their locality heard, Briggs suggests that East Anglia found itself in a unique position: it was actually *outside* the Regional Scheme.⁷⁰

This clearly did not mean that people in East Anglia could not, and did not hear wireless broadcasts. As has been seen broadcasting had become part of contemporary life for some in the region by the late 1920s. Given this it seems necessary to assess the validity Briggs' claim. Firstly, the issue of whether or not the BBC's 'London Region' was actually ever part of the Regional Scheme needs to be clarified. The BBC clearly believed that it was. In the *1929 BBC Handbook* the site of the London station at Brookmans Park was the subject of a feature titled 'The First Regional Station' which claimed that 'the object of the new station is firstly to cover larger and wider areas without interruption, and secondly to give all South-east England sooner or later an alternative programme'.⁷¹

This view was repeated in the *1930 BBC Handbook* in an article titled 'The Regional Scheme' when reference was made to 'the new London Regional Station'. Although this time it was with the caveat that the station would only be 'making a single programme distribution over the metropolis and Home Counties'. The following year's *Handbook* again made reference to the station being part of the Regional Scheme, suggesting that 'the main object of the new London Station is to provide, for a region which consists mainly of London and the South-Eastern Counties, a service of two contrasted programmes'. However, it was not until the *1937 Handbook* that Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire were explicitly mentioned as being part of the London Region.⁷²

When viewed together this evidence does suggest that, in public at least, the BBC felt that not only was the London region part of the overall Regional scheme but also that from at least 1937 Norfolk was included in the region. However, this does not mean that Briggs' claim is necessarily unjustified. Scannell and Cardiff suggest that the London region operated in a different way to the rest of the regional scheme as it covered its designated regional area in name only. They argue that 'London Regional' had 'never been intended as a true regional programme' as it had 'no separate staff or production centre' and the

⁶⁹ Ibid. p. 307; Lord Reith, 'Broadcasting and a Better World', *The Spectator*, 22 November 1930. p. 19. <<http://archive.spectator.co.uk/article/22nd-november-1930/19/broadcasting-and-a-better-world>> [accessed 28/11/2015].

⁷⁰ Briggs, *Golden*, p. 325.

⁷¹ BBC, 'The First Regional Station', *BBC Handbook 1929*, pp. 29-32.

⁷² BBC, 'The Regional Scheme', *BBC Handbook 1930*, p. 29; BBC, 'The London Regional Station', *BBC Handbook 1931*, 1931; p. 269; BBC, *BBC Handbook 1937*, p. 12.

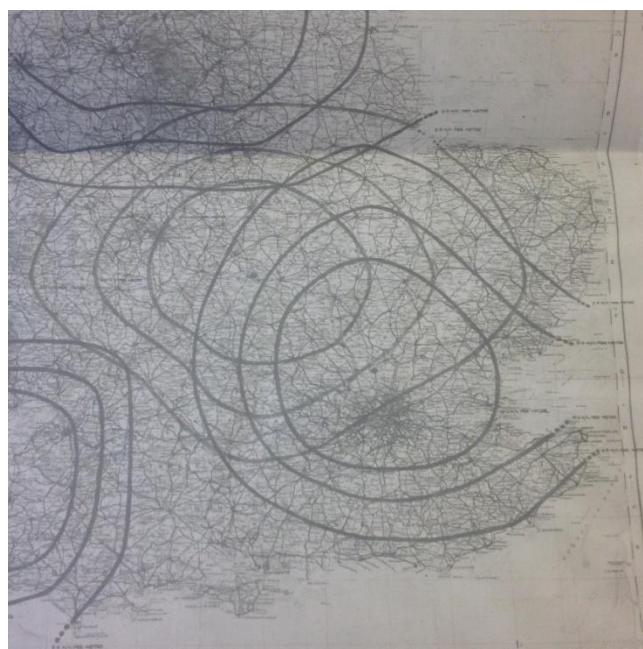
programme that it offered was planned and produced from the BBC's Head Office and was dominated by 'overspill' material from the National Programme.⁷³

Equally it appears clear that the main intended audience for the London Regional Programme was in fact London and the immediate area. Briggs points out that when the service was launched it was listeners in areas such as Barnet and Park Lane that were provided with advice and pamphlets explaining what they needed to do to receive the new service. There is no mention of similar action in the Home Counties and there was no coverage at all in the *Eastern Daily Press* of the opening of the new service nor advice on how potential listeners could best receive it.⁷⁴

Eckersley's *Report on the Proposed Regional Scheme* also suggests that any claim that Norfolk in particular was part of the London region was at best exaggerated. The report contained two maps, one showing the distribution of the Regional Programme from each transmitter (Fig. 3), and the other showing the Distribution of the National Programme from each transmitter (Fig. 4).⁷⁵

The map shown in Fig. 3 clearly indicates that a large proportion of Norfolk was located outside the outer limit of the Regional Programme being transmitted from London. In fact, according to the map most of the County, with the notable exception of Norwich, was covered by Regional broadcasts from the Midlands based transmitter.

Fig. 3
Distribution of Regional Programmes (1929).



⁷³Paddy Scannell and David Cardiff, *A Social History of Broadcasting* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991), p. 326.

⁷⁴ Briggs, *Golden*, p. 310.

⁷⁵Eckersley, *Report on the Proposed Regional Scheme* 1929, p. 8, BBC WAC R53/213/1.

The situation regarding the Universal (National) service, shown in Fig. 4, was equally clear, the service broadcast from London would reach as far as the south of Suffolk and parts of Cambridgeshire but wireless listeners in Norfolk would be better served by tuning into the Midlands service if they wished to listen. Whilst it is not in any doubt that potential listeners in Norfolk were able to listen to wireless broadcasts by the BBC this was not *because* of the implementation of the Regional scheme but rather *in spite* of it.

Fig. 4
Distribution of Universal Programme (1929).



Even if East Anglia was part of the London ‘region’ it is difficult to imagine that listeners in the region would have had much interest in any local news and content from and about the London area which did sneak into the schedules between the ‘overspill’ from the National Programme. It is impossible to believe that, given the policy of the BBC at the time, the London station would have regularly made effort to carry broadcasts from, or about, East Anglia.

Time for one more investigation.

The limitations of the Regional Scheme became a topic of discussion not just within the BBC but also for politicians as the end of the Corporation’s first Royal Charter approached. Another Committee on Broadcasting was assembled in April 1935, this time chaired by Viscount Ullswater. It was asked to ‘consider the constitution, control, and finance of the broadcasting service’ from 1937 onwards. Although the Committee recommended that the BBC be granted a Royal Charter for another 10 years, it also passed comment on the Regional structure of the BBC and offered recommendations for the future.⁷⁶

The Ullswater Committee did not attempt to dictate to the BBC what the Regional Scheme should look like in the future, but they did state that it would be ‘undesirable that large

⁷⁶ HMSO, *Report of the Broadcasting Committee 1935*, Cmd. 5091, p. 5.

populations which differ widely in their character and culture should be combined within a single Region'. They also believed the future of the BBC 'to depend upon the maintenance of a good proportion of regional matter through the development of regional resources including "outside broadcasts", and upon constant attention to the needs, events, and interests of individual Regions'.⁷⁷

Yet despite this political interest in regional broadcasting there was no mention in the Committee's report of the odd position occupied by the London Region within the BBC's Regional Scheme. The point the Committee raised about the undesirability of large regions lacking in shared culture and character was particularly relevant to the scope of the London Region, but in fact the Committee raised this point only in regard to their belief in the need for two additional regions; one for Wales and the other for North-Eastern England.⁷⁸

The focus on Wales and the North East rather than the London region and the plight of East Anglia might be explained by the witnesses that provided evidence to the Committee. Those who gave evidence included the BBC's Regional Director for the North (E. G. D. Liveing) and two MPs from the Welsh Parliamentary Party (Capt. R. T Evans and D. R. Grenfell). Whilst the testimony that they provided to the Committee was not published it is not unreasonable to suggest that the evidence that they gave may have emphasised the needs of their regions and helped persuade the Committee to conclude that these regions deserved special attention from the BBC. In contrast, no individuals or groups provided representation for East Anglia. Therefore the fact that East Anglia was effectively outside of the Regional Scheme remained largely unknown and consequently was not a problem that needed to be addressed.⁷⁹

The BBC's reaction to the suggestions of the Committee regarding the future of the regions was to create a new post of *Director of Regional Relations* and to transfer Charles Siepmann from the position of Director of Talks to the new role. Siepmann's first task was to complete an in-depth survey of the regions and report back to Head Office. The document he produced, *Report on Regions*, in January 1936 was far from a ringing endorsement of the Regional Scheme that had evolved. He suggested that 'among thinking men and women in all parts of the country' he found 'a common preoccupation with the dangers resulting from the increasing tendency for administrative, cultural and industrial concentration in London' and that the provinces were being 'denuded' and 'deprived of opportunities for self expression and of that richness and variety of experience which London enjoys and assumes as a matter of course'.⁸⁰

For Siepmann the policy of 'centralization', that had been a key component of the BBC's expansion, was 'short-sighted'. Denying the Regions the resources to maintain and develop their services not only starved the 'seed-ground' for the London programmes but more importantly limited the ability of the Corporation to help improve the quality of culture nationwide, and more generally enrich provincial life. This was something that was not assisted by the fact that much of the material originating from London was also 'out of tone'

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 9, 11.

⁷⁸ Ibid. p. 9.

⁷⁹ Ibid. p. 55.

⁸⁰ Scannell and Cardiff, *A Social History*, p. 329; Siepmann, *Report on Regions*, p. 1, BBC WAC R34/845.

for the regional ear and lacking in ‘illustration that hits home by reference to facts and conditions capable of local recognition’.⁸¹

Both the Controller of Programmes and the Deputy Director General commented on the report. They agreed that ‘there was a case for Regional broadcasting’ which reflected ‘the local life and characteristics in the different regions’ but cautioned that the Corporation should not replace a policy of London centralisation with a series of local centralisations.⁸²

When the BBC Board of Governors eventually passed on the Corporations official response to the Regional Directors in July 1936 they largely reinforced the recommendations that Siepmann had made. The Board recognised the importance of Regional broadcasting, not just in respect of providing a counterbalance against the centralisation present within the BBC, but also against ‘the general tendency outside broadcasting towards centralisation on the metropolis’. But this recognition of the important role that the regions could play within the BBC should not be mistaken for a fundamental shift in the power relationship between London and the Regions. The document is also clear that the Regions must recognise the need ‘to collect material from all over the country’, that any decentralisation was ‘not in any way inconsistent with the closest co-operation between London and the Regions and between the Regions themselves’ and that ‘co-operation must include supervision to ensure uniformity of policy in all matters, both artistic and general’. London, as before, remained fully in charge.⁸³

In fact any good news for the regions that came from Siepmann’s Report and the subsequent response from the BBC Governors had little relation to East Anglia anyway. Although Siepmann claimed to have visited all of the regions (spending one to three weeks in each) he did not visit the London region. The Governor’s decisions on the Report therefore were only of relevance and communicated to the Midlands, North, Scottish, Welsh and West England and Northern Ireland regions. Norfolk and East Anglia were not after all part of the existing Regional scheme, nor part of its future evolution. A service that fulfilled their unique characteristics would therefore continue to be missing from the BBC for some time to come.⁸⁴

A Parallel Development.

Whilst much of the BBC’s resources had been committed to the foundation and expansion of the wireless service prior to 1936, the corporation also found itself involved in experimentation with a promising new technology – television.

As Winston points out, the development of television depended upon technological research and development in a number of interrelated phenomena (variable resistance to electricity, photoemission and fluorescence), and took place over several decades during the late 19th to early 20th centuries across a number of countries. However, in the United Kingdom the growth of interest in the concept of television and the eventual development of a broadcast system, can most readily be traced back to the early research and activities of John Logie

⁸¹ Siepmann, *Report on Regions*, pp. 1-2.

⁸² *Controller of Programme’s Comments on Reports on the Regions*, p. 2; *Deputy Director General’s Observations on Director of Regional Relations’ Report*, p. 1. BBC WAC R34/845.

⁸³ *Decisions on Director of Regional Relations’ Report on the Regions* pp. 1-2, BBC WAC R34/845.

⁸⁴ Scannell and Cardiff, *A Social History*, p. 330; *Decisions on Director of Regional Relations’ Report on the Regions*, p. 1, BBC WAC R34/845.

Baird. In 1923 he placed an advertisement in *The Times* requesting physical assistance from someone to create a ‘working model’ to enable ‘seeing by wireless’⁸⁵

The experimentation undertaken alongside the BBC during the 1920s and early 1930s, as well as the parallel research taking place in other countries are not the focus of this thesis. It is however worth noting that whilst there was no coverage in the *Eastern Daily Press* of the BBC’s experiments with television during the 1920s, in January 1927 the paper did publish an article describing a demonstration of a method to broadcast images over a distance of around two miles by Dr H. F. W. Alexanderson in New York on 11 January. This had resulted in a crude reproduction of a conversation, but one where ‘the heads and arms of the two figures moved as they had done in the original’. Although regular readers of the newspaper may have remained oblivious to the work taking place in the BBC at this time, they were certainly now aware of the concept of television.⁸⁶

Although the BBC had been involved in the experimental transmission of broadcasts by both the Baird system and the rival system from E.M.I from 1929-1934, under the terms of its Royal Charter it was not guaranteed to be the provider of any television service that might emerge from those tests. The uncertainty as to what form television would take in the UK, and to whom responsibility for it would be granted, was cleared up by the formation of a Government Committee. Chaired by Lord Selsdon, it was to ‘consider the development of television and to advise the Postmaster-General on the relative merits of the several systems and on the conditions under which any public service of television should be provided.’ The Committee solicited for representations and evidence from parties interested in television via a notification in the press in May 1934 and considered evidence from thirty-eight witnesses during the course of the investigation.⁸⁷

Early in the final report the Committee let it be known that any system of television that was to be introduced in Britain must be of ‘high definition’ and be accompanied by sound i.e. there would be no equivalent to the ‘silent film era’. Further the ‘close relationship which must exist between sound and television broadcasting’ pragmatically the most appropriate policy was to entrust the BBC with responsibility for both.⁸⁸

However, this decision was not taken without the Committee considering the option of ‘letting private enterprise nurture the infant service until it is seen whether it grows sufficiently to deserve adoption by a public authority’. Although the idea was ultimately rejected due to the fact it would have signified ‘a departure from the principle of having only a single authority broadcasting a public sound service on the air’ and because the process of granting licences to all potentially interested parties would have been both expensive and

⁸⁵ Brian Winston, ‘The Development of Television’, *The Television History Book*, Ed. by Michelle Hilmes (London: BFI, 2003), pp. 9-12; Francis Wheen, *Television* (London: Century, 1985), p. 11.

⁸⁶ See Wheen, *Television* pp. 11-25; Briggs, *Golden* pp. 519-546 for a fuller description of the advancements made and challenges overcome during this period; ‘Moving Pictures Broadcast by Wireless’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 12 January 1927, p. 10.

⁸⁷ Briggs, *Golden*, pp. 566-582; ‘Television Inquiry Appointment of Committee’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 15 May 1934, p. 10; HMSO, *Report of the Television Committee*, Cmd. 4793, (1935), p. 4.

⁸⁸ Defined as being of ‘not less than 240 lines per picture, with a minimum picture frequency of 25 per second’ *Report of the Television Committee*, pp. 9, 12.

practically difficult. An early opportunity to break the BBC's monopoly over broadcasting in the United Kingdom had been passed over by the Selsdon Committee.⁸⁹

Whilst an important decision in respect of the overall history of British broadcasting, the recommendations that the Committee made in proposing the potential scale of television in Britain were just as important for prospective television viewers in East Anglia. As a result of the technical expertise represented by the witnesses and the visits to television experiments in both the USA and Germany, the Committee were able to identify the factors that needed to be overcome to ensure the development of a truly national television system.

The first limiting factor was a technical one, related to the potential range of television transmitters. Based upon past experience, and the available technology, the Committee suggested that transmission stations broadcasting with a 10kw capacity would have a radius over 'moderately undulating country' that would not exceed a 'radius of approximately 25 miles'. Further that consequently 'a large number of transmitting stations would be required to provide a service covering most of the country'. Although that with ten stations 'probably at least 50 per cent of the population could be covered from suitable locations'.⁹⁰

The second limiting factor was the purchase cost of a television set for viewers. The Committee suggested that the initial cost of a set capable of receiving both sound and image would initially range between £50 to £80. As the average annual salary of a British worker was estimated at around £200 it is easy to understand why the Committee felt that the cost of a television set might prove to be a significant barrier. In fact for those in rural areas the barrier was even more significant. In Norfolk the minimum wage for agricultural workers had been set by the Norfolk Agricultural Wages Committee at 31s 10 ½ d per week, circa £83 per year. Few people with that income would have been able to justify spending over fifty percent of their annual income on a television set.⁹¹

Despite these concerns the Committee remained firmly committed to 'the ultimate establishment of a general television service in this country', with the understanding that such a service could only be reached step by step, and that 'the steps should be as frequent as possible'. The first step would understandably begin in London as the BBC's existing broadcasting and administrative infrastructure were located there alongside the facilities used during the BBC's experiments with Baird and Marconi-EMI.⁹²

However, beginning the process in London and harnessing the existing infrastructure would still be expensive. The cost of setting up and running a London television station from the latter part of 1935 until the end of 1936 was estimated by the Committee as being £180,000, a sum of money that the BBC would need to find. The Television Committee revisited the ideas of 'direct advertisements' and 'sponsored programming' that had been considered by the Sykes Committee on Broadcasting in 1923 as sources of income, but reaffirmed the position that the former should not take place whilst restating that within the BBC's Licence there remained the possibility for the Corporation to accept 'sponsored programming'.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p.12

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*, p.15

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 10; BBC, 'Pre-war Britons 'were happier'', 1 September 2005.

<<http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/wales/4203686.stm>> [accessed 29/12/2015]; *Hansard*, vol. 329, cc. 1685-6, 29 November 1937.

⁹² *Report of the Television Committee*, pp. 15, 17.

Indeed the Committee explicitly stated that during the ‘experimental period’ of the television service they thought it ‘would be legitimate’ to ‘take advantage of the permission to accept such programmes’.⁹³

As the Committee were aware of the BBC’s resistance to any advertising, they also investigated how the television service might be funded through non-commercial means. They identified four options:

1. The raising of the fee for the general broadcast listener’s licence.
2. The issue of a special television ‘looker’s’ licence.
3. The imposition of a licence upon retailers.
4. The retention of the existing listener’s licence at 10s and the contribution from that licence revenue of the necessary funds during the experimental period.⁹⁴

Although it was the final option that was ultimately recommended, the discussion in the report surrounding the rejection of the first option clearly highlighted the problems associated with expanding television into regions such as East Anglia. The Committee realised that whilst an increase in the cost of the general licence would quickly raise the revenue required for the expansion of television it would also be a potentially divisive move. Whilst unconvinced that an increase would materially affect the number of existing listeners or slow down the rate of growth in future listeners, they specifically identified a problem relating to listeners in rural areas. As the Committee put it:

We, however see no adequate answer to the inevitable complaint from country listeners “Why should we pay an increased charge for a service which only London or some other centres can receive?”⁹⁵

Increasing the cost of a licence would mean that provincial listeners would be subsidising a service that they had no immediate prospect of being able to use. The fact that the same was true with their preferred option of ‘top slicing’ some of the existing ‘listener’s licence’ revenue to develop television was perhaps understandably not mentioned in the report. Again provincial listeners would be helping to fund a service not yet intended for them whether or not they wanted to.

Once completed the report was imminently discussed within the Cabinet. A memorandum from the Postmaster-General dated 24 January 1935 indicates that he recommended that the Cabinet accept the Committee’s proposals and that the report, alongside confirmation of the Government’s approval, be presented to Parliament as soon as possible.⁹⁶

Whilst the Postmaster-General was keen for the report to be discussed by parliamentarians, it was not until early March that the Postmaster-General was asked a question about any aspect of the Report. That question concerned whether or not a separate committee would be set up to further investigate the possibility of using ‘sponsored programmes’ to part fund the television service. The Postmaster-General could only confirm that the BBC had the right to

⁹³ Ibid., p. 21.

⁹⁴ Ibid., pp. 21-22.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 22.

⁹⁶ The National Archives: Cabinet Papers, CAB 24 253, 24 January 1935; The National Archives: Cabinet Papers, CAB 23 81 6, 30 January 1935, p. 97.

broadcast 'sponsored programmes' but that it was up to the Corporation as to whether or not they exercised that right.⁹⁷

Television: The First Three Years.

The development of the BBC's initial television service and control over its development were never purely under the domain of the BBC. The Television Advisory Committee that had been recommended by the Selsdon Television Committee, served as a forum for the BBC, the Post Office and the various interested parties to discuss options for the future of the medium. It was this Committee, rather than the BBC on its own, that approved the acquisition of the Alexandra Palace site as the home of the service just as it was the Committee rather than the BBC that made the decision to choose the EMI service, rather than the Baird system as the national standard after a trial of both systems during the opening months of the service.⁹⁸

Although the service began in the winter of 1936, the BBC's Director of Television, Gerald Cock, had given the public a glimpse of the service at the Radiolympia Exhibition in August. This provided a welcome boost to the visibility of a service that had long been in gestation. *The Times* reported that 'The most popular exhibits at Olympia yesterday were the demonstrations of experimental high definition television from the new B.B.C. station at the Alexandra Palace, there being a steady stream of viewers throughout both periods of transmission' and that by the end of Saturday 35,000 people had passed through the eight viewing booths. In fact the BBC's own estimates of the number of people that visited the television booths was much higher, with a figure of over 100,000 claimed.⁹⁹

Readers of the *Eastern Daily Press* however would not have known that this first, large scale, demonstration of BBC television had proven to be so popular. Whilst a small story in the *London Letter* column published on 27 August did mention television, it did so only in reference to the fact that 'foreign interest is greater than ever this year, and engineers, scientists and executives of American companies have paid us the compliment of arriving in impressive strength'. No mention was made of the fact that the BBC were broadcasting specially created content for the show or that visitors to the show would be able to witness this content for themselves. The only further sign that Radiolympia had even taken place was an advert by a local wireless retailer, which referenced the fact that they were able to demonstrate radio receivers shown at Radiolympia to those who had been unable to visit the show for themselves.¹⁰⁰

Launch Time.

The launch of the world's first 'high-definition', regular television service took place two months after the success of Radiolympia on the 2 November. Whilst undoubtedly a momentous event in British broadcasting history a certain amount of perspective is needed in considering the impact that the event had on the country at the time.

⁹⁷ *Hansard*, vol 298, c1770W, 5 March 1935.

⁹⁸ Briggs, *Golden*, pp. 595, 609.

⁹⁹ 'The Wireless Exhibition', *The Times* 27 August 1936, p.10; 'Brisk Business At Radiolympia', *The Times*, 31 August 1936 p. 14; *BBC Handbook 1937*, p. 147.

¹⁰⁰ 'London Letter: Seeing It For Themselves', *Eastern Daily Press*, 27 August 1936, p. 7; 'Panks Advert', *Eastern Daily Press*, 5 September 1936, p. 14.

At launch the Corporation had constructed a transmitter that had a power of around 17kw and a mast that was 220ft in height meaning that the range of those initial broadcasts was extremely limited. The BBC claimed that the station only had a range of 'about 30 miles under ordinary conditions' although also acknowledged after the event that there had been 'reports of more distant reception' published as well.¹⁰¹

Quite how many people watched the inaugural broadcast is difficult to ascertain. Aside from the limited range of the Alexandra Palace transmitter it is unknown exactly how many receiving sets were actually functional within the United Kingdom at the time. In January 1931 John Logie Baird had informed the Postmaster-General that under 1000 sets had been sold, but that he estimated that 'ten times as many had constructed their own sets'. However the television system had changed in the intervening years, meaning that those sets had become obsolete. The BBC itself suggested, in Listener Research undertaken in 1939 that around 280 sets had been sold by the end of 1936. This new service was experienced by the minority rather than the majority of the population and in a very geographically specific area.¹⁰²

Despite the fact that it was extremely unlikely that any of its' readers in Norfolk would have been watching the initial night of television, the *Eastern Daily Press* did report the event, concentrating on the 'behind the scenes' story of the evening rather than on the detail of what was actually broadcast. The article quoted the Postmaster-General as saying that the Government was confident that the BBC would 'devote itself with equal energy, wisdom and zeal to developing television broadcasting in the best interest of the nation, and that the future of the new service was safe in the Corporation's hands'. Readers of the article would have been left with the impression that the launch of the BBC's television service would have no immediate impact upon the lives of those in East Anglia.¹⁰³

Yet there was some curiosity about television within the County. Only one day after the launch the Great Yarmouth Rotary Club had organised for a talk to be given to their members on the subject of broadcasting. The *Eastern Daily Press* reported that a Mr Wolsey had explained to the assembled audience why the range of television was limited to around thirty miles, how the image was transmitted and, in answer to a question from the audience, explained that whilst it would be possible to extend the range of television by connecting small transmitter stations by landlines, to do so would be very expensive.¹⁰⁴

Growth.

Given the limited range of the service and the substantial cost of sets it is not surprising to find that sales of sets remained fairly low. The BBC estimated sales at just over 2000, whilst Murphy Radio Ltd calculated that no more than 1600 had been sold by the end of 1937. In comparison the wireless service had gone from strength to strength, with the number of licences sold annually growing from just under 2.3 million in 1927 to 8.4 million in 1937.¹⁰⁵

The coverage of broadcasting in the *Eastern Daily Press* during this period reflects the view that wireless remained firmly in the ascendency when it came to broadcasting in East

¹⁰¹ BBC Handbook 1937, p. 163.

¹⁰² Briggs, *Golden*, pp. 554, 611.

¹⁰³ 'Television: B.B.C. Opening Ceremony', *Eastern Daily Press*, 3 November 1936, p. 6.

¹⁰⁴ 'Television and its Problems', *Eastern Daily Press*, 4 November 1936. p. 7.

¹⁰⁵ Briggs, *Golden*, p. 611; BBC Annual Report and Accounts for the Year 1950-51, p. 97.

Anglia. During 1937 there were few articles on the new television service but there was a growing interest in wireless broadcasting and the evolving relationship between the BBC and the region. In January Mr. Guy Pocock, Director of Talks at the BBC, visited Dereham to discuss the problems the Corporation faced in undertaking its day-to-day business and a few weeks later the Corporation dispatched a representative to speak to the annual meeting of the Federation of Norfolk Women's Institutes. The audience, whom the *Eastern Daily Press* described as 'keenly interested and critical', appear to have been slightly more forthright and confrontational than those who attended the prior visit to Dereham.¹⁰⁶

After giving a speech on the educational value of broadcasting Mr Gibson was 'bombed with queries from all parts of the hall' including questions about the problems faced by the local audience in receiving the wireless service at all. The *Eastern Daily Press* reported that one delegate asked 'Does the B.B.C. realise how much the Regional Stations fade?', and another member asked Mr Gibson if the cure would not be 'be an Eastern Regional station?'. Mr Gibson could only respond by suggesting that the problem of 'fading' was well known to the BBC and that the problems were receiving attention.¹⁰⁷

The importance of this event should not be underestimated. It indicated that there was significant dissatisfaction with the BBC's approach to East Anglia within the general public. It inspired the Editors of the *Eastern Daily Press* to suggest that 'the large amount of insistence on this local shortcoming in the B.B.C service' might 'send Mr Gibson back to Broadcasting House convinced that there is a large number of serious listeners in Norfolk to whom, whether their interest lies in entertainment or education, the best efforts of the B.B.C. are of only partial benefit.'¹⁰⁸

It has proven difficult to establish how the BBC responded to this incident, although in April 1937 Sir Ian Fraser, one of the BBC's Governors, mentioned at the London Society of East Anglians that 'it was in contemplation to erect another station in the East which would make the service a little better'. The *Eastern Daily Press* seized upon this unofficial announcement and declared that they understood 'that the B.B.C. in pursuance of its policy of improving broadcast reception in areas in which signal strength is not satisfactory' intended 'sometime soon' to construct a transmitting station for East Anglia 'somewhere close to Norwich'. The article, and an associated editorial, also made mention of the fact that although there had been 'almost constant complaint of the shortcomings of reception, especially of the regional programmes of the B.B.C. in the county', that the south and south-west of England suffered equally, and that as the number of complaints there had been higher they would receive transmitters first. As was frequently to be the case in the future, the lack of concerted lobbying had meant that East Anglia would not receive early attention from the BBC.¹⁰⁹

This flurry of interest in the BBC was only brief despite the fact that the Radiolympia show once again took place during the end of August and beginning of September. The *Eastern*

¹⁰⁶ 'Broadcasting House', *Eastern Daily Press*, 27 January 1937 p. 6; 'Current Topics: Women and the B.B.C.', *Eastern Daily Press*, 11 March 1937, p. 6.

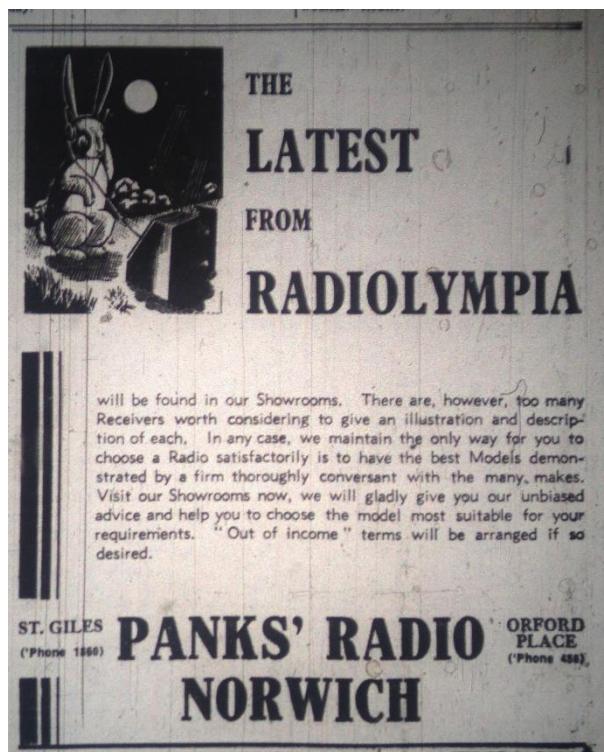
¹⁰⁷ 'Norfolk Women's Institutes', *Eastern Daily Press*, 11 March 1937, p. 11.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁰⁹ 'East Anglian Exiles', *Eastern Daily Press*, 22 April 1937, p. 6; 'B.B.C. and East Anglia', *Eastern Daily Press*, 22 April 1937, p. 9; 'Current Topics: B.B.C. Transmitter for Norwich', *Eastern Daily Press*, 22 April 1937, p. 8.

Daily Press provided no news or editorial coverage of it at all. The only mention of its existence occurred in advertisements such as that of Panks' Radio shown in Fig. 5.

Fig. 5
Panks' Radio Advert.¹¹⁰



However, an interesting development did take place when in October the *Eastern Daily Press* announced that in addition to the daily wireless listings it had printed since the summer of 1925 it would be publishing a regular column dedicated to broadcasting. The author of this 'series of weekly articles' was Malcolm Brereton, a former member of staff in the BBC's Talks Department. These articles would 'touch on many aspects of British broadcasting' whilst paying 'special attention to the needs and interests of the East Anglian listener.' In the first of the articles Brereton explained more clearly that his objective was 'first to offer you some assistance in selecting from the week's programmes' and 'second, to discuss with you either these programmes or others to which you may have listened to already.'¹¹¹

Brereton's columns are particularly useful for this thesis when he errs away from recommendations and reviews and instead articulates the experiences of the listener in the county. In the second of his articles he describes the different requirements of urban and rural listeners, explaining how when he was 'in the game' he used 'to think 9.20 the listening time for a talk', but that 'after all day in the open I find I am ready to turn in by

¹¹⁰ Advert, 'Pank's Radio', *Eastern Daily Press*, August 28 1937, p. 7.

¹¹¹ The *Eastern Daily Press*'s first listings of the 'National Service' were printed on 2 July 1925. This was expanded to include the BBC 'Regional Services' on 10 March 1930 and expanded further to include chosen 'International Services' on 10 March 1934. 'The Week's Broadcasting', *Eastern Daily Press*, 1 November 1937, p. 13; 'The Week's Broadcasting', *Eastern Daily Press*, 30 October 1937, p. 10.

nine o'clock; and particularly in harvest time I think most people in villages are going or gone to bed by then.' Although a throwaway sentence within the context of the entire article, it demonstrates that the needs of rural and metropolitan audiences were very different and that a broadcasting service based outside of the region and failing to take this into account would never achieve real success.¹¹²

Whilst Brereton was focused on the wireless service, others in the region were beginning to experiment with receiving television. Mr C. W. Wilmott had, in conjunction with Pye Radio, attempted to receive the BBC's television service broadcasts from Alexandra Palace, claiming that this was 'the first time that a high definition television transmission' had 'been received in Norwich'. The fact that a picture and images had been received despite the great range was 'further evidence that successful television reception in Norwich may be much nearer at hand than had been anticipated'. The article also reported that experiments had also taken place at Wymondham and also shown that 'in some instances' the range of the television service was 'much greater' than the BBC's estimated range of 30 miles.¹¹³

These experiments did not however indicate that the average individual would be able to receive television in East Anglia at this time. The article also pointed out that it was still 'too much to expect that all one has to do is to buy a television set and get perfect results' but that 'the next two years should see great development'. In reality successful reception during the Norwich experiment required the installation of an aerial that was 'only' 40 feet in height, took place at one of the highest points of the city and still encountered a level of interference described as 'extraordinary'. Nevertheless, this is the first time that we can see that at least some Anglians were dreaming of electric screens and as Brereton wrote several days later, the experiments gave hope that 'television may soon cease to be something nothing to do with Norfolk.'¹¹⁴

At other times Brereton highlighted the way that the BBC had included, or rather failed to include Norfolk within their own regional scheme. Perhaps the best example of this takes place in his article on the 21 February when he wrote that:

On Wednesday morning I shall be taking Ben Colman up to London for his broadcast that evening in our Really Regional programme, "England – South and East." You will remember that after a prolonged stay south of the Thames this programme moved up into Essex last time, and now, spurred no doubt by my reproaches, the B.B.C. have invited me to produce a Norfolk man for this time.¹¹⁵

In his column the following week he described how successful the broadcast had been and how 'the B.B.C. are at last putting regional matter into the Regional programme'. At the same time he playfully made a point about the general treatment of the county by the BBC by warning those in Norfolk who had heard the broadcast perfectly, to not 'say too much about this, or they may say we don't need a transmitter at Norwich after all.'¹¹⁶

The inequity of the BBC's treatment of Norfolk was expounded upon in one of Brereton's final columns for the newspaper when he subtly pointed out that he would have liked to have

¹¹² 'The Week's Broadcasting', *Eastern Daily Press*, 8 November 1937 p. 10.

¹¹³ 'Television in Norfolk', *Eastern Daily Press*, 2 December 1937, p. 7.

¹¹⁴ 'The Weeks Broadcasting', *Eastern Daily Press*, 6 December 1937, p. 10.

¹¹⁵ 'The Week's Broadcasting', *Eastern Daily Press*, 21 February 1938, p. 14.

¹¹⁶ 'The Week's Broadcasting', *Eastern Daily Press*, 28 February 1938, p. 13.

said more about the Children's Hour, 'but this has been rather sucked away from Norfolk by being confined to the Regionals, so that I do not treat it as a programme primarily available to those for whom I write.' From an early stage children's programming had been an important part of the BBC's output, featuring in every *BBC Yearbook* from 1928-1939. Yet according to Brereton a large proportion of listeners in Norfolk had no access to it.¹¹⁷

Brereton's series of articles lasted for approximately five months before ending abruptly in April 1938. They provide a useful, humorous and insightful critique and commentary on broadcasting and its role in East Anglia. It would not be replaced before the outbreak of the Second World War and Brereton's death during the conflict meant that he would not return during peacetime to continue his work.

Despite Brereton's absence coverage of broadcasting did continue. The daily programme listings remained. The newspaper reported on examples of BBC wireless broadcasts featuring Norfolk when they occasionally occurred and the annual Radiolympia exhibition received attention in an editorial article which, rather confusingly suggested that 'the reception of television' was 'extraordinarily good' in Norfolk. Further they asserted that now would be a good time for enthusiasts to buy a receiving set as they would be in no danger of becoming obsolete, a statement that seems in sharp contrast to all the evidence and coverage by the paper that preceded it.¹¹⁸

During the autumn of 1938 the *Eastern Daily Press* also returned to the topic of the place of East Anglia within the BBC services, suggesting in a thoughtful article that:

The B.B.C. has done much to draw the various local cultures of Great Britain into a common stock, from which the whole country may benefit. Some critics say that in so doing it has become one cause of the gradual loss of local individuality which is apparent nowadays. However that may be, the very local pride and individuality whose attrition is deplored, makes any district upon which the B.B.C. does not draw feel a little humiliated and neglected.

It is this feeling which is behind the recurrent call for an Eastern Regional Broadcasting Station. The B.B.C., largely because of technical difficulties in the arrangement of "land lines" to the broadcasting stations, has been rather slow to explore and to use the cultural riches of Norwich and East Anglia generally.¹¹⁹

The combination of the poor reception experienced in East Anglia and the position of the region within the BBC's Regional Scheme had resulted in the region being extremely poorly represented on the airwaves. East Anglia's position within the BBC's Regional Scheme meant that there were clearly only limited opportunities for voices and stories from the region to be heard by either local or national audiences and the absence of a regional transmitter meant that local audiences also experienced difficulties in accessing the national service available to the rest of the United Kingdom. Given this situation it is difficult to believe that local audiences felt that they were part of the BBC network and hard to argue that the region was part of the any public sphere that the BBC was creating at the time, East

¹¹⁷ 'The Week's Broadcasting', *Eastern Daily Press*, 21 March 1938, p. 13.

¹¹⁸ 'B.B.C Listeners Hear A Norfolk Story', *Eastern Daily Press*, 20 April 1938, p. 13; 'Farming Broadcasts', *Eastern Daily Press*, 20 July 1938, p. 13; 'Current Topics: Television', *Eastern Daily Press*, 29 August 1938, p. 6.

¹¹⁹ 'Current Topics: Norwich and the B.B.C.', *Eastern Daily Press*, 27 October 1938, p. 12.

Anglia simply did not have the same level of access to the BBC as other areas of the country did.

As a result one would expect that wireless would be less popular in the East Anglia region than in other areas of the country. Rather counterintuitively data from the time suggests that this was not the case. Using selected licence fee data collated in *Broadcasting and Society 1918-1939* regional comparison can be made of the sales of wireless licences in both 1931 and 1938. See Table 1.¹²⁰

Table. 1
Sales of Wireless Licences 1931 and 1938.

County	1931 Licences	% of Households with Licences	1938 Licences	% of Household with Licences
Norfolk	47,823	34	107,400	77
Suffolk	35,170	32	80,900	74
Cambridge and Huntingdon	35,926	46	60,900	77
Cornwall & Devon	100,866	34	228,300	79
Yorkshire & N. Derby	426,945	33	946,000	73
Leicester & Rutland	59,997	40	119,300	75
Stafford & Warwick	277,542	37	619,700	79
United Kingdom	3,391,042	27	8,862,900	71

In both 1931 and 1938 Norfolk, Suffolk and Cambridge all had a higher percentage of households with a wireless licence than either the national average or counties that were part of established BBC Regions. Both Yorkshire and North Derby (BBC Northern Region) and Leicester & Rutland (BBC Midland Region) had lower levels of adoption despite the comparative lack of BBC resources directed towards East Anglia. It would seem that the attitude of the BBC and the difficulty of actually receiving wireless was not enough to discourage East Anglians. However, as Pegg recognised it is necessary to approach the data with some caution as ‘the coverage for a large county such as Yorkshire may disguise wide variations in licence holding within each area’. Consequently the figures for East Anglian counties might be similarly skewed by urban areas, such as Norwich i.e. the percentage of licence holding in small towns and villages might be lower due to factors such as reception difficulties and lower wages and levels of disposable income.¹²¹

Equally caution must be exercised in assuming that the relatively high level of licence holding in Norfolk represented approval of the wireless service that was offered by the BBC.

¹²⁰ Mark Pegg, *Broadcasting and Society 1918-1939* (London: Croom Helm, 1983), pp. 12-16.

¹²¹ Ibid., p. 8.

The location of East Anglia, relatively close to continental Europe, meant that receiving foreign wireless broadcasts was possible in the area, and the inclusion of programme listings within the *Eastern Daily Press* for several of the international stations from 1934 does suggest that there was some interest in listening to these services within the County. It may have been the case that some licences in East Anglia were being purchased in order that listeners could tune into these stations without the risk of prosecution.

Whatever the reason, and despite all obstacles, it is clear that by 1939 East Anglia had adopted wireless into its life, but television remained a distant dream. The hope of 1937 that developments would mean that television would be a feature of life in the region remained unfulfilled with the BBC explaining in January that ‘when the first jump in effective transmission was made it would be to the Midlands’ rather than towards the provincial areas of the country. They reinforced this message in March when the Corporation’s Television Public Relations Officer visited the region and told an audience of wireless retailers that it was ‘hopeless’ for him ‘to try to give you any idea of when we are going to get television in the provinces.’¹²²

Whilst the news about television might have been disappointing for the region, news in February was more positive about the future of the wireless service in the region. It was announced then that ‘the British delegates to the conference at the International Broadcasting Union’ would ‘seek provision for a new B.B.C. station at Norwich’, addressing the issue of achieving ‘good reception of the regional programmes’ and pleasing ‘those local patriots who consider that East Anglian events and interests get too little attention in broadcasts.’¹²³

Whilst there is no further evidence in the *Eastern Daily Press* of any individual from Norfolk purchasing a television set and having success with receiving the BBC’s service, sales across the nation had improved, with one manufacturer claiming to have sold about 2,000 sets by February 1939. Whilst the majority of purchasers would clearly have been based in the London area (i.e. within the twenty-five mile range of Alexandra Palace), one individual from the East Anglia region purchased a set. The *Radio Times* featured an interview with a farm labourer from Suffolk who had ‘spent his life savings of £126 on a television set’. The publication praising him for his ‘courage’, ‘spirit of sacrifice’ and ‘desire for self-improvement’ whilst the man opined that ‘television’s far more entertaining and much less trouble than a wife would be.’¹²⁴

His ‘spirit of sacrifice’ was to be in vain as the outbreak of war resulted in the closure of the BBC’s television service. The 18,999 televisions that the Radio Manufacturers Association claimed had been sold before the war would remain silent for nearly seven years. Yet in truth the cessation of the service had little impact on East Anglia. Whilst people were aware of the service, few would have personally experienced it in their home counties.¹²⁵

¹²² ‘New York gets British Television’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 3 January 1939, p. 6; ‘Television not for the Provinces Yet’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 24 March 1939, p. 7.

¹²³ ‘Current Topics: Norwich B.B.C. Station’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 27 February 1939, p. 6.

¹²⁴ Keith Geddes and Gordon Bussey, *The Setmakers: A History of the Radio and Television Industry* (London: BREMA, 1991), p. 254; Francis Wheen, *Television*, p. 34.

¹²⁵ Geddes and Bussey, *The Setmakers*, p. 255.

Conclusion.

It is apparent that virtually from the very start of broadcasting in the United Kingdom there was considerable interest in the phenomenon within East Anglia. However this interest was not necessarily reciprocated by either the BBC or the Government during the interwar period. Although the BBC had adopted a regional scheme that was supposed to cover the entire United Kingdom, East Anglia uniquely managed to remain outside of it. This meant that voices, stories and experiences from the region were heard even less frequently on the wireless service than those from other BBC regions.

Both the BBC and successive Broadcasting Committees recognised the important role that broadcasting might play in provincial areas, particularly those with isolated communities, but all failed to ensure that East Anglia even received parity with other areas of the country. In part this can be explained by financial pragmatism on behalf of the BBC. The low population density of the area meant that it was expensive to reach the full local audience but it is also the case that when opportunities arose to complain about the situation there was no individual or organisation prepared to lobby on the behalf of the region, leaving the area at the back of the broadcasting queue.

Although this did not prevent wireless from significantly gaining in popularity during this period it did have wider consequences in setting a long-lasting framework for broadcasting in the region that television would follow. The combination of not being an established part of one of the BBC's administrative regions and not having strong local advocates meant that the expansion of the television service into the region would likely follow the same pattern as wireless; the region would be nearer to the back of the queue than the front.

Given these factors there must be some doubt as to whether the BBC was a genuinely national service at this time. East Anglia was not genuinely represented in the BBC, its inclusion within the London Region was an administrative, box ticking exercise, rather than an attempt to genuinely include the area within the wireless service. As such it is also difficult to argue that East Anglia was a participant in the 'public sphere' that was beginning to emerge with the formal adoption of public service principles after the Crawford Committee recommended the creation of a public corporation. Little effort was paid to expanding broadcasting from London to the East Anglia region, even less was paid to encouraging regional voices to be heard.

Chapter 2: All regions are equal but are some regions less equal than others?

Introduction.

As we have seen the television service that the BBC had established before the war was from a national service and had limited direct impact upon the people of East Anglia. The service was however always planned to be accessible from around the country, the war merely delayed its rollout. The wartime shutting of the BBC's television service, and the redeployment of many of its technical staff, created an opportunity for the Government to assess the progress that had been made thus far and make plans for its future development.

It is those plans, and the immediate post-war years, until 1949, that are the focus of this chapter. Whilst the government and the BBC put into place plans for the *national* expansion of television, the chapter considers the extent to which they had any impact upon East Anglia specifically and the parallel events occurring in the region which arguably were of greater significance both at the time and subsequently.

Preparing for Resumption.

Although questions had been posed in parliament during the first few months of the war as to when the television service might resume, it was not until 1943 that the Government appointed a Committee (known as the Hankey Committee) to investigate the future of television in Britain. The terms of reference were to:

‘prepare plans for the reinstatement and development of a service after the war with special consideration of –

- (a) The preparation of a plan for the provision of a service to at any rate the larger centres of population within a reasonable period after the war;
- (b) The provision to be made for research and development;
- (c) The guidance to be given to manufacturers, with a view especially to the development of the export trade.’¹²⁶

In their opening remarks the committee highlighted the successes of the pre-war service and pointed out that the small number of television receivers sold, at least in comparison to wireless sets, could be explained by a number of factors including ‘the cost of sets (£20 to £75)’, ‘belief that the price would soon fall’, ‘the fear of obsolescence’ and the fact that ‘the restriction of the service to the London area no doubt gave rise to the impression that the service was still in the experimental stage’. The population of East Anglia were undoubtedly amongst those who considered the television service to be experimental, but may also have had some justification in believing that, given the manner in which the BBC approached the region, from their perspective the wireless service was *also* experimental.¹²⁷

Despite the existence of these barriers to adoption, the committee recognised that during the pre-war period there had actually been some demand amongst those in the provinces for

¹²⁶ *Hansard*, vol 356 c1119 31st January 1940; *Hansard*, vol 357 c1365W 21 February 1940; *Report of the Television Committee, 1943* (1945), p. 4.

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

television. Indeed the report suggested that ‘a demand for the extension of the television service to the provinces became insistent; it was urged in Parliament, in the Press and by the radio industry’. Whilst it is true that there was pressure for the expansion of the service from the provinces, it is important to consider that equal pressure did not originate from all quarters. As the previous chapter shows, whilst there had been some public interest in television within Norfolk during this period, none of county’s MPs pushed for the expansion of television into the county and there was little concerted support shown to the idea by the county’s dominant press interest. Perhaps the lack of attention and lobbying from Norfolk partly explains why, when the Television Advisory Committee had initially suggested in 1938 a framework for expansion of the television service, their proposal left Norfolk, and to an extent East Anglia more generally, isolated from the rest of the country.¹²⁸

As Fig. 6 shows, the scheme proposed before the outbreak of war had involved an expansion of the service northwards, spreading the service to highly populated areas but the plan would also mean that the east of England, and to an extent the extreme south-west as well, would remain on the fringes of the system with potential viewers in Norfolk having little chance of receiving a reliable television signal.

Fig. 6.

Television Advisory Committee Proposed Television Stations, Dec 1938.



¹²⁸ In December 1938 the *Television Advisory Committee* suggested the television service be expanded to include four provincial stations located at Birmingham, Huddersfield, Falkirk and Bristol alongside an improvement of the existing London station. *Ibid.*, p. 5.

Regardless of whether or not certain areas of the country would initially be left out of any expansion plans, the Television Committee Report recognised that the extension of the television service to the provinces was a pre-requisite for the future success of television in Britain. They believed that this was the only way that television would ever pass from being an ‘experimental’ service in the public imagination and generate a level of demand and interest that would be sufficient so that ‘the full benefits of mass production, with resultant reduction in price’ could be achieved.¹²⁹

The Hankey Committee recommended that the television service be restarted as soon as possible, using the same technical standards as the pre-war system and that it still be operated by the BBC. They also endorsed a view that ‘plans should be made for extension of Television to possibly six of the most populous provincial centres as soon as possible’ but that the ‘scope of extension’ should be under constant review by an advisory committee consisting of representatives from the Treasury, the General Post Office, the Department of Scientific and Industrial Research and the BBC. It also made clear that it would be impossible for the BBC to fund any expansion of the television service via the revenue generated by the wireless licence fee alone suggesting that an additional television viewer licence of £1 per annum be introduced in an effort to make television ‘self-supporting as soon as possible’.¹³⁰

Whilst the Hankey Committee had taken a first step in preparing the country for the return of a television service after the war’s end, little immediate change had in fact been recommended. The practicalities of restarting television when the war ended would be left to the same interests that had controlled it before. If those interests followed the expansion plans that had been established before the war, or if they followed the recommendations of the committee to expand the network to ‘six of the most populous provincial centres’ then the consequence for potential viewers in East Anglia would be that television would remain a distant dream. The dispersed population of the region meant that if population density alone was the criteria for expansion, then East Anglia would be nearer to the bottom than the top of the list of areas that would receive the television service next.

As Briggs points out, the reaction to the publication of the Hankey Committee Report in 1945 within the press was largely tepid although some regional newspapers such as the *Liverpool Daily Post* and the *Birmingham Post* did provide some coverage of the main recommendations to their readers, and in the case of the *Liverpool Daily Post*, pointed out that in respect of television the BBC had been spending money ‘received from millions of listeners for the benefit of a few viewers’. This was an issue that was particularly pertinent for East Anglians, although the *Eastern Daily Press* failed to cover it, or any detail of the report, at all. The practical reality was that the money generated from wireless licences sold in the region were being used to subsidise a television service that few in the area could

¹²⁹ Ibid., p. 7.

¹³⁰ The Committee pointed out that in 1938 the BBC had spent £450,000 on the television service (11% of their net revenue from wireless licences) and that expansion of the network to include 6 provincial stations could involve an initial capital outlay of £1.5m and annual costs of £1.75m. Ibid., pp. 16, 19, 21.

access and that could rather have been invested in improving access to the existing wireless service and creating parity of experience with the rest of the nation.¹³¹

Given the overall political, social and economic situation of Britain at the end of the war it is not entirely surprising that during the immediate months which followed its publication, discussion of the report and the future of television did not feature heavily within the press. Debate and action in parliament was also limited, not least because of the dissolution of parliament on 15 June 1945 and the post-war general election held in July. Nevertheless, the delay was relatively short and by September the newly installed Labour government had assessed the main point of the Hankey Committee report. A memorandum from Herbert Morrison (Lord President of the Council) to the Cabinet made clear that after discussions between himself the Minister of Information, the Postmaster-General and the Minister of State it had been generally agreed that the government should endorse the 'recommendations of the Hankey Committee' and that authorisation should therefore be granted to allow for the implementation of those recommendations to take place and for the television service to restart as soon as possible.¹³²

The subsequent Cabinet meeting on 20 September 1945 acted as an opportunity to provide the rubber stamp for the Morrison's recommendations, paving the way for the BBC to relaunch the television service and for the government to raise the licence fee from 10s to £1 'at an early date', rather than introduce a special licence for television owners to provide the funding to do enable further expansion and development.¹³³

Unlike the publication of the Hankey Committee's report, the parliamentary announcement of the government's intention to authorise the BBC to recommence the television service did prompt coverage in the *Eastern Daily Press*, albeit only in the form of a brief article reporting that a statement had been made to parliament by Morrison, an official response from the BBC and a short sentence explaining that 'the extension of the television service to the provinces will be pressed on as personnel and material allow'. The paper therefore failed to acknowledge the fact that the increase in cost of the licence fee meant that licence holders in East Anglia would now be making an even larger financial contribution to a service that to all practical intents they were denied access to and to which they would not have access for the foreseeable future. Government policy had resulted in rural regions such as East Anglia subsidising expansion into urban areas, and in the case of East Anglia listeners did not even have reliable access to the BBC's wireless services to help soften the blow.¹³⁴

Whilst the announcement failed to inspire any editorial comment on the prospects of people in Norfolk being able to receive the soon to be re-launched television service, a separate statement relating to the BBC a few weeks later did inspire the newspaper to cast a critical eye on the treatment that Norfolk, and East Anglia, had thus far received from the BBC.

Published under the headline of 'B.B.C. and East Anglia', an editorial article appeared in response to a parliamentary exchange between Lieutenant Colonel Hare, Conservative MP

¹³¹ Asa Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom Vol III: The War of Words* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1970), p. 725.

¹³² *Television, Memorandum by the Lord President of the Council*, The National Archives: Cabinet Papers CAB/129/2, 17 September 1945.

¹³³ *Cabinet Conclusions*, The National Archives: Cabinet Papers CAB/128/1, 20 September 1945.

¹³⁴ 'Television Again Next Year', *Eastern Daily Press*, 10 October 1945, p. 4.

for Woodbridge and the Minister of Information, Edward John Williams. Hare asked whether the government and the BBC were prepared to consider opening an ‘eastern regional station’ to address the problems of reception experienced in ‘most parts of East Anglia’. The Minister’s response was to say that the BBC did not ‘consider that the opening of a regional station in East Anglia’ was ‘practicable’, but that the BBC was looking for ways to improve the medium wave regional service for Norfolk and Suffolk and that ‘reception of the Light or National programme on long wave should be just as satisfactory over East Anglia as it was before the war’. The fact that reception had never actually been very satisfactory in the region appeared to have been lost on the Minister.¹³⁵

The *Eastern Daily Press*’s response to this was surprisingly robust, the editorial article pointed out that for several years before the war there had in fact been numerous complaints about reception in the region and that the BBC had always responding by claiming that ‘As soon as is practicable, East Anglia is to have a regional station of its own’. It was now frustrating to hear, for the *Eastern Daily Press*, that despite the increased cost of a wireless licence, the opening of an East Anglian regional station was still considered as impracticable for the immediate future. The article also made reference to the fact that the BBC had quietly made an important alteration to its regional scheme for the wireless service and that the province of East Anglia had now ‘discovered that it was classified as part of the Midland region’ as a consequence of ‘post-war rearrangement’.¹³⁶

In fact, the situation was actually more complicated than the *Eastern Daily Press* realised and is an issue that deserves further intention as it is emblematic of the haphazard way in which the BBC had approached East Anglia. During July 1945 the boundaries between the BBC Regions had been the subject of discussion and redefinition within the BBC, however rather than relocate the whole of East Anglia, or even the whole of Norfolk, to the Midland Region, the BBC had actually chosen to put part of Norfolk under the control of the Midland Region. An internal memo from Leslie Hayes, the Head of Overseas and Engineering Department, to the Senior Controller suggested that the area that was to be moved could be described as:

An area within roughly 12 mile radius of Norwich and also the coastal strip between a line drawn from Aylsham to just west of Cromer in the North, and a line along the county boundary from just north of Bungay to Oulton Broad, thence along the Broad to the coast just south of Lowestoft in the South. Yarmouth and Lowestoft are thus included.¹³⁷

The reality of this complicated description was shown on an accompanying map, see Fig. 7. The area of land marked with the number five was under the control of the BBC’s Midland Region, whilst all areas marked with the number six remained as part of the London Region. The vast majority of East Anglia had therefore, and contrary to the understanding of the *Eastern Daily Press*, not become part of the Midland Region. Indeed over fifty percent of the land mass of Norfolk, ironically the part closest to the midland area, was not even part of the Midland Region. Listeners expecting improvements to the problems of ‘patchy or downright

¹³⁵ *Hansard* vol 415, cc359-60W, 30 October 1945.

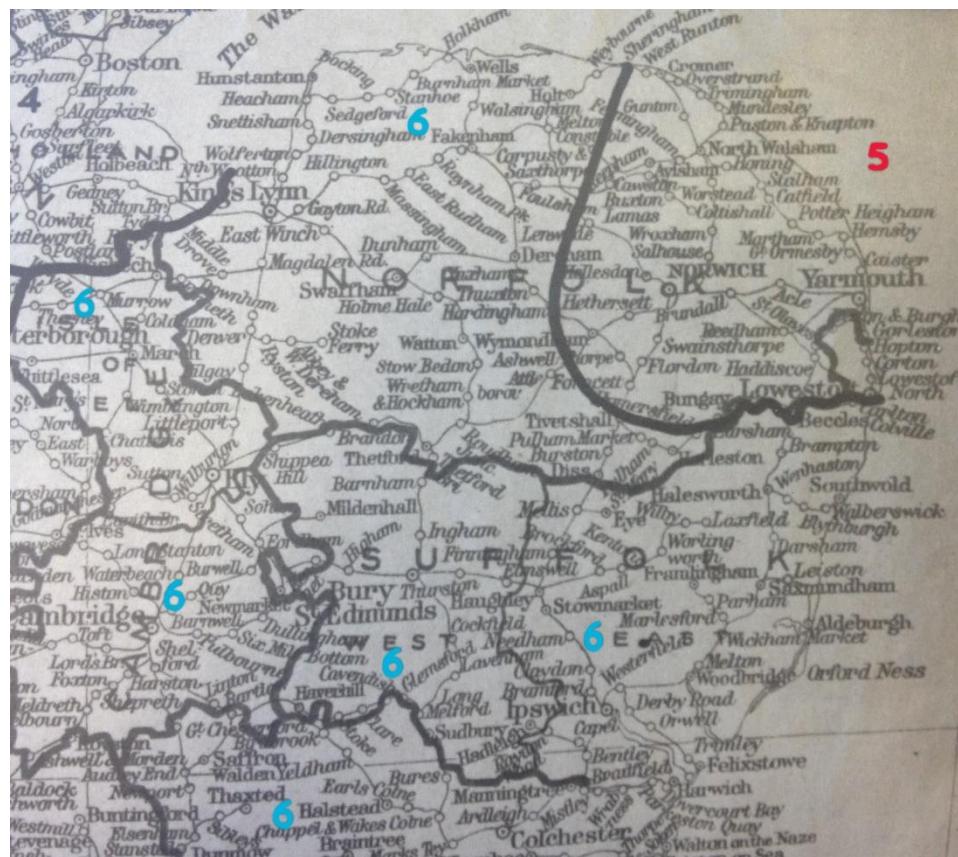
¹³⁶ ‘B.B.C. and East Anglia’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 1 November 1945, p. 2.

¹³⁷ Hayes, *Regional Boundaries*, 27th July 1945, BBC WAC, R34/262/1.

bad reception' in East Anglia were therefore likely to be disappointed as little about their situation had actually changed.¹³⁸

The *Eastern Daily Press* article also identified that there was a larger, more cultural problem with East Anglia being regarded as part of the Midland region. It suggested that being defined as part of a region which had 'few affinities with East Anglia' was ultimately bad for 'regional patriotism'. This concern was justifiable. The majority of other areas in the country were part of BBC Regions that were logical and/or geographically sensible and built upon existing cultural links. East Anglia had never been a part of this, its inclusion within a region seems to have been more of an afterthought for the BBC – demonstrated by the comparative ease at which they felt able to split Norfolk between two of their administrative regions. The needs, interests and lives of the Norfolk audience had been largely unrepresented in the output of 'their' BBC region and this latest development was an indication that things were unlikely to immediately change.¹³⁹

Fig. 7.
Map of BBC Regions in East Anglia, 1945.¹⁴⁰



In his entry in the *BBC Year Book 1946*, Maurice Gorham, Head of the BBC Television Service wrote that whilst television would only be accessible for the few to begin with, it had 'the chance to go forward fast to the stage when' it would be 'no longer a comparative luxury for people who live in one part of the country, but an amenity that can be enjoyed by

¹³⁸ Interestingly it is in the BBC Year Book of 1947 rather than 1946 that the Midland Region mentions the acquisition of this area. BBC, *BBC Year Book 1947*, p. 72.

¹³⁹ 'B.B.C. and East Anglia', *Eastern Daily Press*, 1 November 1945, p. 2.

¹⁴⁰ *Untitled Map*, [undated], BBC WAC, R34/262/2.

the bulk of the population'. Yet the policy decisions of both the BBC and the Government seemed to indicate that East Anglia remained an area that did not neatly fit into any of the proposed plans and despite Gorham's promotion of the expansion of television, East Anglians were not so much looking forward to the arrival of television, but rather hoping that the BBC would finally deliver a wireless service to them that was on par with that experienced by the rest of the nation.¹⁴¹

A Turning Tide?

The proposed increase in the cost of the annual wireless licence fee to £1 and the introduction of a combined television and wireless licence costing £2 provided East Anglians with an opportunity to express their dissatisfaction with the service that they had received. This was first expressed in two published letters and an editorial article in the *Eastern Daily Press* in January 1946. The editorial piece suggested that listeners in East Anglia, were 'grumbling sorely at having to pay 10s. extra for an "improvement of sound programmes" which is not at all apparent to them'. They also complained about the removal of the promise to establish an East Anglian Regional Station, which was described in the article as 'the sop which was always offered by the B.B.C. to quiet the growls of the East Anglian Cerberus before the war'. Further the subsequent move of the region to the Control of the BBC's Midland Region had made the situation worse as according to the *Eastern Daily Press* East Anglia did not regard itself as part of the Midlands in any cultural or geographic sense.¹⁴²

The concerns expressed in both the letters and editorial column were also displayed in parliament. In February Mr Gooch, MP for North Norfolk, asked the Minister of Information whether the BBC would consider increasing the strength of the existing transmissions or provide a regional station for East Anglia. In response the Parliamentary Secretary, Mr Harold Wilson, referred Gooch to the reply given to the Mr Hare, MP for Woodbridge, in late 1945 in which it was confirmed that the BBC did not see an East Anglian Regional Station as practicable, but that discussions were 'going on at the moment with regard to improving the services'.¹⁴³

Whilst the prospect of an East Anglia Regional Station was as distant as ever, the BBC were about to subtly change their approach to East Anglia and Norfolk in an attempt to sooth the 'East Anglian Cerberus' and persuade local listeners that they were an important part of the BBC's Midland Region. This was to be achieved by establishing what the *Eastern Daily Press* christened 'East Anglian Week'¹⁴⁴.

The BBC's Written Archives contain little information regarding how or when the concept of an 'East Anglian Week' was developed, but it is possible to piece together a rough outline of what was involved in the week's activities. In his Monthly Report to senior BBC staff in March 1946, Percy Edgar (Midland Regional Director) explained that his region had arranged for an exhibition to take place in Norwich from 27 April. During the ten days of the exhibition there would be a number of broadcasts, both live and recorded, from the city,

¹⁴¹ Maurice Gorham, 'Television is Coming Back', *BBC Year Book 1946*, p. 21.

¹⁴² 'Wireless Licences', *Eastern Daily Press*, 26 January 1946, p. 4; 'Wireless Reception', *Eastern Daily Press*, 26 January 1946, p. 4.

¹⁴³ *Hansard*, vol 419 cc955-6, 19 February 1946.

¹⁴⁴ 'B.B.C. Plans for East Anglian Week in July', *Eastern Daily Press*, 12 April 1947, p. 5.

including two performances by the BBC Symphony Orchestra, a transmission of the Children's Hour programme, several talks and 'other special programmes' that the Midland service was 'taking from Norwich during the period'. Importantly Edgar also confirmed in his monthly report that he had been receiving 'most cordial and efficient help' from the local press.¹⁴⁵

This help extended to the *Eastern Daily Press* providing promotional coverage in advance of the event, as well as coverage during the event. The first sign of any assistance from the *Eastern Daily Press* occurred on 22 March, when the paper published a short ten line article announcing that the BBC Symphony Orchestra would be playing two concerts in St. Andrews Hall at the end of next month and that both concerts would be broadcast.¹⁴⁶

The newspaper followed up on this initial announcement at the start of April with a more detailed explanation of the BBC's planned 'exhibition week'. It highlighted not only the orchestral concerts but also further opportunities for the people of Norwich and Norfolk to 'see behind the scenes of broadcasting', to audition to take part in either Children's Hour or a variety show and also publicised that:

On Thursday, May 2nd there will be a quiz programme in the Castle Museum, at which senior officials of the B.B.C will be prepared to undergo a bombardment of questions on broadcasting from the audience.

Given the frustration some local listeners felt towards the BBC it is not surprising that the paragraph relating to the quiz also featured a caveat that the programme would be recorded, but only broadcast if it was 'suitable'.¹⁴⁷

As it turned out frustration continued to be expressed during the build-up to the 'exhibition week' with the *Eastern Daily Press* reporting further complaints regarding wireless reception in the East Anglia region and carrying an editorial suggesting that in Norfolk there were 'many people' who could 'only hear one programme, in spite of the intention of giving every listener in the United Kingdom at least one alternative'. Further it stated that the imminent arrival of the Regional Director, and other officials of the Midland Region, in Norwich represented an opportunity for local listeners to 'make their complaints' to the 'fountain head of broadcasting'.¹⁴⁸

It seems that the audience of the BBC's 'quiz' grasped this opportunity as a subsequent article reported that questions such as 'Why do programmes in the Norwich area fade and become distorted after 9 p.m.?' and if 'In the eyes of the B.B.C does Norwich exist at all?' were asked during the recording. Given this type of questioning it is unsurprising to discover that there is no evidence to suggest that the recording was ever actually broadcast, although the Midland Region Directors' Report indicates that a programme entitled *Listeners Answer*

¹⁴⁵ *Monthly Report: Midland Region, March 1946*, BBC WAC R34/748/3.

¹⁴⁶ 'Norwich: B.B.C. Orchestra', *Eastern Daily Press*, 22 March 1946, p. 3.

¹⁴⁷ 'Glimpses Behind the Scenes in B.B.C. Norwich Week', *Eastern Daily Press*, 2 April 1946, p. 3.

¹⁴⁸ 'East Anglian Wireless B.B.C. Hope to Improve Reception', *Eastern Daily Press*, 24 April 1946, p. 4; 'The B.B.C.', *Eastern Daily Press*, 24 April 1946, p. 4.

Back was recorded there is no record of it being scheduled for broadcast within the pages of the *Radio Times*.¹⁴⁹

Despite the problems relating to the quiz, overall the exhibition seems to have been considered a success in the region. The *Eastern Daily Press* described the first two days as an ‘Impressive Opening’, explaining that the BBC were occupying one of the galleries in the Castle Museum to serve as a temporary studio and that there had been a civic luncheon during the weekend in which it had been announced by the BBC’s Director of Publicity that the Corporation had little say over the order in which locations outside London would receive the television service and that it should be remembered that currently the ‘effective range was normally 40-45 miles’ from the transmitter. This effectively confirmed that no television reception could be expected in East Anglia. He also admitted that the BBC were conscious of the wireless reception difficulties in the area, but that they could say with ‘a certain amount of confidence that we hope that our efforts will be crowned with success in the near future’. This was a hint at a step that the BBC were about to take in respect of Norfolk, namely the establishment of a wireless booster station in Norwich.¹⁵⁰

A Temporary Boost.

Firm details of the booster station plan began to emerge in June, when the *Eastern Daily Press* published an article claiming that an announcement of the purchase of a site might shortly be made by the BBC, something confirmed in both the national and local press when it was announced that Postwick, a small village to the east of Norwich, had been chosen as the site for just such a station.¹⁵¹

However, after this announcement, interest in the Postwick transmitter reduced. No letters were written to the newspaper to comment on the potential benefits for local listeners and there was no further news coverage until the end of September when planning permission for the erection of two 126ft tubular steel masts was granted. Instead any discussion of broadcasting that did occur, and it was very fleeting, was largely centred around the political debate about the extension of the BBC’s Royal Charter.¹⁵²

In fact, significant coverage of broadcasting in Norfolk did not re-emerge until the April of 1947, when for a second time the prospect of an ‘East Anglian Week’ generated interest. Unlike the inaugural ‘East Anglian Week’ of 1946, ‘Operation Ozone’, a codename given to it by the *Eastern Daily Press* but not seemingly used in internal BBC documentation, would not feature a physical exhibition of broadcasting in Norwich, but instead consisted of seven

¹⁴⁹ ‘Why Radio Fades in Norwich’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 3 May 1946, p. 2; *Monthly Report, Midland Region: May 1946*, BBC WAC R34/748/3; BBC Genome project, search for “Listeners Answer Back” for the period from May-December 1946.

<<http://genome.ch.bbc.co.uk/search/0/20?adv=1&q=Listeners+Answer+Back&media=all&yf=1946&yt=1946&mf=4&mt=12&tf=00%3A00&tt=00%3A00#search>> [accessed 02/02/2016]

¹⁵⁰ ‘Week-end Broadcasts from Norwich’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 29 April 1946, p. 1.

¹⁵¹ ‘B.B.C. Booster in Norwich Area’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 5 June 1946, p. 5; ‘B.B.C. Station for Postwick’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 6 June 1946, p. 1; ‘News in Brief’, *Times*, 6 June 1946, p. 2.

¹⁵² ‘B.B.C. Transmitter at Postwick’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 28 September 1946, p. 5; ‘Mr Morrison in Debate on B.B.C.’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 17 July 1946, pp. 1, 3.

days of broadcasts from Norfolk distributed across the Light, Midland, Home, Overseas and Third programme.¹⁵³

The arrival of ‘Ozone’ also represented the first time that the BBC publicly acknowledged that these ‘East Anglia Weeks’ were part of a distinct approach towards East Anglia. Denis Morris, the Midland Regional Programme Director, explained that it was ‘part of a policy under which B.B.C. visits to the area would be less frequent but far more concentrated because land lines from East Anglia were some of the most difficult in the country.’ Whilst the difficulty in securing a landline from the GPO was undoubtedly a factor behind the policy, the monthly report from the Director of the Midland Region covering March and April indicates that another key driver behind the policy was actually economic, with Edgar plainly stating that ‘We have found from experience that the most economic way of harvesting our East Anglian territory is to concentrate the number of broadcasts together.’¹⁵⁴

As the *Eastern Daily Press* rightly identified the BBC’s approach to East Anglia was part of a larger behavioural trend that had resulted in the region feeling isolated from the rest of the nation, as an editorial column succinctly observed:

It is strange that this isolation persists to a degree in spite of railways, motor cars, aeroplanes, wireless telegraphy and every other improvement in communications that has been devised in the age of power... Strangest of all the B.B.C., which puts a girdle round the earth more swiftly than Ariel apparently finds it difficult to broadcast so frequently from this as from most other parts of the country.¹⁵⁵

Whilst the *Eastern Daily Press* praised the efforts of the BBC in attempting to make ‘East Anglia audible to the rest of the country’ during a week of special broadcasts, they also expressed a sense of dissatisfaction with the region’s inclusion within the wireless services of the BBC on such a piecemeal basis. In addition, there were signs of resentment from the local audience towards the way that the East Anglia region had been split between the BBC’s London and Midland services and the fact that in the BBC’s eyes visiting Norfolk once a year was an adequate proxy for serving East Anglia as a whole. This complaint manifested most clearly in a letter from ‘Suffolk Lad’ in which he suggested that it was ‘difficult to understand how the B.B.C. can justify the title of “East Anglia Week” for the present series of programme as “East Anglia is not confined to a corner of Norfolk”. This approach that left him feeling ‘aggrieved that a series of programmes should be organised giving but a narrow conception of East Anglian activities.’¹⁵⁶

Whilst the BBC had altered its policy towards the region and aimed to include it more fully within the wireless service, the solution which it had adopted was clearly still suboptimal on a number of levels. Visiting Norfolk for a week on an annual basis would undoubtedly inspire public interest during that week, but also had the unintended consequence of highlighting the fact that for 51 weeks of the year Norfolk and the rest of East Anglia was ignored and treated as a second-class citizen. Equally the decision to include only part of

¹⁵³ ‘B.B.C. Plans for East Anglian Week in July’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 12 April 1947, p. 5; ‘East Anglia “On the Air” This Week’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 14 July 1947, p. 5.

¹⁵⁴ ‘East Anglia “On the Air” This Week’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 14 July 1947, p. 5; *Monthly Report, Midland Region: March and April 1947* BBC WAC R34/748/4

¹⁵⁵ ‘B.B.C. Week’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 14 July 1947, p. 4.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid.; ‘B.B.C and East Anglia’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 16 July 1947, p. 4.

Norfolk within the Midland Region, whilst leaving the west of the county and the remainder of East Anglia under the remit of the London Region, left many members of the local audience confused as to exactly where their counties featured in the BBC's plans, confusion which could boil over into frustration as evinced in the letter from 'Suffolk Lad' when they failed to see their own experiences represented in 'their' broadcasting.

Despite the obvious flaws and limitations of this 'sticking plaster' solution remained the preferred option of the BBC as plans continued to be made for the erection of the new transmitter at Postwick during 1947. Another East Anglia week took place during July 1948 which the *Eastern Daily Press* encouraged the local audience to embrace, whilst also encouraging them to 'cherish the hope that the technical advances of the war years' might have 'brought nearer the day when they will have a little home service of their own'.¹⁵⁷

It is obvious that the majority of the BBC's efforts in respect of the East Anglia region during this time were focused upon incorporating the region more fully into the wireless service than previously but this focus did not mean that the possibility of receiving television had fallen from the thoughts of everyone in the region. Although there had been little coverage of television within the *Eastern Daily Press* during 1946 and 1947, in 1948 a flurry of articles and letters appeared about when television might be available to interested parties in the region.

The initial catalyst for this interest came in the form of an article in the *Eastern Daily Press* in mid-April that reported on a talk given to the Yarmouth Round Table by Gerald Nethercott of the BBC Midland Region. In it he declared that there was 'not the slightest possibility that television will reach the Norwich area for a number of years' even though the BBC itself was 'all out to promote television'. The article inspired a series of letters during the following few weeks starting with a response from R. Drury, in which he lamented the lack of progress made in the field since 1939, admonished the Government for not implementing a better policy and also claimed that he and his brother had watched the 1939 cup final with 'very good results'.¹⁵⁸

Mr Drury's letter generated some debate with other interested individuals and early viewers. Mr Thirtle from Bungay pointed out that despite Drury's experience in 1939 it was 'quite clear' that unless a television transmitter was established in 'the immediate locality', television would never reach East Anglia. Yet within a week Thirtle's assessment was challenged, when Mrs Brock, the wife of a radio engineer, claimed that they had been 'receiving almost perfect reception of television for the past 12 months on a modified receiver' in the village of North Lopham. Unwilling to let the matter rest, Thirtle had the last word on the issue at the start of May when he wrote, in some depth, about the factors that might affect reception, suggesting that 'the fact that Mrs. Brock can receive transmissions in North Lopham does not mean that good reception can be obtained in neighbouring towns'

¹⁵⁷ 'Two-Kilowatt Transmitter to be Erected on Postwick Site', *Eastern Daily Press*, 24 December 1947, p. 1; 'East Anglian Week Broadcasts to be centred on Lowestoft', *Eastern Daily Press*, 17 June 1948, p. 1; 'East Anglia Week', *Eastern Daily Press*, 3 July 1948, p. 4

¹⁵⁸ 'No Television in East Anglia "For Years"', *Eastern Daily Press*, 14 April 1948, p. 3; 'Television', *Eastern Daily Press*, 19 April 1948, p. 4.

and that any service so reliant upon favourable weather conditions could not ‘be called a satisfactory television service’.¹⁵⁹

Clearly people in Norfolk were attempting to watch television during this time, and indeed throughout the period prior to the establishment of a permanent transmission station in the area, but it does seem reasonable to suggest that those who were trying to watch the service were obviously in the minority and that Thirtle was correct, in no sense could the experience of television be described as satisfactory.

The BBC’s Expansion: Sound and/or Vision?

Behind the scenes the BBC was making progress with its plans to expand the television service nationwide. During the summer of 1948 the BBC lobbied the government to provide authorisation for a plan to build ‘new regional transmitters’ at a ‘rate of three in two years [...] giving nation-wide coverage by 1955/6’, a request which the government agreed to in the August of 1948. This allowed construction to begin on a transmission station at Sutton Coldfield, expanding the network northwards ‘to bring television within the range of the greater part of the population.’¹⁶⁰

Despite the fact that the first of the new transmitters would be based near Birmingham and was designed to serve the Midland Region, which now included part of Norfolk, the new transmitter was actually further away than the existing transmitting station at Alexandra Palace, see Fig. 8. Despite the height (approximately 240 metres) and the higher power of the station at Sutton Coldfield (35kw compared to 17kw at Alexandra Palace), there was still no guarantee that the reception of television in Norfolk would be improved by the initial expansion of the television service into the Midland Region when it opened in 1949.¹⁶¹

Therefore, whilst the construction work at Sutton Coldfield was a hugely important development in television when viewed from the national perspective, it was of relatively little relevance for viewers in East Anglia. Indeed for the East Anglian population more generally, and particularly listeners in Norfolk, the parallel construction efforts at the Postwick booster station, which had begun in earnest during August 1948 in advance of 1949’s now annual ‘East Anglia Week’ were more important and likely to affect life in the region.¹⁶²

¹⁵⁹ ‘Television’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 22 April 1948, p. 2; ‘Television’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 28 April 1948, p. 4; ‘Television’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 5 May 1948, p. 4.

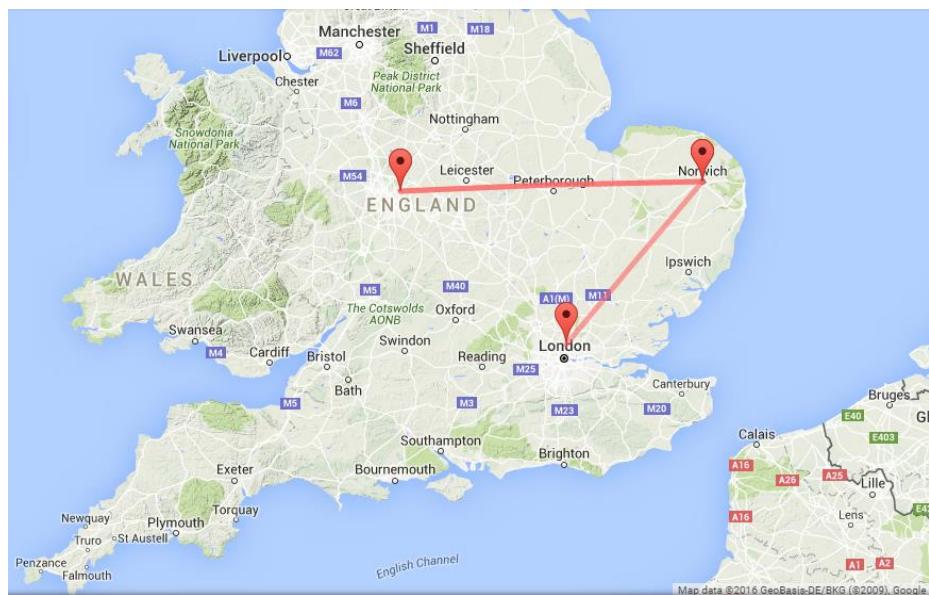
¹⁶⁰ Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom Vol IV: Sound and Vision* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), pp. 236-7: ‘British Television’, *Times*, 25 Aug 1948, p.5. <<http://find.galegroup.com.ueaezproxy.uea.ac.uk:2048/ttda/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=TTD&userGroupName=univea&tabID=T003&docPage=article&searchType=BasicSearchForm&docId=CS84363033&type=multipage&contentSet=LTO&version=1.0>> [accessed 26/03/2017]

¹⁶¹ ‘The Engineering Division: Television’, *BBC Handbook 1950*, (1950), p. 121; ‘London Television Station’, *BBC Handbook 1937*, (1937), p. 156.

¹⁶² ‘Work Starts on New B.B.C. Station to improve Reception in Norfolk’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 6 August 1948, p. 1.

Fig. 8.

Map of the Distance between Norwich and Sutton Coldfield/Alexandra Palace.



Whilst construction took place at both Postwick and Sutton Coldfield a few pioneers in the region continued to experiment with receiving television and communicated the results to the wider population. Mr Alfred Read of Alysham Road, Norwich, wrote to the *Eastern Daily Press* at the end of December to explain how he had obtained 'almost perfect television' from home-made apparatus constructed from 'Government surplus radar sets and part of a broadcast set'. However a response from a fellow experimenter, J.V. Newson of North Walsham, cautioned against reading too much into this result as it was still the case that set manufacturers were 'very wary of selling television receivers outside the service area' because of inconsistent reception the 'enthusiastic constructor' was 'often willing to overlook', but that the ordinary viewer would not be prepared to tolerate. A view that is backed up by the general lack of advertising for television within the *Eastern Daily Press* by electrical retailers who continued to push wireless receivers rather than television sets.¹⁶³

Whilst the BBC's plans for the expansion of the television service were reported in the *Eastern Daily Press* discussion of broadcasting in East Anglia during the first half of 1949 was once again dominated by the wireless service and the annual visit of the BBC for 'East Anglia Week'. Again the event had its base in Yarmouth, but this time the broadcasts were transmitted not from London or the Midlands but rather from the local area: the BBC's 5kw relay transmitter at Postwick was planned to begin service to coincide with the annual event.¹⁶⁴

If the BBC expected this development to placate the audience and the local press in East Anglia then they were to be disappointed. The opening paragraphs of an editorial column published at the conclusion of the week's broadcasts 'acknowledged the time and trouble expended on the various local broadcasts' and gave praise to the fact that the Postwick

¹⁶³ 'Television in Norwich', *Eastern Daily Press*, 31st December 1948, p. 2; 'Television in Norwich', *Eastern Daily Press*, 4 January 1949, p. 4.

¹⁶⁴ 'B.B.C. Plans to Develop Television', *Eastern Daily Press*, 29 May 1949, p. 1; 'New Postwick Transmitter Starts in B.B.C. East Anglia Week', *Eastern Daily Press*, 14 June 1949, p. 1.

transmitter provided East Anglia with a ‘closer link with the main system of the B.B.C.’. This was the type of ‘favourable comment’ that was mentioned in the Midland Region’s Monthly Report when reporting on the week. However, the remainder of the column was less complimentary.¹⁶⁵

The editorial piece reiterated some of the frustrations that had been made in readers’ letters and previous editorial columns during the previous few years. Firstly, the column made the point that East Anglia covered a ‘much wider territory than the corner of it which has been served by the so-called East Anglia Week’, that ‘apart from some only vaguely understood technical factors’ there was no reason why the region, with its ‘own culture and dialect’, should be part of either the Midland or the London region, and that this type of arrangement was of no satisfaction to either East Anglia or the other regions. Finally, the article reminded both the BBC and the Government that they had made promises before the war to the region regarding the provision of an East Anglian regional station which had been reneged upon. Although not quite an overt call to arms, the article did suggest that East Anglians would not accept the opening of Postwick and annual visits ‘as a final answer’ to their desire to have parity with the rest of the nation. In fact the article suggested that these developments might act as a catalyst to popular action and ‘hasten the day when the B.B.C. will yield at last to the importunity of those tiresome East Anglians.’¹⁶⁶

In many ways this was an ideal moment to harness the momentum and interest that obviously did exist and to lobby the relevant authorities with regard to both wireless and television services in East Anglia. Yet the moment to strike seemed to have slipped away, when no further comments were made on the topic by the newspaper and nor did an organised campaign emerge despite one reader writing to state plainly that all previous mentions of the expansion of the television service had failed to include East Anglia and that it seemed as if the region would be left out ‘until enough pressure of public opinion forced the B.B.C. to provide for us’.¹⁶⁷

There was in fact an early opportunity for the Region’s MP’s to exert the pressure of public opinion but it was missed when they failed to take part in a ‘deputation of MPs’ who asked the BBC for television in their constituencies. The cross-party deputation (Labour, Conservative and Liberal MPs were present) featured representatives of constituencies in Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, as well as the south west and north west of England. They met with the BBC’s Director General in private to ask when their regions could expect to have access to the television service. Although they failed to receive any definitive answer to their question, the BBC stated only that ‘the battle will be continued’, the group had at least pressed their case for expansion. The absence of any voices from East Anglia in this ‘action committee’ ensured that the region would not benefit from any eventual advances made by these collective lobbying efforts.¹⁶⁸

¹⁶⁵ The BBC’s Monthly Report from the Midland Region for June 1949 only mentioned ‘The Station and its performances have been the subject of favourable comment in the East Anglian press, for whom a visit of inspection was arranged.’, BBC WAC R34/748/6.

¹⁶⁶ ‘B.B.C. and East Anglia’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 25 June 1949, p. 4.

¹⁶⁷ ‘Television Development’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 19 August 1949, p. 4.

¹⁶⁸ ‘Deputation of M.P.s Ask B.B.C. for Television in Their Areas’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 8 September 1949, p. 1; ‘Spread of Television’, *The Manchester Guardian*, 8 September 1949, p. 4.

<<http://search.proquest.com/docview/479012819?accountid=10637>> [accessed 14/02/2016]

When Herbert Morrison announced the expansion plans for television at the Annual Radiolympia Show at the end of September it was therefore no surprise that whilst the individual nations and the north west and south west of England were included there was no mention of East Anglia at all in his statement. As the *Eastern Daily Press* pointed out, his announcement of 'technical progress and plans for the expansion of the television service' were 'hardly likely to arouse much excitement' amongst the thousands of listeners who could still not even get satisfactory reception on their wireless sets.¹⁶⁹

The Midland Television Transmitter Opens.

Despite their indifference towards Norfolk's prospects of receiving television in the immediate future the *Eastern Daily Press* did mark the opening of the Sutton Coldfield station when it began transmitting in December. They not only reported on the actual events, including the 'valve troubles' that caused the initial opening to be something of a damp squib, but also carried an article on the experiences of those in Norfolk who had tried to receive the first broadcasts. The results of which were not entirely conclusive. Mr Wilmott of Norwich experienced better reception from Sutton Coldfield than from Alexandra Palace, although 'good reception' was 'marred by fading and interference' whilst other owners reported that reception on Saturday night was better from the London station than from Birmingham'.¹⁷⁰

There was however one long term impact of the opening of Sutton Coldfield on the region. The *Eastern Daily Press* began to include the television schedule in its daily broadcast listings for the first time, see Fig. 9.

Fig. 9

First Television Listing in *Eastern Daily Press*.¹⁷¹

TODAY'S WIRELESS PROGRAMMES	
MIDLAND (296.2 m.)	
6.30—Harold Geller's Orchestra. 6.55—Weather. 7—News. 7.10—Interlude. 7.15 Gramophone miscellany. 7.50—Lift Up Your Head! 7.55—Weather. 8—News. 8.15—Metropolitan Opera Orchestra. 8 Recital—Norman Stone (tenor), Joan Baker (piano). 9.30—Letter from America by Alfie Cooke. 9.45—Freddie Phillips and his Band.	9—News. 9.10—Housewives' Choice. 10 Rudy Lewis (theatre organ). 10.30 Forces Broadcast—Citizenship.
10.15—Service. 10.30—Music While You Work. 11—Music. Goring in "Winnie-the-Pooh." 11.30—Recital. 12—Break for Music. 12.30—Look Who's Here! 12.55—Weather. 1—News. 1.10—Those Were the Days! 2—B.B.C. Welsh Orchestra, with John Shinebourne (cello).	1—Week in Westminster. 11 Felix Mendelssohn and his Hawaiian Serenaders. 11.30—Short Story. 11.45—Mrs. Dale's Diary. 12—Midland Light Orchestra. 12.30—Christmas holiday programmes for children. 1—B.B.C. Scottish Orchestra. 2—Woman's Hour.
1—"The Perfume Forgeries." 3.30—Brenda Griffiths (soprano). 3.45—Women Forum. 4.30—Records. 5—Children's Hour—"Winnie-the-Pooh." 5.55—Weather. 6—News. 6.15—Sport. 6.20—Patricia Burke in "On Tour with the Duffs." 6.45—B.B.C. Northern Orchestra. 7.30—"A Round the Corner." 8—Henry Hall's Guest Night. 9—News. 9.15—World Theatre. Shakespeare's "The Winter's Tale." 11—News Summary.	3—Melody Hour. 4—Mrs. Dale's Diary. 4.15—Edward Chapman and Hugh Burden in "The Paragon." 5.45—Sid Phillips and his Band. 6.15—Music While You Work. 6.30—Book Review. 6.45—Sport. 7—News and Radio Newsreel. 7.25—Sport. 7.30—Top of the Form. 8—Gala Concert, with Anne Ziegler and Webster Booth, Rawicz and Landsauer and the London Girls' Choir. 8.45—"The Adventures of P.C. 49." 9.15—"Ladies" Night. 10—News. 10.15—Topic for Tonight. 10.20—Enchanted Rhythm. 11—A Book at Bedtime—"The Story of the Treasure Seekers." 11.15—Music Tapestry. 11.55—News Summary.
TELEVISION	
(Alexandra Palace, Vision 45 Mc/s, Sound 41.5 Mc/s, Sutton Coldfield, Vision 61.75 Mc/s, Sound 55.25 Mc/s)	9 p.m.—Prokofiev's music to Romeo and Juliet. 10—The Heritage of Early Britain—Saxons and Normans. 10—Greek Folk Songs. 7.10—On Talking About Feelings—A Logical and Literary Problem. 7.30—Walter De La Mare's "The Secret Marriage." 8—The Secret Marriage. 8.25—John Lehman on the influence of the United States on European literature. 9.45—"The Secret Marriage" (Act 2). 10.35—The Last Actor-Managers (1906-17). Told by Hesketh Pearson. 11.10—Schubert's "Trout" in full, played by the Busch-Serkin Trio (records).

¹⁶⁹ 'Extension of Television Programmes Planned', *Eastern Daily Press*, 29 September 1949, p. 1; 'Television', *Eastern Daily Press*, 1 October 1949, p. 4.

¹⁷⁰ 'Valve Trouble Delays Television for Midlands', *Eastern Daily Press*, 19 December 1949, p. 1; 'Reception in Norfolk Two Transmissions Compared', *Eastern Daily Press*, 19 December 1949, p. 4.

¹⁷¹ 'Today's Wireless Programmes', *Eastern Daily Press*, 19 December 1949, p. 7.

Whilst few people in the region would be able to make full use of them, all readers of the paper would now be able to see what was on without having to buy a copy of the *Radio Times* or the *Listener*. An example of the ephemeral paraphernalia of broadcasting had taken root in the county and although it would take several more years for television to become truly established in the region in the meantime it would serve the important function of reminding the region what exactly it was that they were missing out on.

Conclusion.

The interruption due to the war clearly provided an opportunity for the government and the BBC to reassess their plans towards television. Whilst the development and approval of a five year plan for the national expansion of the television service was a significant step in the process of moving television from an ‘experimental stage’ towards mass adoption, when seen from an East Anglian point of view the general consequence of these movements was continuity rather than significant change.

In fact, any changes that did take place tended to have either a predominantly neutral or negative effect upon the region when carefully analysed. The increase in the cost of the licence fee, subsidising the expansion of television, obviously affected all listeners in the United Kingdom but East Anglian listeners were asked to tolerate the increase knowing that they would not be part of the expanded network for at least five years. This was a bitter pill that was made only slightly easier to swallow when the booster station at Postwick was constructed to improve wireless reception within the region.

Indeed, whilst it was television that was described as an ‘experimental service’ before the war in the report of the Hankey Committee, it could be argued that in post-war East Anglia the wireless service could be described in the same way. The BBC’s decision to split East Anglia in two by bisecting Norfolk in half has no parallel with any other area of the United Kingdom and is a unique moment in the history of British broadcasting. It had the practical effect of dividing the population of the region rather than bringing them together and forced some of them to be part of a Midland region with which they had no natural cultural affinity. Overall this approach reinforced the view that the BBC simply did not have a workable solution for how to deal with East Anglia and set the tone for how the region would continue to be approached in the future.

This fragmented, piecemeal approach can be clearly seen in the use of ‘East Anglia weeks’ from 1947 onwards. On one hand these annual events can be seen as a positive development. They allowed voices and experiences from the region to be heard across the nation, or at least into the Midland region and occasionally provided an opportunity for the region to contribute to national conversations that could be considered to be part of a larger public sphere. However, this ‘solution’ was also clearly only a ‘sticking plaster’ designed to placate calls from within East Anglia for the BBC to make it a standalone administrative region and to reduce the financial cost of broadcasting in the region. It failed to address the fact that in comparison to the remainder of the United Kingdom, East Anglia had always been poorly served by the BBC. Seven to ten days’ worth of programming each year was not an adequate alternative for the services offered elsewhere.

The BBC’s approach and the region’s inability to lobby effectively for more equitable treatment had combined to ensure that East Anglia remained firmly on the periphery of the BBC’s services. The advances in the spread of television largely passed the region by, even

though part of it was now technically served by the new Sutton Coldfield transmitter in the BBC's Midland Region, and dreams of television, and to an extent wireless, had failed to turn into anything more tangible.

Chapter 3: You Can't Always Get What You Want...

Introduction.

The 1950s would prove to be a pivotal decade for television, during which a number of significant events took place. To understand the significance of this period it is necessary to take a step back and analyse the effects of the events discussed in the previous three chapters and to establish the extent to which television and radio had been adopted into the fabric of the United Kingdom and in Norfolk specifically.

Then the discussion will consider the build up to, and recommendations of, the Beveridge Committee's Report on Broadcasting, which was the first post-war attempt to define the future of broadcasting in the United Kingdom. Subsequently how those recommendations were received in, and impacted upon the future direction of broadcasting in the East Anglia region specifically will be discussed and analysed.

After this the chapter focuses upon how a 'pivotal' event in the history of British television, the 1953 Coronation, was experienced in the region and considers whether it was 'pivotal' in the same way in East Anglia.

The State of Broadcasting in Norfolk.

In the twenty-four years since its transition into the British Broadcasting Corporation, significant developments in respect of both the wireless and television services had clearly taken place. Whilst the war, and its immediate aftermath, had slowed down the pace of expansion of both services, the arrival of the 1950s signified the start of an era that would forever change the media landscape of the United Kingdom and finally bring television to Norfolk, and put Norfolk into television.

However, before embarking on a critical assessment of this period, and arguing that the experience of this pivotal period was significantly different in Norfolk, it is worth recapping what the media environment looked like at the beginning of the 1950s, both from a national perspective as well as in regard to Norfolk and East Anglia specifically.

Wireless.

The gradual expansion of the wireless service during both the pre and post war periods had resulted in the Home Service and the Light Programme being available to 97% of the national population by 1950, whilst the Third Programme covered almost 70% of the population by the same point in time. Thanks to information collected during the 1951 Census and data published by the BBC it is possible to assess the impact that the expansion of the wireless service had on the actual diffusion of wireless receivers into British households.¹⁷²

As Table. 2 shows, whilst the two main BBC's wireless services had been made available to a potential audience 97% of the British population, on a national scale less than 85% of

¹⁷² The BBC defined coverage as 'the availability of a service at a reasonably good standard of reception both during the day and at night'. *BBC Yearbook 1951*, 1951, p. 134.

households had in fact purchased a wireless licence that would allow them to listen legally.¹⁷³

However, there were clear disparities in the uptake of licences within the different counties and regions of Britain. Despite being at the centre of the BBC's activities, although not part of a genuine BBC 'region', London and the Home Counties actually featured a lower uptake of wireless licences (72.3%) than the national average. The same was true in Northumberland and Durham (73.4%), as well as in Lancashire and Cheshire (81.5%), both areas within the BBC's well established North Region.¹⁷⁴

Table. 2
Wireless Licences at End of 1950.¹⁷⁵

Region	No. of Wireless Licences	Percentage of Households with a Wireless Licence
Norfolk	155,062	95.8%
Suffolk	93,440	70.5%
Cornwall and Devon	308,005	90.4%
Northumberland and Durham	482,598	73.4%
Lancashire and Cheshire	1,567,407	81.5%
London and the Home Counties ¹⁷⁶	2,581,885	72.3%
England, Scotland and Wales	12,143,547	83.7%

Given the above, the position of Norfolk does appear to be an aberration. The account presented in previous chapters paints a picture of a county that had been largely left out of the BBC's official plans during the pre-war era, had been split into two sections by the BBC after the war (each served by a different BBC region), had been forced to be satisfied with an annual visit from the Midland Region to broadcast from the region and had been required to wait until 1949 for the creation of a transmitter dedicated to bringing a useable service to the area. Yet despite these clear obstacles to widespread adoption over 95% of households in Norfolk had a wireless licence, a figure dramatically higher than the national average and those areas with histories of being well served by the BBC.

¹⁷³ There are no estimates for level of licence fee evasion at the time.

¹⁷⁴ The North of England was initially served by a Manchester Transmitter (2ZY) during the 1920s before the North Region was established at Moorside Edge in May 1931, followed by the construction of a transmitter at Stagshaw in late 1937 that provided better service for the North East and Cumbria.

¹⁷⁵ BBC, *The British Broadcasting Corporation Annual Report and Accounts for the Year 1950-51*, Cmd. 8347 pp. 98-99; 'Private Households and Dwellings', 1951, 1951 *Census of England Wales County Report*

http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/census/table_page.jsp?tab_id=EW1951COU_M3&u_id=10061325&show=DB&min_c=6&max_c=10; '1951: All Residential Establishments: Occupied', 1951 *Census of Scotland, County Report*

http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/census/table_page.jsp?tab_id=S1951COU_M1 [accessed 16/03/2017]

¹⁷⁶ The BBC's definition of the area includes Greater London, Essex, Hertford, Kent, Middlesex and Sussex.

This was not reflected across the whole of East Anglia. For example Suffolk did not exhibit the same level of uptake for wireless licences despite sharing many similarities with Norfolk, although it was not incorporated into the Midland Region, only around 71% of households in the county had purchased a wireless licence. In fact, the nearest parallel with Norfolk can be found on the other side of Great Britain where the counties of Cornwall and Devon, similar to Norfolk in terms of their geographical distance from metropolitan centres and their rural nature, shared an enthusiasm for wireless, with over 90% of households in those south-western counties having purchased a wireless licence.

The obvious prediction would have been that the treatment of Norfolk by the BBC, as well as the well documented problems of reception, would have led to a lower than average uptake of licences. Given the counterintuitive nature of the situation that actually evolved, it is necessary to consider what factors might have played a role in the evolution of this state. Firstly, whilst reception of the BBC's services in the county was often plagued by fading and interference (particularly before the introduction of the Postwick transmitter in 1949), the county's proximity to mainland Europe may have meant that transmissions from the continent could be heard comparatively clearly compared to the rest of the nation. The fact that in 1934 the *Eastern Daily Press* published the schedules of a number of these international stations does lend some credence to this explanation. Unfortunately neither the *Eastern Daily Press* nor any of the oral history interviews carried out for this project shed further light on whether this explanation is correct.

Secondly, it is necessary to consider whether there are reasons to suggest that demand for radio would be naturally higher in areas with dispersed rural populations. Metropolitan areas with high population density naturally feature a greater range of entertainment options from which the local population could pick and choose. In contrast those in more rural areas, and especially those in isolated villages, had comparatively poor access to sources of entertainment and news. Most choices required the audience to physically travel to another location – either within their village, or more likely further afield. Given the effort and time required to do this, it is not unreasonable to suggest that the purchase of a wireless receiver and the necessary annual licence was actually a rational choice, even if the service being offered by the BBC was less than perfect it still offered them culture and news that was not available on their doorstep.

Regardless of the factors involved by 1951 wireless in Norfolk had become extremely popular and was clearly embedded in the fabric of society at a level that was higher than the rest of the United Kingdom. However, the situation in respect to television was rather different.

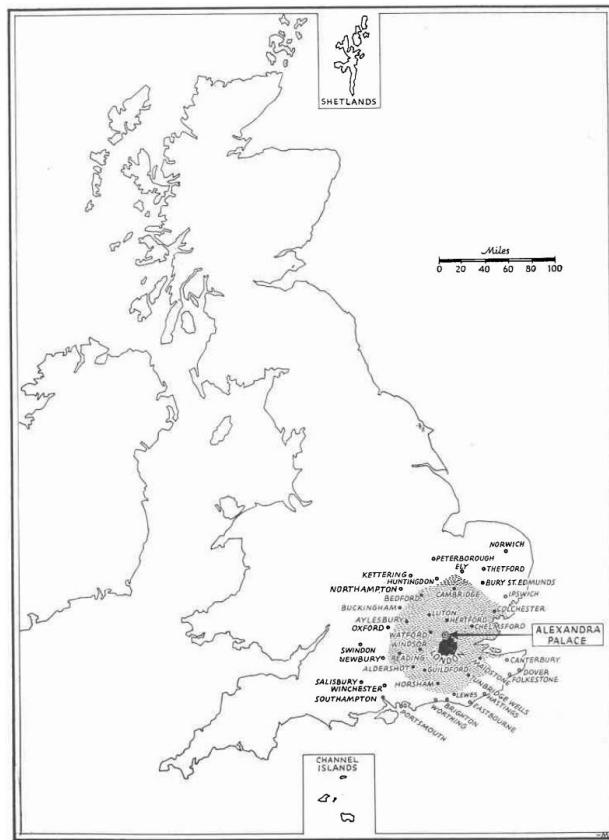
Television.

Whilst external factors had slowed the pace of expansion, the reach of the BBC's television service had dramatically increased during the immediate post-war period.¹⁷⁷ The initial range of the Alexandra Palace service in 1936 meant that the BBC estimated that coverage was limited to 25% of the population, all located either in the London area and the South East of England (See Fig. 10). The opening of the Sutton Coldfield transmitter in late 1949 did

¹⁷⁷ The need for government approval for large scale expenditure as well as shortages of raw materials during this period slowed down expansion and development. 'Television (New Transmitters)', *Hansard*, vol. 460, col. 138, 19 Jan 1949.

increase this range and made the service potentially available to 46.5% of the population, it also expanded the audience on a northerly basis.¹⁷⁸

Fig. 10
Range of the Television Service, 1936.¹⁷⁹



However, just as with the wireless service, these figures referred purely to the theoretical range of the television service, the amount of households that had actually purchased a television licence was far lower.

Table 3 shows that whilst nearly half of the UK population could theoretically receive television, less than 4% of households in the UK had purchased a television licence. Perhaps unsurprisingly the area with the longest history of being able to receive television also had the highest rate of penetration, with nearly 10% of households in London and the Home Counties being in possession of a licence. In fact, the uptake of licences in London and the Home Counties has the potential to massively skew the way in which one assesses the overall popularity of television during this period, as the region represented 24.62% of all UK households, yet accounted for over 61% of all television licences at the start of 1951. In comparison Lancashire and Cheshire contained 13.26% of all UK households but had only 4% of the country's television licences.

¹⁷⁸ BBC, *BBC Television: A British Engineering Achievement*, (London: BBC, 1958), p. 62.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 12.

Table. 3.
Television Licences at End of 1950.

Region	No. of Television Licences ¹⁸⁰	Percentage of Households with a Television Licence ¹⁸¹	Percentage of UK Households in the area	Percentage of UK Television Licences in the area
Norfolk	673	0.42%	1.12%	0.12%
Suffolk	2,043	1.54%	0.91%	0.35%
Cornwall and Devon	77	0.02%	2.35%	0.01%
Northumberland and Durham	70	0.01%	4.53%	0.01%
Lancashire and Cheshire	23,772	1.24%	13.26%	4.11%
London and the Home Counties ¹⁸²	355,786	9.96%	24.62%	61.57%
England, Scotland and Wales	577,852	3.98%	100%	100%

Whereas the uptake of wireless within Norfolk prior to 1951 had been unexpectedly high, the uptake of television in the county was predictably low, with only 673 licences purchased in the entire county, meaning that only 0.4% of households in the region had regular domestic access to a television.¹⁸³

In an inversion of the wireless situation adoption in Suffolk was considerably higher, not just in respect of absolute numbers (2,043) but also in terms of the percentage of households in the county who had purchased a television licence (1.54%). Clearly the extremely low rate of adoption in both counties is the headline message of the statistics, but it is also important to recognise that despite their close geographic proximity there were observable disparities in the adoption of television between the individual counties of East Anglia at the beginning of the 1950s.

Again it is possible to observe a certain level of similarity between Norfolk and both Devon and Cornwall. Only 77 television licences had been purchased in Devon and Cornwall

¹⁸⁰ BBC, *The British Broadcasting Corporation Annual Report and Accounts for the Year 1950-51* Cmd. 8347

¹⁸¹ "Great Britain Historical GIS Project (2004) 'Great Britain Historical GIS'. University of Portsmouth.", *Private Households and Dwellings, 1951*, <http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/census/table_page.jsp?tab_id=EW1951COU_M3&u_id=10061325&show=DB&min_c=6&max_c=10>: 1951: All Residential Establishments: Occupied, <http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/census/table_page.jsp?tab_id=S1951COU_M1>. [accessed 16/03/2017]

¹⁸² This uses the BBC's definition of Greater London, Essex, Hertford, Kent, Middlesex and Sussex.

¹⁸³ Meaning that only 1 in every 240 homes in Norfolk had a television.

meaning that only 0.02% of households in those counties possessed a television at this point in time.¹⁸⁴

Whilst areas in the East and South West of England had experienced little growth, the expansion of the television network northwards, with the opening of the Sutton Coldfield transmitter, had provided a boost for the adoption of television in northern regions. The population of Cheshire and Lancashire had purchased 23,772 television licences by the close of 1951, representing just over 4% of the total number of licences sold in England, Scotland and Wales. Although there is no publicly published data detailing the number of television licences sold in this area prior to the opening of Sutton Coldfield, it can be reasonably hypothesised that the figure was much lower before 1949 and that the chance of receiving much clearer and reliable reception acted as a significant driver for adoption.¹⁸⁵

At the start of the 1950s television was still a technology that was the preserve of a minority of the UK population but it is also important to recognise that this minority were not equally dispersed across the United Kingdom. Ownership of a television licence was not merely due to an interest in television, nor about having the disposable income to pay for a television set, it was also fundamentally related to *where* people lived. That television was a minority interest at this point in time is not a revelatory statement, but the disparities that existed between different regions of the UK at this time are not something that has been considered in any real detail by scholars previously. Doing so provides a useful benchmark to frame the analysis of events that were to prove pivotal in the development of television in Britain and to consider how they may have been experienced in Norfolk compared to the rest of the country. In the process of doing so it also challenges some of the assumptions of the existing historiography.

The Beveridge Committee: The beginning of the end?

The 1950s began with an investigation into the future of broadcasting via the appointment of a broadcasting committee to consider how broadcasting should be organised when the BBC's Royal Charter finished at the end of 1951.¹⁸⁶ Chaired by Lord Beveridge, their exact terms of reference were:

To consider the constitution, control, finance and other general aspects of the sound and television broadcasting services of the United Kingdom (excluding those aspects of the overseas services for which the BBC are not responsible) and to advise of the conditions under which these services and wire broadcasting should be conducted after the 31st December, 1951.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁴ This figure represents one television in every 4427 households in Devon and Cornwall.

¹⁸⁵ This is an idea supported by the fact that the level of adoption seems to decrease as the distance from the Sutton Coldfield transmitter increases. Hence, only 70 television licences were sold in Northumberland and Durham with only 12 in the entirety of Scotland, areas all further away from the transmitter.

¹⁸⁶ As Sendall points out, the five year extension of the BBC's Royal Charter without a committee of enquiry in 1946 by the Labour Government was not universally supported within parliament and therefore the formation of this Broadcasting Committee was anticipated by some members of the political class. Bernard Sendall, *Independent Television in Britain Volume 1: Origin and Foundation 1956-62* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1982), p. 5.

¹⁸⁷ *Report of the Broadcasting Committee, 1949*, Cmd. 8116 (1951), p. 1.

Even prior to the announcement of the enquiry interest in television within parliament seemed to have increased. From the beginning of 1949 MPs from around the United Kingdom had begun to ask questions regarding when the areas they represented might expect to receive television, although none of these questions originated from MPs representing Norfolk or other East Anglian counties.¹⁸⁸ In fact it was not until March 1950 that Brigadier Frank Medlicott, representing Norfolk Central, raised a question in the House of Commons asking when East Anglia would have a television station to serve the region.¹⁸⁹

The government committee provided an opportunity for any interested parties, not just politicians, from across the United Kingdom to put forward their views on the future of broadcasting. To this end the Committee issued a request for submissions from all interested parties in the national press after their first initial meeting, a request that resulted in the receipt of '233 memoranda which, with other papers circulated to the Committee, amount in total to 368.'¹⁹⁰

The submissions were received from a variety of sources but excluding those from the BBC, Government Departments and BBC Advisory Bodies as these were characterised as *Disinterested Outsiders, Minorities with a Message, Inside Interests and Outside Interests* within the Report, there were no submissions from any groups representing of the people of East Anglia, or Norfolk specifically. Indeed, the interests of not one of the individual regions or counties of England were represented, instead the only geographic areas specifically represented were the individual nations. Both the Scottish National Party (SNP) and the Saltire Society provided detailed submissions expressing their belief that either regional devolution of the BBC in Scotland or the creation of an entirely separate broadcasting system for Scotland was necessary, whilst Plaid Cymru, Undeb Cymru Fydd (The New Wales Union) and the Welsh Parliamentary Party expressed similar views in respect of Wales.¹⁹¹

The presence of well-established political parties and campaign organisations with defined organisational structures and grassroots support were harnessed by those in both Scotland and Wales who sought better access to, and representation in, the BBC's services. This aim and the means to lobby effectively do not appear to be present to the same extent within the English regions. Whilst regional identity was undoubtedly important for some in Norfolk and East Anglia, there was no popular movement for a greater level of autonomy from the rest of England. Hence no existing organisations could lobby for the interests of East Anglia in respect of broadcasting; nor had there been much evidence that the *Eastern Daily Press* would provide support were such an organisation created.

In reality the closest that East Anglia had to an advocate for its claims towards television came in the form of the 'Television Action Committee', chaired by C. O. Stanley of Pye Ltd

¹⁸⁸ From February until June 1949 questions were tabled in the House of Commons regarding TV in Scotland (23 February, 26 April and 25 May), the North East (9 March), Lancashire (4 May) and Wales (18 May).

¹⁸⁹ 'Written Answers (Commons), Television, East Anglia', *Hansard*, vol. 472, col. 114W, 22 March 1950.

¹⁹⁰ *Report of the Broadcasting Committee, 1949*, p. 1.

¹⁹¹ A deposition was also received from *The Royal Society of St. George* but this was more concerned with a supposed lack of English nationalism within the BBC and in particular the manner in which 'Britain' and 'British' has supplanted 'England' and 'English' within the language of the BBC, however it did also suggest that independent English, Welsh and Scottish Broadcasting Corporations be set up.

a company which manufactured radio and television equipment in the region. The *Eastern Daily Press* reported that at a meeting held in London on 4 October 1949, Stanley 'emphasised the need for the necessary smaller stations to be built, citing as an example the fact that such stations would be necessary at Aberdeen, Norwich and Plymouth'. However there are two important points to note in relation to this news report, firstly that this meeting occurred after the deadline for submissions to the Beveridge enquiry had passed, and secondly that the 'Television Action Committee' did not actually submit any evidence to the enquiry.¹⁹²

The BBC makes its Case.

In contrast to the approach of any individual or group in East Anglia the BBC had been preparing its submissions for an inquiry into the future of broadcasting since early 1948, taking time to hone its case and present the most favourable view of its past, present and future activities. Whilst submissions on every aspect of the corporation were prepared, the manner in which the BBC sought to manage any evidence originating from its own regions is of particular relevance to this study. As Briggs points out 'the BBC wished to prove that it was a body which depended on public participation and had its support in all parts of the country. At the same time, it did not wish to have its Regional Advisory Councils presenting recommendations from the Regions which ran counter to general BBC policies.'¹⁹³

In an attempt to ensure that the BBC regions did not provide contradictory evidence the BBC mandated that the Regional Councils should give evidence 'through the BBC' if they wished to offer a collective view and the Regional Controllers were briefed, prior to visits from members of the Committee, that great emphasis was being placed 'on the extent of freedom that the Region has in developing programmes on an independent basis'. Both the Advisory Councils and the Regional Controllers largely took heed of the instructions and the official submissions to the Committee almost resolutely remained 'on message'. They highlighted the good work of the BBC, the opportunities for regional autonomy and cultural expression, and made the case against the need for any type of competition.¹⁹⁴

Consequently the findings of the Broadcasting Committee were not directly informed by views and experiences from areas such as East Anglia that had justification to believe that they had been previously underserved by the BBC. Rather the case was built on evidence from the BBC itself and in the specific case of East Anglia there was nobody from the region to even deliver the evidence as no official representative had been appointed. This meant no significant mention was made in the evidence as to the rather haphazard way that Norfolk and East Anglia had been included within the wireless service nor to the fact that it appeared

¹⁹² The deadline for submissions was set as 1 October and the 'Television Action Committee' is not listed as a contributor in the appendix of witnesses accompanying the final report. Pye Ltd did submit evidence but this was related to VHF broadcasting only. It should be noted that the Committee did intend to make a direct deputation to the Postmaster General about their ideas and plans, although this does not explain why the group missed a seemingly perfect opportunity to influence future policy direction. "Action Committee" Chairman On Norwich Television Needs', *Eastern Daily Press*, 5 October 1949, p. 1.

¹⁹³ Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom Volume IV: Sound and Vision* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), pp. 311-2.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

that the area was entirely absent from the BBC's plans for the expansion of the television service.¹⁹⁵

The Final Report.

The sheer scale of the document produced by the Beveridge Committee dominated much of the initial press reaction to the publication of the report. In comparison to previous inquiries it was considerably longer and more detailed. The report placed considerable emphasis on the amount of evidence that had been received and considered (over 1.6 million words).¹⁹⁶ After deliberating this evidence the Committee agreed upon one hundred main recommendations relating to the 'constitution and powers of broadcasting authority'. The main theme of which was that the BBC's monopoly of broadcasting within the UK should remain. In the Committee's words:

After expiry of its current Charter, the British Broadcasting Corporation (described below as the BBC or the Corporation) should be continued as the authority responsible for all broadcasting in the United Kingdom, including Television and the Overseas Services.¹⁹⁷

However, this did not entirely grant the BBC the freedom to do exactly as it pleased in perpetuity as the Committee recommended the BBC's Charter should not be renewed for a specific fixed term or in perpetuity, but rather that the activities of the BBC be 'reviewed every five years by a small independent committee' and that work of the BBC should be under 'constant and effective review from without the Corporation'. However, it did importantly give approval for the BBC to go ahead with a five year plan for the expansion of the television service.¹⁹⁸

This recommendation had clear implications for the rollout of television to Norfolk and other provincial areas in the United Kingdom. The possibility of intervention by commercial interests to provide local commercial television stations to serve regions outside of the existing service and to speed up the development of a truly national television service, as had been advocated for by the Television Action Committee in 1949, was effectively dismissed and therefore the BBC's 5 year expansion plan for television was approved.¹⁹⁹

However, according to the Committee the BBC's new Charter should contain provisions that could have particular relevance for those in areas such as Norfolk and East Anglia. In recommendation 7(iii) the Report suggested that power should be delegated to each of the BBC Regions to 'secure their effective autonomy' and establish 'the greatest possible variety and initiative in respect of programmes'. Further recommendation 7(iv) pointed out that the development of VHF broadcasting should be a prescribed aim of the Corporation as it would give both 'better coverage of the whole country' and increase 'the possibility of local stations'. This organisational change and technical development might have opened up

¹⁹⁵ *Report of the Broadcasting Committee, 1949: Appendix H Memoranda submitted to the Committee*, pp. 50, 286-7.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

¹⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 189.

¹⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 190.

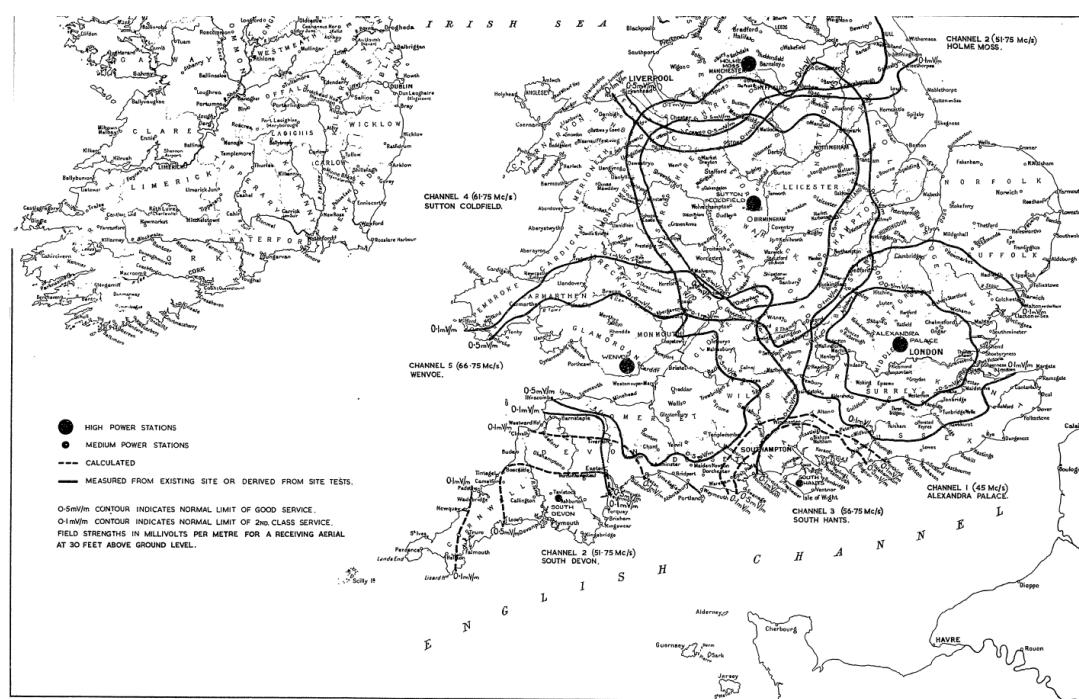
¹⁹⁹ "Action Committee" Chairman On Norwich Television Needs', *Eastern Daily Press*, 5 October 1949, p.1.

an opportunity for Norfolk to feature more prominently within the Midland Region, or perhaps even for East Anglia to become a BBC Region in its own right.²⁰⁰

Indeed, although the Report made no explicit recommendation that East Anglia should become a standalone BBC Region, there were tantalising glimpses that suggested that the Committee had at least been made somewhat aware of the dissatisfying nature of East Anglia's existing place within the BBC's Regional System. Although neither the Midland Advisory Committee nor BBC Head Office had mentioned the problematic position of the area, the BBC's Agricultural Broadcasting Advisory Committee had submitted evidence during which it was mentioned that 'important agricultural centres like Cambridge, Norwich and Lincoln have no studio facilities' and 'that many valuable contributions to programmes are being lost'. This lead the Committee to state that they 'considered as unfortunate the fact that East Anglia and South-east England has no BBC Region at all.'²⁰¹

Although the above related to the provision of the wireless service, the Committee also noted that the BBC's plans for the expansion of the television service would, by the end of 1954, leave 'considerable areas outside even its outer lines' including 'Norfolk and other parts of the Eastern Counties', as is illustrated in Fig. 11.

Fig. 11
Map of the Proposed Television Service by 1954.²⁰²



However, the Committee recognised that this did not simply mean that individuals in areas such as Norfolk would not be able to watch television when this phase of expansion had been completed, but rather that there would be a level of 'secondary reception' possible, i.e. there would be people attempting to watch television outside the 'official' range of the transmitting stations. Clearly, leaving sections of the British population to experience only

²⁰⁰ *Report of the Broadcasting Committee, 1949*, p. 190.

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 28.

²⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 82.

‘secondary reception’ was not tenable in the longer term. It would create a two tier system of television in which those further from transmission stations (effectively those in the provinces of Britain) would experience a service lacking in both the fidelity and ease of use common to those living in major urban and central areas. Unsurprisingly therefore, the Committee expressed the view that ‘extension to some at least of these areas – particularly where there are substantial populations – will it is hoped follow on the completion of the main plan’. Although it added the caveat that ‘coverage for television is not likely to become as complete as that for sound broadcasting’.²⁰³

Overall the recommendations of the report did not suggest that East Anglia was about to immediately enter a golden age of broadcasting. The region would, despite some acknowledgement that the current situation was less than ideal, remain a bit player within the BBC’s regional wireless scheme, unable to develop a strong sense of regional cultural identity over the airwaves whilst still controlled from afar. Nor was it likely that if the recommendations were acted upon fully that the people of East Anglia would see immediate and drastic improvement in respect of their ability to access television on a reliable basis. Parity with other areas of the country remained a long way off, despite the most comprehensive investigation into the future of broadcasting by a British government that had ever taken place.

Yet as will be seen in chapter four of this thesis the recommendations of the report were not to be accepted in their entirety and within the overall document there sat a small ‘minority report’ that would prove to be the catalyst for a great change in the future of television across the nation and particularly in Norfolk.

Reception to the Report in Norfolk.

Coverage of broadcasting matters in the *Eastern Daily Press* during the investigations of the Beveridge Broadcasting Committee were typically sparse. During the spring of 1950 reporting on broadcasting was limited to a story on the poor reception of the wireless service experienced in Lowestoft and Yarmouth. A letter to the editor regarding reception of television transmissions from France in Norwich was also published as was an article report that the Assistant Postmaster General had suggested that those proposing the introduction of commercial broadcasting were welcome to make submissions to the Broadcasting Committee. The final story drew no feedback from the readership at all, perhaps suggesting that the issue of commercial television was not of great interest to the readers of the *Eastern Daily Press*, many of whom would still have only had limited experience of the BBC’s television service, let alone have developed opinions on the need for competition.²⁰⁴

The situation had not changed dramatically by the summer of 1950, with the only significant story on broadcasting being an editorial column celebrating the publication of a history of the BBC’s Midland Region. It was noted that the inclusion of ‘an outpost defined by a line drawn from Sheringham, round Norwich, to Lowestoft’ was the ‘greatest oddity’ of the Midland Region as the ‘inhabitants cannot by any stretch of the imagination be called Midlanders, but who are, are to the contrary highly conscious of being East Anglians’. It

²⁰³ Ibid.

²⁰⁴ ‘Reception Poor on the South Coast’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 7 Jan 1950 p. 3; ‘Television from France’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 21 Feb 1950, p. 4; ‘Proposal for Sponsored Television Programmes’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 25 March 1950, p. 1.

cannot be emphasised enough that this was a truly unique situation. No other region in Britain received similar treatment from the BBC and although the *Eastern Daily Press* and the local population were clearly aware of the situation there was no appetite on behalf of either to actually do anything to improve the situation. Indeed when the BBC did announce their five year plan for the nationwide expansion of the television network in September of 1950, the newspaper published no editorial comment on the development and nor did it stimulate any response from the readers of the paper.²⁰⁵

In truth, and understandably, the only broadcasting issue that seemed to interest the people of Norfolk during the investigations of the Beveridge Committee continued to be the poor reception of wireless that many listeners experienced, leading to a spate of letters appearing in October, all complaining that the situation had got worse despite the establishment of the transmission station at Postwick.²⁰⁶

The publication of the committee's final report did however result in both coverage and editorial comment. These highlighted that the committee had recommended the continuation of the BBC monopoly and provided a commentary which pointed out the 'inherent evils of monopoly' and the potential importance of the recommendations that had been made in regard to local broadcasting. Yet the column also made clear that 'references to the general excellence of reception must seem ironical to many Norfolk listeners', but that the development of local stations should 'receive a warm welcome' as a local station at Norwich 'would do much to foster local interest and local patriotism'. Nevertheless despite the fact that television was clearly now an important part of the future of broadcasting, having been discussed at length by the Beveridge Committee and being the subject of the BBC's five year plan, it was not mentioned in the newspaper's coverage. Clearly it was still not felt to be an issue of significant importance to the majority of the readers of the paper.²⁰⁷

Once the report had been published and the government entered into a period of contemplation, coverage of broadcasting once again virtually disappeared from the *Eastern Daily Press*. During the first half of 1951 the only significant reporting of events relating to broadcasting came in the form of the newspaper's by now predictable discussion of the BBC's annual visit to the region as part of 'East Anglia Week'. Although the Government's broad approval of the Beveridge Committee's recommendations in a White Paper in June did however draw editorial comment from the paper. This comment suggested that although it had been agreed by government that the BBC's monopoly should be maintained, it was the paper's view that the BBC 'might be greatly stimulated by competition from one or more independent corporations'. Given this claim it is surprising that the paper had never seized upon either the opportunity to submit evidence to the committee supporting this idea or reported on the dissent that was present in the report on precisely this point. Once again there was no great clamour for significant change to take place or for the BBC to do more for the county emanating from the *Eastern Daily Press* on behalf of its readers.²⁰⁸

²⁰⁵ 'Midland Regional', *Eastern Daily Press*, 28 August 1950, p. 4; 'B.B.C. Plans to Make its Television Service "Truly National"', *Eastern Daily Press*, 9 September 1950, p. 1

²⁰⁶ 'B.B.C. Reception', *Eastern Daily Press*, 16 October 1950, p. 4; 'B.B.C. Reception', *Eastern Daily Press*, 17 October 1950, p. 4.

²⁰⁷ 'Beveridge Report', *Eastern Daily Press*, 18 January 1951, p. 4.

²⁰⁸ 'The B.B.C.', *Eastern Daily Press*, 11 July 1951, p. 4.

The political inquiry into the future of broadcasting during 1950-1 had failed to inspire much interest in television for the *Eastern Daily Press* and readers. The recommendations of the Broadcasting Committee had largely ensured that for the immediate future it would be 'business as usual' in respect of television, and broadcasting more generally, for those in East Anglia. As the statistics demonstrate, wireless broadcasting was hugely popular in the area despite all of the problems associated with it, whilst television remained an experimental plaything for a tiny minority of the local population. Yet two pivotal events in the history of British television loomed just around the corner, one is often claimed to have been the turning point at which television became dominant over wireless, whilst the other would change the structure of British broadcasting forever. Although occurring concurrently this thesis will consider how each was experienced in East Anglia separately. First the televising of the Coronation Ceremony in 1953 and then the process by which the introduction of commercial television received political approval, which will be considered in the next chapter.

A Crowning Glory?

The death of King George VI in February 1952 set into motion a chain of events that would culminate in the Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in June 1953. Whilst it would not be the first royal ceremony to become a media event, nor the first to be in part televised, it would become the first in which television would play a central role and achieve a mass audience.²⁰⁹

As Briggs suggests plans for the broadcasting of the ceremony began in earnest shortly after the announcement of the King's death, but with the view that it would be sound broadcasting rather than television that would be the dominant medium.²¹⁰ In fact the initial plans for media coverage of the ceremony announced by the Duke of Norfolk (head of the Coronation Commission in charge of the overall arrangements) on 21 October 1952 dictated that a sound broadcast commentary of the coronation service would take place but that live television coverage would be 'restricted to the processions west of the choir screen' and that a 'film of the ceremony will be available for subsequent showing in the television'.²¹¹

This decision was not met with universal approval within either the general population nor the political class. Within one week of the announcement four MPs tabled questions to the Prime Minister asking why the Government had apparently advised against the televising of the ceremony.²¹² The response from the Prime Minister first pointed out that responsibility for the decision did not in fact rest with the Cabinet but rather with the Coronation Commission and secondly that he was aware of 'a broad general opinion' within the country that 'fuller advantage should be taken of the modern mechanical arrangements now available

²⁰⁹ The BBC undertook its first television outside broadcast for George VI's Coronation but was only given permission to film the procession. The estimate for the television audience was 60,000 viewers. Philip Ziegler, *Crown and People* (London: Collins, 1978), p. 60.

²¹⁰ Briggs, *Sound and Vision*, p. 459.

²¹¹ 'Coronation Films On Television', *Times*, 21 October 1952, p. 6.

<http://find.galegroup.com/ttda/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=TTDA&userGroupName=univea&tabID=T003&docPage=article&searchType=BasicSearchForm&docId=CS103632725&type=multiPage&contentSet=LTO&version=1.0> [accessed 26/03/2017]

²¹² 'Coronation Ceremony (Television)', HC Deb, *Hansard*, vol. 505, col. 1737, 28 October 1952.

through television, to enable the many millions of people outside the Abbey to see what is seen by the congregation of notables in the Abbey.²¹³

In response to this public controversy the Coronation Commission announced at the start of December that approval had been granted to extend ‘the use of television during the coronation service’ to ‘parts east of the screen’ including ‘the Recognition, the Crowning and the Homage’.²¹⁴

As Table 4 shows one justification for the decision to authorise the televising of the Coronation ceremony could be found in the growing popularity of television. The increase in the number of television licences sold was dramatic during the period of 1950-2, both in respect of the national perspective where the absolute number of licences sold had multiplied by a factor of three, but also in relation to the regions. Even Norfolk exhibited considerable growth in the total number of licences sold, although the overall number of licences sold in the region remained small.

This suggests that the trend of growth in the popularity of television was already well established before the Coronation had even been announced and does cast doubt on any claims that large sections of the British population purchased televisions and television licences because of the Coronation. It is difficult to see the event as ‘UK television’s tipping point’, when in fact it had already tipped.²¹⁵

Table. 4
Television Licences 1950-52.²¹⁶

Region	No. of Television Licences at end of 1950	No. of Television Licences at end of 1951	No. of Television Licences at end of 1952
Norfolk	673	982	1,913
Suffolk	2,043	3,079	4,222
Cornwall and Devon	77	209	2,992
Northumberland and Durham	70	3,170	11,190
Lancashire and Cheshire	23,772	108,855	240,354
London and the Home Counties	355,786	650,194	775,747
England, Scotland and Wales	577,852	1,162,330	1,892,508

²¹³ ‘Coronation Ceremony (Television)’, HC Deb, *Hansard*, vol. 505, col. 1741-8, 28 October 1952.

²¹⁴ ‘Coronation T.V. Changes’, *Times*, 9 December 1952, p. 8. The Times Digital Archive, <<http://find.galegroup.com.ueaezproxy.uea.ac.uk:2048/ttda/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=TTD&userGroupName=univea&tabID=T003&docPage=article&searchType=BasicSearchForm&docId=CS136793993&type=multipage&contentSet=LTO&version=1.0>> [accessed 26/03/2017]

²¹⁵ Tom de Castella, ‘How the Coronation kick-started the love of television’, 30 May 2013, <<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/magazine-22688498>> [accessed 19/03/2017]

²¹⁶ *The British Broadcasting Corporation Annual Report and Accounts for the Year 1950-51*, Cmd. 8347, pp. 98-99; *The British Broadcasting Corporation Annual Report and Accounts for the Year 1952-53*, Cmd. 8928, pp. 74-5.

However, the status of the 1953 Coronation within the canon of television studies is not just the result of the pre-conditions and build up to the event or their role in driving adoption, but rather because of the way it is suggested that the British population experienced it and the subsequent effect on the adoption of television that it is suggested to have had.²¹⁷

According to Briggs over nineteen million adults in Britain watched the Coronation procession on television and almost twenty million watched the actual service, figures which suggest that over half of the adult population experienced the event via the medium of television. In contrast the BBC estimated that 11.7 million adults listened to the wireless coverage of the event. Given these figures it is unsurprising that the Coronation is so often considered as the moment at which television gained primacy over the wireless service. The people appeared to have spoken and chosen television as the medium of the present and the future.²¹⁸

Yet, scholars have failed to ask with any real seriousness whether or not this high level of viewing was the case everywhere in the UK. The viewing and listening figures presented are national and may hide regional differences in the way that people experienced the event. It has already been identified that a disproportionate amount of television licences were held in London and the Home counties compared to the rest of the nation and this might skew our understanding of how people across the United Kingdom experienced the event. Does a simple acceptance of the BBC's own viewing figures risk an overemphasise on homogeneity over heterogeneity of experience? Briggs hints at this possibility when mentioning that in the BBC's West region the listening audience was actually larger than that of the television coverage. The question that remains to be addressed is what was the experience of the Coronation in Norfolk. Did the 'tele-parties' described by Ziegler and Örnerbring actually take place in Norfolk as they did in the rest of the country and did the Coronation act as stimulation for the growth of television as Örnerbring suggests.²¹⁹

The Coronation in Norfolk: Who saw what and when?

When it was announced that the Coronation would in fact be televised East Anglia was still without a transmission station of its own. Viewers in Norfolk were effectively served by the transmitters at Sutton Coldfield or Alexandra Palace depending on viewer preference and both were not powerful enough to reliably broadcast a clear signal to the area. Clearly this posed a problem for both the BBC and anyone wanting to view the television coverage of the ceremony in the region.

These types of access problems were not of course exclusive to East Anglia. From an early stage of proceedings MPs from around the country had begun to ask questions in parliament about what the government and BBC would do to ensure that their constituents would be able to witness the coronation ceremony. As has been shown, historically MPs from the region had seemed hesitant to overtly press the case for the need for television in East Anglia. However in October 1952 the MP for Yarmouth, Anthony Fell, explicitly asked the Assistant Postmaster General whether in respect to providing transmission facilities for the

²¹⁷ Briggs, *Sound and Vision*, pp. 466-7.

²¹⁸ Ziegler, *Crown and People*, p. 114.

²¹⁹ Briggs, *Sound and Vision*, pp. 466-7; Henrik Örnerbring, 'The Coronation in the Mass-Observation Archive', in *Re-viewing Television History*, ed. By Helen Wheatley, (London: I.B. Taurus, 2007), p. 176.

Coronation he would ‘consider further areas like East Anglia and other fringe areas, which are so close to and yet so far from the transmission of the Coronation, and whether it would be possible, by some ingenuity not only on the part of the B.B.C. and the Post Office but by industry as well to give them a service?’ The Assistant PMG could only respond by suggesting that if it were possible to provide a service to those areas then the BBC would, but that there were significant limitations on the amount of equipment available.²²⁰

As can be seen in the next chapter, this would not be the last time that Fell became involved in the issue of television, and his mention of the possible role of industry in providing a television service was a clue to where his own allegiances and ideology were.

The effort to persuade the GPO and the BBC to put some kind of solution in place for East Anglia in time for the Coronation did not simply rest on the shoulders of Mr Fell. In November 1952 Denys Bullard, the MP for Norfolk South West, followed up by asking the Assistant PMG whether he was ‘aware of the impossibility of getting reasonable television reception in Norfolk’ and if he would take steps to ‘improve the transmission service so that the people of Norfolk may have a fair chance of receiving the broadcasts of the Coronation’.²²¹

In February 1953 Frank Medlicott, MP for Norfolk Central, who like Fell would also play a role in directing the future shape of television, also made an appeal to the Assistant PMG for Norfolk to have a television station of its own, but not on the basis of the Coronation but so that ‘persons engaged in the task of food production, and whose amenities are limited may no longer feel that they are being neglected as compared with the centres which happen to have greater density of population.’²²²

Interest in whether the Coronation would be seen in Norfolk was not just limited to those in Westminster. The sense of frustration with the situation began to boil over into the correspondence page of the *Eastern Daily Press* too. This was first evinced in a letter from Denison Brighouse in December 1952 in which he described the excuses provided by the government for the lack of television in the area as ‘bureaucratic poppycock’. He implored his fellow readers to write to their MPs and for the local newspapers to ‘hammer away’ at the issue in their editorials. The lack of response from other readers clearly infuriated Peter Johnson, who harangued his fellow readers for not expressing their support, suggesting that it seemed that ‘we do not want a service or, if we do, we are not prepared to shout for it’ and that it seemed likely that several European countries would be able to watch the Coronation even though those in East Anglia would not be able to. Johnson’s letter acted as a lightning rod for correspondence on the issue and throughout January the newspaper regularly featured correspondence from fellow readers frustrated with the injustice of being denied television whilst the rest of the country enjoyed it and lamenting the lack of action taken.²²³

Despite the apparent new found interest in television amongst readers, and the demands to have a solution in place that would allow local viewers to watch the Coronation from both

²²⁰ ‘Television Transmitters Pontop Pike and Belfast’, *Hansard*, vol. 505, col. 1025-30, 22 October 1952.

²²¹ ‘Reception, Norfolk’, *Hansard*, vol. 507 col. 64-5W, 12 November 1952.

²²² ‘Facilities, Norfolk and Suffolk’, *Hansard*, vol. 511 col. 217-8W, 25 February 1953.

²²³ ‘Television in East Anglia’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 17 Dec 1952, p. 4; ‘Television in East Anglia’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 5 Jan 1953, p. 4; Letters about the topic were published on the 8th, 9th, 12th, 13th, 14th, 15th, 16th, 19th, 20th, 26th, 27th, 28th and 31st of January 1953.

politicians and the general public, no alterations were made to the system. Those in Norfolk and East Anglia who wished to watch the coverage were reliant upon the existing Sutton Coldfield and Alexandra Palace transmitters, although knowledge of this did not entirely extinguish the hopes of all those in the region. Individual viewers strove to give themselves the best possible chance of receiving a television signal on the day of the event, with Mr J. B. Postle arranging the erection of a 30ft tall aerial onto the 90ft high tower of Alysham church in the hope of being able to project the television coverage onto a 4ft by 3 ft screen in the church for the viewing pleasure of the local community. Although even with those extreme measures Postle warned that people 'might not see anything at all' as reception was uncertain and 'the public would have to take a risk'.²²⁴

Local retailers also attempted to take advantage of the event and the interest in it, as the day grew ever closer they advertised with the *Eastern Daily Press* and in the case of Panks Radio, emphasised that despite the fact that no improvements to the BBC's transmitters would be made before the day that any prospective purchasers would 'stand a very GOOD CHANCE' of seeing the Coronation if they purchased one of their latest receivers. Given that an individual with a 120ft tall aerial was doubtful about receiving a watchable version of the broadcast it seems that Panks were stretching the definition of the phrase 'GOOD CHANCE' to its very limit. Nevertheless the existence of the advert does suggest that there was a degree of anticipation within the local area for the chance to watch television and that the anticipation could be exploited. See Fig. 12.

Fig. 12

Panks Advert, 'Coronation Television'.²²⁵



²²⁴ 'Coronation Day Television Offer of Screen in Alysham Church', *Eastern Daily Press*, 11 Mar 1953, p. 5: 'Television Aerial on Alysham Parish Church Tower', *Eastern Daily Press*, 22 May 1953, p. 5.

²²⁵ 'Panks Advert, "Coronation Television"', *Eastern Daily Press*, 2 May 1953, p. 7.

The Experience.

It is difficult to accurately measure how many of the twenty million adults who watched the Coronation ceremony were located in Norfolk but there are a number of reasons to believe that the number was extremely small.

Although information on exactly how many television licences had been sold in time for Coronation day is not readily available, it is possible to narrow the figure down. As previously mentioned at the end of 1952 the BBC had reported that 1913 television licences had been purchased in Norfolk and an answer from the Assistant Postmaster General to a question from Anthony Fell confirms that less than one month after the Coronation the approximate number of television licences in Norfolk was 2,500.²²⁶

Clearly it is not the case that one licence is equal to one person. Ziegler describes the phenomenon of the ‘tele-party’ where multiple viewers would crowd around a television set to watch the events of the day. Accepting the claim of the BBC that 20 million people watched the event and using the television licence fee data from the end of 1952, namely that 1892508 television licences had been purchased in England, Scotland and Wales it can be estimated that roughly ten people were gathered around each set on average. Applying this to the number of licences in Norfolk indicates that the size of the potential Norfolk audience was likely to have been in the range of 20,000 to 25,000 people, or around 0.125% of the total audience across the United Kingdom.²²⁷

However, in reality the figure was probably considerably lower. Whilst some areas of the UK did enjoy good reception, weather conditions across the country, and in Norfolk in particular, were such that reception was extremely variable. The Met Office describes how ‘cloudy and wet weather continued across eastern districts which persisted well into the evening’ and that ‘the wind was a notable feature of the weather’, and that it was ‘particularly cold down the east coast and really quite miserable’.²²⁸

Perhaps the best assessment of the impact of this is to be found in an article in the *Eastern Daily Press* headlined ‘Norfolk Television a Failure Except in South and West’. It described how reception was ‘excellent in South and West Norfolk’ but that ‘would-be viewers in other parts of the county spent a fruitless day in front of screens that were either blank or a maddening sea of flashes and dots.’ Television reception in Norwich was described as ‘practically non-existent’, whilst conditions in Yarmouth and Lowestoft were ‘poor’ or ‘very poor’. In contrast the report explained that ‘pictorial reception’ had been excellent in Hunstanton and that King’s Lynn was one of the lucky areas, in which ‘many people’ were to be found grouped around TV sets. In Dereham similar parties ‘gathered around television sets’ but reception was described as ‘patchy’.

Meanwhile Mr Postle’s fears that his efforts at Alysham Church would be for nought were proven to be correct. According to the report hundreds of people gathered to see the

²²⁶‘East Anglia’, *Hansard*, vol. 517, cc. 399-401, 1 July 1953.

²²⁷ Ziegler, *Crown*, p. 116; BBC, *The British Broadcasting Corporation Annual Report and Accounts for the Year 1951-52*, Cmd. 8660, pp. 111-112.

²²⁸ Met Office, ‘Tuesday 2 June 1953 (Coronation Day of Queen Elizabeth II), <http://www.metoffice.gov.uk/media/pdf/d/0/Coronation_Day_-_2_June_1953.pdf> [accessed 19/03/2017]

ceremony, but the atmospheric conditions made it impossible to receive a signal. Even a 120ft tall aerial could not guarantee good reception of television in Norfolk during 1953.²²⁹

Testimony from the oral history interviews undertaken as part of this research project provide additional supporting evidence to illustrate the varying experiences within the county. ‘V’, who was living in Swaffham at the time of the Coronation recalled that she watched the ceremony on a television set owned by the cousin of her step-father:

So we spent several hours just watching the Coronation, but of course the pictures weren’t great because of the weather and the interference and everything which goes with having an OK picture.

‘P’ also remembered watching the Coronation, although her recollections were more vague. Living in the small village of Ashill she remembered the event as follows:

Well in those days it being black and white and I don’t think television had been about too long, she decided we were going to watch television. So she put it on and we couldn’t see the screen very well, so the next thing I remember she got a big blanket to put over the top of our television and over our heads- 3 of us and we sat there underneath this blanket trying to watch the screen! [Laughs] The only thing I could really see was a horse and carriage and two small children, and I believe it was the Queen’s Coronation but I’m not 100% sure of that.

‘RN’ was another participant who remembered watching the events of the day. He lived on the estate of Houghton Hall, located in the west of Norfolk near to King’s Lynn and described how he and his father had been invited to a ‘tele-party’ at one of the big farms on the estate:

I think there was about a dozen of us, perhaps even more than that, and it was of special interest in Houghton because the Marquis of Cholmondeley was the Lord Great Chamberlain and played a substantial part in the ceremony and we actually saw him on the television... It was immediate, it was actually there at the time whereas the stuff at the cinema was sometimes weeks old... it was pretty sensational in a way.

A commonality between all these interviewees is the fact that they all lived in locations towards the west of Norfolk and their experiences do back up the contemporary report from the *Eastern Daily Press* that reception in this area of the county was strong. However, this does not mean that everyone in the area watched the television coverage, ‘RY’ from Wereham, a village south of King’s Lynn explained that:

I didn’t see it because Wereham, like I think many villages, had a special fete and I think afterwards we went to what was called the ‘red triangle hut’ and we were given a tea.

‘S’ described a similar experience, although she was located in the centre of Norfolk at the time in a small village named Southburgh:

²²⁹ ‘Norfolk Television a Failure Except in South and West’. *Eastern Daily Press*, 3 Jun 1953, p. 8.

We had a wonderful time for the Coronation, we had sports and tea and then in the evening they had lit beacons.

Reaction to the television coverage of the Coronation in the *Eastern Daily Press* during the following days was not particularly positive. A letter from E. H. Wingrave, from Yarmouth, pointed out that there was ‘a great disappointment and some bitterness at the failure to receive any worthwhile television signals’ and that although unintentionally, the BBC had “‘rubbed it in’ by stressing what a wonderful show we missed.”²³⁰

Wingrave was far from alone in holding this view, although others expressed it with a hint of sarcasm. A correspondent identified only as ‘An Anglian Sufferer’, explained how he was sure that ‘all East Anglia is delighted to hear that so many millions, including France and Germany, had such a splendid view of our beloved Queen’s Coronation on their television’ but that East Anglian television licence payers were ‘suffering from acute disappointment and eye strain’ but were hoping for ‘fair play and fair viewing in the very near future’.²³¹

A previous correspondent on the topic of television, Denison Brighouse, went a step further than others and informed the paper that he had sent telegrams to both Sir Winston Churchill and the PMG to express his disgust at the ‘neglect to provide television for the Coronation in East Anglia’, highlighting that there were ‘strong feelings of resentment which unless appeased could affect the outcome of next General Election’. It is unknown what Churchill’s response to the telegram was, although one can imagine.²³²

The general sentiment of dissatisfaction continued to be expressed in the letters page of the *Eastern Daily Press* with further correspondence published on 9 and 10 of June, but also made its way to Westminster via the efforts of the MP Frank Medlicott, who promised to ask the Assistant PMG in the House of Commons if he was aware of the resentment felt in Norfolk regarding the way the county was treated during the Coronation and also if the government could give assurances that when the next stage of the expansion of the television service was decided upon ‘Norfolk and Suffolk’ would be given ‘at least equal priority with other areas’.²³³

It is absolutely clear that the way that the Coronation was experienced in televisual terms in Norfolk was not the same way that it was experienced throughout the majority of the country and as has been accepted in existing historical accounts of British television. An event that has been so often viewed as a triumphant success for the BBC and a ‘tipping point’ in the adoption of television as a mass medium was understandably described as a ‘failure’ in Norfolk. Years of policy decisions had resulted in the provision of broadcasting in Norfolk being underdeveloped compared to the rest of the nation and ultimately meant that a large proportion of the population missed out on the televisual aspect of a significant national event.

Conclusion.

Predictably at the start of the 1950s television had made little penetration into Norfolk although it had proven to be more successful in Suffolk. The BBC’s approach to the

²³⁰ ‘The Coronation and TV’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 5 Jun 1953, p. 4.

²³¹ ‘The Gap in TV’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 6 Jun 1953, p. 4.

²³² ‘TV In East Anglia’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 8 Jun 1953, p. 4.

²³³ “‘Resentment’ over Lack of Television”, *Eastern Daily Press*, 10 Jun 1953, p. 1.

expansion of television explains this neatly, priority was being given to expanding into areas of dense population so as to serve the largest percentage of the national population as soon as possible. In practice this meant that the television network expanded northwards initially to industrial, urban heartlands with the unfortunate corollary of leaving provincial areas in both the east and south-west of England out in the cold.

It is more difficult to explain why the wireless service had made such strong inroads into Norfolk despite the policies of the BBC towards the region. Whilst the provision of a booster transmitter at Postwick in 1949 had improved reception for some, Norfolk remained without a firm identity within the BBC's regional scheme and was only truly included in the network during the annual 'East Anglia Weeks'. The offered explanations for the success of the medium, such as the presence of 'international/pirate' stations and the lack of alternative entertainment/information due to the dispersed nature of the local population, are plausible but not entirely satisfactory.

The announcement, investigations and publication of the Beveridge Committee's Report on the future of broadcasting generated little attention from the local press and nor did the announcement of the BBC's five year expansion plan for television. The fact that there was no single interest group for the region, i.e. an East Anglian equivalent of the SNP, to give evidence to the Beveridge Committee meant that an opportunity had been missed to highlight the lack of broadcasting available to East Anglia and to lobby for changes in policies and in the end the decisions would be taken without any direct input from the region.

If acted upon the recommendations of the Beveridge Committee would have had some impact upon the region, particularly with regard to the devolution of the BBC's individual regions, but it is unclear whether this would have actually meant that East Anglia became its own region or whether Norfolk would have remained part of the Midland region, but with perhaps a minor increase in its autonomy.

The manner in which the Coronation was experienced in Norfolk reinforces the argument that there is much to be gained from analysing the history of broadcasting in Britain from a regional perspective. This 'micro level' perspective has highlighted a greater level of nuance in the experience of a pivotal event than has previously been considered. Whilst there are of course similarities between the existing historical analyses and this study, it is clear that Norfolk approached the Coronation from a different position, with far lower numbers of televisions, and also experienced it in a different way, relatively few people in the region were able to actually watch it live. It is important to note that this was not because people in the region were not 'dreaming of electric screens', many were, but rather can be seen as an inevitable consequence of pre and post war BBC and government policies.

Consequently, it is necessary to reconsider what impact this event had on the region. It is difficult to support the claim that this was a 'tipping point' in the history of television in Norfolk when so few people viewed it on television. Instead it should be seen as a catalyst for crystallising support for putting pressure on the BBC and Government to treat the region more equitably than they previously had. In this sense the power of the Coronation in the history of television in Norfolk is not that it was seen by so many on the small screen, but rather that it was seen by so few.

Chapter 4: The End of a Monopoly

Introduction.

As mentioned previously, the events of the Coronation in 1953 occurred in parallel with another pivotal event in British media history; the beginning of the end of the BBC's monopoly over television broadcasting. The highly visible and well documented nature of the Coronation ensures that it is ingrained in the history of television in Britain. However this chapter argues that the events surrounding the initial arguments for a rival commercial television service and regionally specific events that occurred at the same time had a larger impact on the development of television in East Anglia and that other events, specific to the region, also had a significant impact on the manner and timing in which television reached the region.

The Origins of Dissent.

Although there had been expressions of dissent regarding the BBC's monopoly over broadcasting prior to the 1950s, none had garnered significant traction or public support. Indeed the main recommendations of 1951's Beveridge Committee's report into the future of broadcasting in Britain, followed the tradition of supporting incremental change within the BBC rather than radical root and branch reform. However, the inclusion of a minority report by the Conservative MP Selwyn Lloyd which argued for the introduction of a rival to the BBC in the field of television was 'destined to become the most influential part of the Beveridge Report'.²³⁴

Lloyd was careful to phrase his disagreements with his committee colleagues in gentle terms and went to great lengths to ensure that his vision was not seen as a 'condemnation of the work of the BBC in the past' but instead as a 'recognition of the expansion accomplished and of the great possibilities ahead'. Like his colleagues Lloyd grasped the huge potential of broadcasting to influence society and felt that it was critical to answer the question of whether or not it was right 'that the control and development of this means of informing, educating and entertaining should remain with a single body of men and women'. However unlike his colleagues he felt that the inherent problems of monopoly were not outweighed by the past achievements of the BBC and he made clear that he could not agree that 'it is in the public interest that all this actual and potential influence should be vested in a public or private monopoly'.²³⁵

Whilst Lloyd recognised four main evils inherent to monopoly, it was the issue of excessive power (and the abuse thereof) that most concerned him. He argued that such excessive power could take two starkly different, yet equally problematic, forms. Either a public monopoly could grow so large and 'timid of making mistakes that it divests itself of initiative and purpose' or it could 'swing to the other extreme and exercise its power excessively'. For Lloyd the latter had already been demonstrated by the corporation's own evidence to the committee wherein he suggested they claimed that 'it is the BBC's duty to

²³⁴ H. H. Wilson, *Pressure Group: The Campaign for Commercial Television* (London: Secker and Warburg, 1961), pp. 54-55.

²³⁵ Selwyn Lloyd *Minority Report in Report of the Broadcasting Committee 1949* (Cmd. 8116), p. 201.

decide what is good for people to hear or to see', an argument that Lloyd pointed out was also the 'stock argument of dictators.'²³⁶

Lloyd felt that there were a number of possible solutions to the 'problem' of the BBC monopoly, although he immediately discounted the possibility of broadcasting falling under the direct control of the government. He instead proposed that the BBC continue to exist but be licensed by a 'Commission for British Broadcasting' to provide the existing Home and Regional wireless services including the provision of News, Schools and Overseas services. Competition would be introduced to wireless and would be provided by one or two companies or corporations who would 'run national programmes on commercial lines' as well as by the creation of local stations that would broadcast to smaller areas making a 'great contribution to local patriotism, local interest, the development of local talent and to the diversification of broadcasting as a whole'.²³⁷

In Lloyd's plan the responsibility for television would be taken from the BBC and a new British Television Corporation created. During the interim period the BBC would be temporarily allowed to accept advertisements in an attempt to enable the licence fee to be reduced. In addition, Lloyd imagined that over the course of time one or more other Television Corporations would be formed in response to public demand for alternative television programmes. This would he imagined result in a similar model to that proposed for wireless, 'a public service non-commercial programme financed by a licence fee and alongside it one or more other agencies financed commercially'.²³⁸

Lloyd argued that although breaking the monopoly would be a painful process, doing so would introduce some much-needed competition whilst simultaneously safeguarding the best of what the BBC had been broadcasting (News, Schools, Overseas and 'distinctive programming'). In his view the BBC would continue to set a benchmark for quality and broadcasting standards that commercial broadcasters would need to emulate. The plan also provided an opportunity for genuinely local broadcasting to thrive. For areas such as East Anglia, which had been largely side-lined both in terms of access to broadcasting from London as well as in respect of having the ability to broadcast for themselves, this would potentially generate new opportunities for audiences and producers and perhaps lead to an expansion of the public sphere.

The Immediate Political Reaction to the Minority Report.

The Labour Government, elected in 1950 with a majority of only five, found itself in a difficult political situation when the Beveridge Report was finally published. Its comparative lack of parliamentary authority meant that it was 'forced to avoid new controversial measures' whenever possible, a category that the future of broadcasting fell within.²³⁹

Whilst the Government delayed announcing their intentions for broadcasting, let alone implementing them, internally the Conservative Party began to set into action a plan to bring some aspect of competition to broadcasting in Britain. This can be seen as part of the rise of the 'One-Nation Group' within the Conservatives. They were, according to Sendall, 'a semi-

²³⁶ Lloyd, *Minority Report*, pp. 202-3.

²³⁷ Lloyd, *Minority Report*, p. 208.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*

²³⁹ Asa Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom Volume V: Sound and Vision*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), p. 394.

official association of some of the more able new Conservative politicians, all of who were destined to make their mark and all of whom were united in their opposition on principle to monopolies of whatever kind.²⁴⁰

As the Conservative Party regrouped following its electoral defeat a decision was taken in February 1951 to form an official Conservative Broadcasting Policy Committee comprised mainly of figures opposed to the BBC's monopoly. This group was able to work quickly and by May 1951 had been able to prepare a draft report setting out a position that the Conservative Party could adopt.²⁴¹

In contrast the Labour Government struggled not only to work its way through some of the detail of the Beveridge recommendations (negotiations with the BBC regarding regional devolution was a particular sticking point). In addition it suffered with the fact that the health of relevant Ministers was impacting on the ability for decisions to be made in a timely manner. Given these factors the Government's official response, White Paper Cmd. 8291, to the Beveridge Committee, was not published until 10 July.²⁴²

The Parliamentary debates that followed the publication of the White Paper featured both passionate defence of the BBC alongside the view from the 'One-nation' section of the Conservative party that the time for monopoly was over. However these debates were to ultimately prove to be largely irrelevant in respect of any immediate impact on Government policy. The instability of the Labour Government, due to its small majority, led Clement Attlee to call a snap general election in October 1951, which was duly won by the Conservative party with a majority of seventeen.

The inability of the Labour Government to implement the recommendations of the Beveridge Report quickly and the shift in political power meant that the members of the Conservative Broadcasting Policy Committee rapidly found themselves in the position of being able to advance their plans to break the BBC's monopoly. Their task would be to persuade their colleagues, the opposition and the electorate that breaking the BBC's monopoly was actually a good thing to do. Given the historical resistance to any change in the broadcasting status quo this was by no means guaranteed to be possible. Yet for those in regions such as East Anglia the promise of improved local services, supplied by anyone, might have appeared an attractive proposition.

Driving Forwards.

The first task of this group of 'One-Nation' Conservative MPs was to persuade the establishment figures within their party that dismantling the BBC's monopoly was in their interests and that it would be electorally popular. Although there were around one hundred Conservative MPs broadly supportive of breaking the monopolies in British society, within the Cabinet there was 'little pressure for change' when it came to television. Few members

²⁴⁰ Bernard Sendall, *Independent Television in Britain Volume 1 - Origin and Foundation, 1946-62*, (Basingstoke, Macmillan, 1982), p. 5.

²⁴¹ Briggs, *Sound and Vision*, p. 398.

²⁴² Herbert Morrison initially had responsibility for broadcasting as Lord President of the Council but was forced to replace Ernest Bevin as Foreign Secretary when Bevin fell ill in March 1951. Bevin subsequently assumed the position of Lord President until his death on 14th April 1951 and it was not until 29th May that the Government announced that Patrick Gordon Walker would become responsible for 'the co-ordination of information policy'. Briggs, *Sound and Vision*, pp. 404-5.

of the Cabinet were actively interested in television and those that did hold any interest, including Anthony Eden, were not in favour of the introduction of any commercial rivals to the BBC.²⁴³

The lack of appetite for change within the Cabinet did not put off those within the Conservative party advocating for competition, eleven of whom formed the Conservative Broadcasting Study Group (CBSG) during November 1951. From the perspective of this study the group is particularly interesting as two of the eleven members were MPs from Norfolk: Anthony Fell, a newly elected MP for Yarmouth and associate of C.O. Stanley at Pye Radio Ltd.; and also Brigadier Frank Medlicott, MP for Central Norfolk. As previous chapters have shown, there had been little public political pressure from local MPs regarding the expansion of television into East Anglia during the late 1940s and early 1950s, so the appearance of two Norfolk MPs within this relatively small group is surprising and signifies that politicians in the region were now prepared to take on a more active role in issues relating to television, albeit with a focus on the big issue of breaking the BBC's monopoly rather than on the specific needs of their constituents.

This group, aimed to influence official Conservative policy not only via the traditional route of the Conservative Party's 1922 Committee but also via direct discussion and lobbying of the Postmaster-General and the Assistant Postmaster-General. Whilst it is always difficult to assess the exact causal role that a lobbying group such as this one actually has, it was the case that following the establishment and initial actions of the group the Conservative Government formed a Committee of Ministers to look at the future of broadcasting. In May 1952 they published a White Paper (Cmd. 8550) that moved away from the previous policy of allowing the BBC to continue as it had before as the sole provider of broadcasting.²⁴⁴

Paragraph four of this White Paper made clear that 'the successive Licences granted to the B.B.C. have not in themselves established the Corporation as the sole authority for all broadcasting in the United Kingdom'. This was a reminder that Parliament had ultimate sovereignty over the control of broadcasting in Britain. More importantly paragraphs seven and eight explicitly moved away from the policies of previous governments by stating that:

The present Government have come to the conclusion that in the expanding field of television provision should be made to permit some element of competition when the calls on capital resources at present needed for purposes of greater national importance make this feasible' and 'As the policy governing the B.B.C. Charter and Licence is always considered by Parliament on the occasion of renewal, the Government think that Parliament should have a similar opportunity of considering, before the licensing of the first station, the terms and conditions under which competitive television would operate.²⁴⁵

This carefully worded document, contained what was described at the time as a "Trojan Horse" clause'. This allowed the Government to introduce the idea of competition for the

²⁴³ Briggs also notes that although Churchill was not in favour of commercial television he was also not a supporter of the BBC as an institution, perhaps due to his experience of the BBC during the General Strike of 1926 when the Corporation resisted his attempts to bring it under control of the Government. Briggs, *Sound and Vision*, p. 424.

²⁴⁴ Briggs, *Sound and Vision*, pp. 425-6.

²⁴⁵ HMSO, *Broadcasting Memorandum on the Report of the Broadcasting Committee, 1949* Cmd. 8550, p. 3.

BBC in the area of television but stopped short of demanding the introduction of it. The caveat that competition should only be introduced when capital resources were not needed elsewhere and the suggestion that it would be up to Parliament to ultimately decide upon what form any competition might take, provided the Government with a convenient get out clause and indicated that at this time the Cabinet still had no overwhelming desire to break the BBC's monopoly.²⁴⁶

Given the contentious nature of the proposals in the White Paper, strenuous parliamentary debate was assured and began in the House of Lords. Lord Reith tabled an initial motion to begin the debate and after a rather lengthy dissection of the details of the paper argued that the introduction of competition in television would inevitably result in a lowering of standards.²⁴⁷

The Postmaster-General, Earl De La Warr, attempted to diffuse these concerns by making clear that the word 'commercial' had been very deliberately left out of the white paper and that whilst it was 'clear that under our proposals commercial television is possible' there was also a strong argument for 'a rival State-financed broadcasting commission', one which would not be under any pressure to deliver profits ahead of quality programming.²⁴⁸

It was not until 11 June that the House of Commons had the chance to discuss the White Paper in a debate opened by the Secretary of State for the Home Department. The debate began with a tribute to the past achievements of the BBC before moving on to the issue of the suggestion that the monopoly be broken. Unlike De La Warr, the Secretary of State was explicit in his description of the competition to the BBC as being commercial in nature, saying that 'the competitors in the field of television will have to provide their own equipment from their own financial resources. This means, in short, that they will have to rely on advertisements and sponsored programmes for their income.'²⁴⁹

The debate which followed was predictably lively, featuring submissions from all parties and viewpoints. It was not only the substance of the White Paper that was debated but also the forces behind it. Charles Hobson (Labour) argued that the paper was 'an attempt to reconcile rival forces within the Conservative Party' and that it was only with the 'advent of the many new Conservative Members that there was any question of the desirability or otherwise of having sponsored broadcasts.'²⁵⁰

Those 'many new Conservative Members', included those within the CBSG who unsurprisingly had an input into the discussion. John Profumo, the first Chairman of the Group made clear that contrary to the thoughts of other MPs the White Paper did not go far enough in respect of introducing competition to Broadcasting. He stated that 'I do not like mere indications. I should have liked to see it come out flatly in favour of breaking the B.B.C. monopoly, not only in vision but in sound broadcasting', before arguing that sponsorship would 'take the very high cost of good quality radio and television entertainment off the shoulders of the public.'²⁵¹

²⁴⁶ Briggs, *Sound and Vision*, p. 425.

²⁴⁷ Hansard, vol. 176, col. 1289-1347, 22 May 1952.

²⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

²⁴⁹ Hansard, vol. 502, col. 213-342, 11 June 1953.

²⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

²⁵¹ *Ibid.*

Whilst Profumo was the dominant voice from the CBSG within the debate, other members featured too. Charles Orr-Ewing and John Rodgers both provided input and Anthony Fell, one of the MPs representing Norfolk made clear that the recommendations in the White paper did not mean that people would no longer be able to listen to the BBC and ‘get their culture’ if they wanted to.²⁵²

The debate concluded at 10.11pm after Labour Party amendments to the White Paper were approved by the by 297 votes to 269. Parliament had, for the time being, been won over and the advocates of breaking the BBC’s monopoly had overcome the first major obstacle. However much remained to be done to fully persuade the public and parliament that the introduction of a commercial rival to the BBC was in the interests of the nation.

Reaction in Norfolk.

Prior to the election of the Conservative Government the *Eastern Daily Press* had shown a surprising level of interest in broadcasting’s post-Beveridge Report future, particularly in regard to the recommendation that 15% of the BBC’s net revenue be allocated to the Exchequer rather than to the corporation. The newspaper claimed that this idea was a ‘mean one’ and that this money could have been spent on ‘the improvement of the programmes, or as and when the materials on the construction of more or better broadcasting stations to improve reception in those parts of the country where it is still poor.’ The reallocation of financial revenue, or ‘top slicing’, would disproportionately affect East Anglia. In an era of limited capital expenditure any reduction in the BBC’s finances would further delay the introduction of television to the region and the newspaper therefore hoped that this issue ‘should be most hotly contested when the White Paper is debated in Parliament’. This support for the BBC retaining all of the licence fee revenue did not mean that the *Eastern Daily Press* was therefore anti-competition, the article also stated that there was ‘still much to be said for the suggestion that the B.B.C. might be greatly stimulated by competition from one or more independent corporations’.²⁵³

Whilst this is clearly a long way away from being an explicit declaration of support for the introduction of competition, either funded commercially or otherwise, it is a cautious intervention that suggests that the BBC would not be able to rely upon the non-critical support of the *Eastern Daily Press* if progress were not made in bringing both the wireless and television services to the area more fully.

The column failed to generate any correspondence from the readership either in agreement or dissent during the remainder of the year and it was not until after the election of the Conservative Government in 1952 that any substantive discussion of either the BBC or television featured in the pages of the newspaper. Surprisingly this next intervention in the *Eastern Daily Press* took the form of a letter from Ernest Benn rather than an article in direct response to the plans of the Conservative Government or the activities of the CBSG.²⁵⁴

Although respectful of the past work that the BBC had done, Benn argued that the Government’s decision to extend the charter of the BBC for only six months provided an opportunity for the public to discuss not just the BBC’s past record but also the bigger issue

²⁵² Ibid.

²⁵³ ‘The B.B.C.’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 11 July 1951, p. 4.

²⁵⁴ Although it is not possible to confirm, it seems probable that this letter is from Ernest Benn the renowned advocate of laissez-faire politics and classical liberalism.

of the overall control of information which was in his view leading to Britons becoming ‘the least well informed of peoples outside of the Iron Curtain’. He argued that ‘the strict control of broadcasting’ was ‘an essential part of the machinery of dictatorship’ and bemoaned the ‘woeful lack of public concern at the nationalisation of fifty million pairs of ears under the B.B.C. monopoly’.²⁵⁵

Whilst Benn’s letter drew attention to the forthcoming opportunity to rearrange broadcasting in Britain, it was the more immediate issue of television still not being readily accessible within the region that concerned the *Eastern Daily Press* more. In late January 1952 an editorial column was dedicated to an attempt by the St.Faiths and Aylsham Rural District Council to persuade the Norfolk branch of the Rural District Councils Association to lobby the BBC for better provision of television within the County. Following the same approach established during previous coverage, the editorial line tentatively supported the idea of lobbying the BBC, stating that ‘it will do no harm for the B.B.C. to have an official reminder that Norfolk is not content to remain in the television backwoods’. Yet it also attempted to justify the BBC’s existing policies of expansion by claiming that ‘there was some righteousness in a policy of giving foremost consideration to the greater number of people’.²⁵⁶

This somewhat subservient approach of accepting the BBC’s position was certainly not adopted by all areas of Norfolk and the Chairman of the Yarmouth Chamber of Commerce declared in April 1952 that although he was ‘not at all sure that television was a good thing’ it had ‘come to stay’ and that ‘we should at least have the same service provided for us as the rest of the country.’²⁵⁷

It was not until June that the *Eastern Daily Press* returned to the issue of the future of broadcasting. Whilst the paper provided some general news coverage of the House of Lords debate on the Government’s White Paper response to the Beveridge Report, it failed to offer any editorial coverage on the recommendations within it. It was not until just prior to the House of Commons debate on the topic that the newspaper’s editors entered the discussion. The editorial column did not advocate a position either in favour or against the introduction of competition in broadcasting, but did offer a nuanced commentary on the politics that would guide the outcome of the debate. The column pointed out that the subject of broadcasting was not one that was ‘most usefully considered on party lines’ but because the House was to ‘be called upon to choose between a Government proposal and an Opposition amendment’ there was a presumption that the White Paper would receive the approval of the House of Commons.²⁵⁸

Whilst this political debate had considerable news value on a national level, and was described as the ‘most interesting item on the programme of the House of Commons’ in the above column, coverage in the *Eastern Daily Press* of broadcasting was re-directed towards more local concerns and the imminent arrival of the BBC’s annual ‘East Anglian Week’. Readers of the *Eastern Daily Press* were subjected to an agenda focused on the ‘here and now’ of broadcasting and which emphasised the immediate relevance of the BBC physically

²⁵⁵ ‘The B.B.C.’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 8 January 1952, p. 4.

²⁵⁶ ‘Television’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 26 January 1952, p. 4.

²⁵⁷ ‘Call for East Anglian Television Station’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 26 April 1952, p. 7.

²⁵⁸ ‘Broadcasting’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 9 June 1952, p. 4.

visiting the region rather than discussions that would ultimately affect the long-term future of broadcasting, but seemed irrelevant to the daily lives of those in the region.²⁵⁹

A Campaign begins.

The initial efforts of a small section of the Conservative Party had succeeded in placing commercial television on the political agenda but much work remained to be done if an act of parliament were to be passed and the general population persuaded that they needed, or wanted, commercial television.

According to Briggs during the summer of 1952 the British public were 'still reasonably happy with the broadcasting status-quo' and following the success of televising of the Coronation in 1953 the BBC's reputation amongst the public was very positive. Those seeking to gain support for competition were therefore aiming to persuade a country that was not dissatisfied with the past and present performance of the BBC, although areas such as East Anglia might have had some justification in feeling disappointed with the manner in which they had been served by the BBC.²⁶⁰

Whilst the CBSG continued to work behind the scenes to lobby the Government to hasten the arrival of competitive television, it was the Institute of Incorporated Practitioners in Advertising who fired the first shot in the battle to persuade the general public, with the publication of a pamphlet titled *Television: The Viewer and the Advertiser* in April 1953. This was a development which inspired a debate within the House of Commons on the subject of sponsored television.²⁶¹

Opened by John Rodgers (an advocate of sponsored television as well as a director of an advertising agency), he began by suggesting that the Government had unreasonably dragged its feet over the issue of competition in television. He attempted to refute those who claimed that the introduction of competition would inevitably debase the standards of broadcasting by arguing that 'the desire of all those who would operate independent television stations would be to attract an audience and provide first-class entertainment and vital and stimulating programmes' and that any comparisons made with the USA were useless as they had 'no parallel B.B.C. or public corporation to operate and set a very high standard, which undoubtedly the B.B.C. have done.'²⁶²

Arguing in response, Christopher Mayhew argued that the Government had not committed to a specific time frame for the introduction of any competitive service to the BBC because there was an 'extraordinary lack of support for these proposals in responsible sections of opinion', including within the churches, the trade unions and the Press. A claim which earned the ire of Anthony Fell (MP for Yarmouth and as previously noted a member of the CBSG) who accused Mayhew of making a deliberately untrue statement. This heated opening salvo set the tone for the subsequent public debate in which Mayhew would play a frontline role.²⁶³

²⁵⁹ 'East Anglian Week', *Eastern Daily Press*, 18 June 1952, p. 4.

²⁶⁰ Briggs, *Sound and Vision*, p. 888.

²⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 890.

²⁶² *Hansard*, vol 513, cc1456-76, 2 April 1953.

²⁶³ *Ibid.* Christopher Mayhew was at this point in time a regular contributor to the BBC and was the MP for Woolwich East. He had also been the MP for South Norfolk from 1945-50.

The public debate between the advocates and opponents to commercial television began in earnest after the Coronation had taken place. On 4 June a letter was published in *The Times* stating the intention of Lady Violet Bonham Carter, Lord Brand, Lord Halifax, Tom O'Brien (Chairman of the TUC) and Lord Waverley to set up a 'National Television Council' to 'resist the introduction of commercial television in this country, and to encourage the healthy development of public-service television in the national interest.'²⁶⁴

Within two weeks of announcing their intentions the National Television Council had officially formed. They began to undertake efforts to secure both political and public support for the BBC's monopoly by 'evoking the weight of authority' and appealing to 'thinking people'. In the words of a pamphlet authored by Mayhew, they implored people 'to exercise all the influence you have as a free citizen of the most democratic country in the world, to prevent this barbarous idea being realised.'²⁶⁵

The pamphlet, entitled *Dear Viewer*, explained that whilst to the casual viewer it might seem that the aim of commercial television was 'to give pleasure', the 'real aim' was 'to sell toothpaste' and that 'for good or ill, television is going to be a dominant force' so it was crucially important to 'make sure that it has ideals and integrity, or it will ruin us'.²⁶⁶

Although there was no news or editorial coverage on the formation of the National Television Council or Mayhew's *Dear Viewer* in the *Eastern Daily Press*, the ideas being disseminated about commercial television did appear in the letters column of the paper. R. Hallett, writing on behalf of the Norfolk Federation of the Workers' Educational Association, argued that they did not believe that 'commercial sponsors' would 'for a variety of reasons be able to maintain or emulate the high standards set by the B.B.C.'. They were convinced that 'the majority of people will find it extremely distasteful to be harassed in the privacy of their own homes by advertisers intruding by means of the TV screen to hawk their wares.' The letter closed with an appeal for the matter to be decided in parliament by a free vote rather than 'in accordance with the catchphrases of party dogma or by means of the rigidities of the party system'. This call to resist commercial television was not however met with universal approval. A. P. Cooper of Norwich responded in a letter published on 20 June in which he accused the author of weakening his case by engaging in exaggeration, Cooper put forward the view that nobody would be 'harassed' by advertisers as 'no one could be compelled to listen and look, for every TV set can be switched off at the flick of a hand'.²⁶⁷

Discussion, in Norfolk, regarding the future of television then briefly turned to the announcement of the BBC's ten-year plan for Television. The *Eastern Daily Press* reported that during this 10 year period coverage would be extended to 97 percent of the British Isles and that East Anglia would finally be provided with a low-power station to serve the region,

²⁶⁴ Violet Bonham Carter, Brand Halifax, Ton O'Brien, Waverley, 'Commercialized Television', *Times* 4 June 1953. p. 7.

<http://find.galegroup.com.ueaezproxy.uea.ac.uk:2048/ttda/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=TTD&userGroupName=univea&tabID=T003&docPage=article&searchType=BasicSearchForm&docId=CS118837444&type=multipage&contentSet=LTO&version=1.0> [accessed 26/03/2017]

²⁶⁵ Briggs, *Sound and Vision*, p. 904.

²⁶⁶ Christopher Mayhew, *Dear Viewer*, (London: Lincolns Prager, 1953), pp. 6, 23.

²⁶⁷ 'W.E.A. and Television', *Eastern Daily Press*, 18 Jun 1953, p. 4; 'W.E.A. and Television', *Eastern Daily Press*, 20 Jun 1953, p. 4.

although these plans depended on ‘Government financial policy and on the allocation of frequencies’.²⁶⁸

As the BBC’s plans were announced Hallett responded to Cooper’s critique of his resistance to commercial television by questioning why the public should ‘be made to suffer what at best will prove irrelevant interruptions in the programmes in order to allow a few manufacturers the “freedom” to press their goods?’ Arguing that sponsors would only want to pay for programmes that appealed to mass audiences, he made the regionally specific point that viewers would ‘never get shown any features about farming because the majority would not be interested in it.’²⁶⁹

Within three days a further riposte from Cooper was published in which he once made the point that viewers would ultimately have a choice as to whether they wished to watch commercial television or not. He argued that it was not simply the case that they could only switch off, they also had the option to switch over if they wished. Cooper also challenged Hallett on this concerns about content quality by suggesting that he ‘seemed to be confusing undesirable entertainment with popular entertainment’ and that whilst a sponsor may prefer a variety show to a performance of *Gloriana* there was no inherent harm in this being the case.²⁷⁰

There was however also some support for Hallett, Mrs G Farquhar Folland argued that ‘Atomic energy is a power we should not like to see in private hands. Television is potentially an even more dangerous power’ and that rather than introduce commercial competition the BBC should be given the full proceeds of the Licence Fee revenue to help fund its television service. Or as a course of last resort, the corporation should be allowed to broadcast short adverts at authorised times.²⁷¹

The last word in this exchange went to Hallett, at the beginning of July he wrote to argue that ‘Remote and sparsely-populated areas like Norfolk will never receive good services from commercial television stations, at least so long as the range of their transmitters is limited’ and that ‘People in Norfolk would be well advised to study and support the B.B.C.’s recently announced plans for television, which ensure that every part of the country will be fairly covered’. ²⁷²

Hallett’s optimism about the BBC’s plans and his cynicism about commercial television clearly echo the narrative presented by the National Television Council but with the benefit of hindsight one can see that his pessimism about commercial television, and particularly whether it would ever reach Norfolk, was slightly misplaced. As is discussed in a later chapter, its arrival would provide a stimulus for the BBC to improve its own offer to the region.

Almost as soon as the discussion on the merits, or otherwise, of commercial television had reached its conclusion attention was once again diverted back to the future of the BBC’s television service in Norfolk. An announcement on the future of television during the

²⁶⁸ ‘B.B.C.’s Ten Year Plans for Television’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 24 June 1953, p. 1; ‘Television Plans’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 24 June 1953, p. 4.

²⁶⁹ ‘Commercial TV’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 24 June 1953, p. 4.

²⁷⁰ ‘Commercial TV’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 27 June 1953, p. 4.

²⁷¹ *Ibid.*

²⁷² ‘Commercial TV’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 1 July 1953, p. 4.

Autumn of 1953 included reference to the fact that once the construction of the series of high power BBC transmitters was completed East Anglia's claims for a low-power transmitter would 'come to the fore'.²⁷³

This announcement coincided with a push in Parliament from two of the regions MP's to accelerate the arrival of television in the region. Given their role in the CBSG it is not surprising that these MPs were Anthony Fell and Frank Medlicott. Fell when asking the Assistant Postmaster-General to confirm the approximate number of television licences in East Anglia, made the point that 'he may be getting quite a large number of postcards with more than political slogans on them if people in this area do not receive television programmes soon'. Fell's question was followed by one from Medlicott who asked the Assistant Postmaster-General to make sure that the decision on which area to expand into next was not just based upon population size but to also 'bear in mind' that 'the people who do much to produce our food are entitled to a higher priority in amenities of this kind'.²⁷⁴

The editors of the *Eastern Daily Press* were not entirely impressed by the announcement of the extension of the BBC's television service. In an editorial column in early July East Anglia's position in respect of all forms of broadcasting was lamented along with the fact that 'no early benefit' was promised 'to that large part of Norfolk and Suffolk where the reception of television is extremely uncertain'. Despite some concerns about placing television in the hands of private enterprise the most pertinent issue remained the lack of television in the East Anglia region rather than who ran it. The column explicitly recognised that as television 'may be an influence for good' a 'major claim upon the service ought surely to be that of rural areas like our own, where it may become a valuable mean of contact between small communities and the great world'.²⁷⁵

Although not phrasing it in these terms, the *Eastern Daily Press* had clearly recognised that television had the potential to act as an important part of the public sphere in regions such as East Anglia. The geographical and cultural separation of provincial areas from the metropolitan centres and other nations might, to an extent, be overcome with the advent of television. This could enable isolated communities to witness and be part of cultural events that they would otherwise have no way of attending. Looked at in this way, areas such as East Anglia had a better claim to 'need' television than the metropolitan areas which had enjoyed it for so long already.

The Pressure Mounts.

Although those advocating the retention of the BBC's monopoly had struck first in the battle for the hearts and minds of the public it did not take long for those with opposing views to respond. Frankland reports that within one month of the formation of the National Television Council, C O Stanley (Chairman of Pye Ltd) chaired a meeting at the St Stephen's Club in Westminster for a chosen selection of guests, including a number of Tory

²⁷³ 'Control for Sponsored Television', *Eastern Daily Press*, 3 July 1953, p. 1.

²⁷⁴ Ibid.

²⁷⁵ 'Television', *Eastern Daily Press*, 3 July 1953, p. 4.

MPs (Anthony Fell of the CBSG and ex-employee of Pye was one of the attendees) and Sir Robert Renwick, a long-term associate of Stanley and Pye.²⁷⁶

The aim of the meeting was to establish an organisation that would lobby on behalf of commercial television and as the event drew to a close Stanley ‘made a short statement about the formation of a Popular Television Association’, asking for assistance in financing the organisation and receiving a promise from Renwick of £20,000 to the cause. A request was also made for Norman Collins, previously the Controller of Television at the BBC before resigning in 1949 and an early supporter of commercial television, to approach Lord Derby with the hope that he would act as the Association’s president. Writing about these events, Wilson, suggests that even amongst those involved in the organisation there was some disagreement about the exact origins of the organisation but that the press were told that the organisation had been the idea of the Earl of Derby.²⁷⁷

Whilst the Earl of Derby was certainly the President of the Association, in fact neither the reports in the *Manchester Guardian* or *The Times* entirely support Wilson’s claim that the Earl was identified as the originator of the idea. Both merely reported the Association’s aims and that the Earl had written to a number of potential vice-presidents, not that he was the founder of the organisation.²⁷⁸

Regardless of whose idea it was, the aims of the Popular Television Association were explicitly laid out in the *Guardian*’s article. Lord Derby summarised them as ‘to awaken the national conscience to the dangers, social, political, and artistic of monopoly in the rapidly expanding field of television’, ‘to provide the public at the earliest possible moment with alternative programmes which are in keeping with the best standards of British taste’ and finally to ‘free from monopolistic control and to open up steadily widening opportunities of employment for artists, writers, producers and technicians in all fields of the entertainment and electronics industries.’²⁷⁹

The formation of the Popular Television Association, meant that supporters of the principle of competition in broadcasting now had a conduit through which they could advance their viewpoint. Despite the presence of several high-profile aristocrats within the organisation from the very start the Association positioned itself as a populist organisation, presenting itself as a popular body acting in the interests of the masses, who could be trusted with the burden of choice. This approach was in direct contrast to the paternalistic vision of

²⁷⁶ Sir Robert Renwick had known C. O. Stanley since the Second World War when he was Controller of Communications at the Air Ministry. Mark Frankland, *Radio Man: The Remarkable rise and fall of C. O. Stanley*, (London: Institution of Electrical Engineers, 2002), p. 101.

²⁷⁷ Frankland suggests that this £20,000 was in fact pledged from Stanley and Pye, as a way to kickstart the organisation. *Ibid.* p. 215; Wilson, *Pressure Group*, p. 164.

²⁷⁸ ‘Association to Support Competitive Television: Wants Alternative Programmes--No Monopoly’, *The Manchester Guardian*, 23 July 1953, p. 3.

<http://search.proquest.com.ueaezproxy.uea.ac.uk:2048/docview/479505429?accountid=10637> ; ‘Opposition To T.V. Monopoly’, *Times*, 23 July 1953, p. 4.

<http://find.galegroup.com.ueaezproxy.uea.ac.uk:2048/ttda/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=TTD&userGroupName=univea&tabID=T003&docPage=article&searchType=BasicSearchForm&docId=CS68767991&type=multipage&contentSet=LTO&version=1.0> [accessed 26/03/2017]

²⁷⁹ ‘Association to Support Competitive Television: Wants Alternative Programmes--No Monopoly’, *The Manchester Guardian*, 23 July 1953, p. 3.

<http://search.proquest.com.ueaezproxy.uea.ac.uk:2048/docview/479505429?accountid=10637> [accessed 26/03/2017]

broadcasting that the National Television Council had put in place. The Popular Television Association set forth a vision of broadcasting in which choice and commercialism would not inevitably lead to a debasing of broadcasting standards but would instead free television from tyrannical control and create new opportunities for viewers and broadcasting professionals.

As the public debate on the future of television began in earnest the British Public were split on whether or not they wanted sponsored programming. A BBC Listener Research Bulletin of July 1953 reported that, in a *Daily Express* poll, 45% of the population were in favour of sponsored TV programmes, 36% disfavoured it and 19% didn't know how they felt about it. However, as the report observes the question, phrased as 'Do you favour or disfavour sponsored TV programmes?', did not ask for respondents to offer an opinion on the proposed plans to introduce commercial rivals to the BBC and that 'a vote 'in favour' might be given even by an opponent of that particular plan, for sponsored programmes could be broadcast by the BBC if the G.P.O. approved.'²⁸⁰

After the flurry of correspondence in June, there was little effort from the *Eastern Daily Press* to involve itself in the topic of television at all, let alone advocate for the earliest possible arrival of a television service from either the BBC or a commercial competitor. This was something that did not go unnoticed by those readers who were eagerly awaiting television. It was exemplified in a letter to the editor of July 6 from V.E. Bruce when he attacked the papers lack of advocacy by claiming that 'anything more complacent that your own sleepy comments would be hard to imagine' and that the *Eastern Daily Press* was 'practically telling us how lucky we are that television is not yet coming to debase our minds and morals.'²⁸¹

This was not an isolated letter, three days later Mrs Kathleen Kemp wrote to agree with Bruce about 'the apathetic and typical East Anglian attitude towards television' and to express a call to arms of sorts:

Wake up East Anglia: let them know in no uncertain manner that we are not country bumpkins whose only interest in life is weather and crops. We too demand the right to view Ascot, Lord's, Wimbledon, etc, and to see as well as hear what is happening in the world outside, with the rest of Great Britain.²⁸²

This drew a response from L.W. Harrison who suggested that licence fee payers in Norfolk take part in an act of mass civil disobedience and that if 'several thousand licences' were not paid then the Postmaster General 'might decide that East Anglia was really a part of the British Isles and entitled to the same amenities as the rest of the country'.²⁸³ Whilst J. A. Minns of Norwich later wrote to suggest that 'this is a slight on our county and an insult that should arouse the ire not only of the owners of TV set, but every member of the population'. The growing sense of frustration amongst television enthusiasts in the county was not likely to have been helped by an intervention from the Assistant Postmaster General when at the opening of a Post Office in the Norfolk town of Diss he 'made a reference to television in East Anglia. Urging his audience to consider the counter advantages they had in East Anglia,

²⁸⁰ BBC, *Listener Research Bulletin No. 66*, LR/53/1119, 1953.

²⁸¹ 'Views on Television', *Eastern Daily Press*, 6 July 1953, p. 4.

²⁸² 'Attitude to TV', *Eastern Daily Press*, 9 July 1953 p. 4.

²⁸³ 'Viewpoint on TV', *Eastern Daily Press*, 13 July 1953, p. 4.

he commented: “I do hope that television is not becoming the only criterion of a full and happy life.”²⁸⁴

Yet in a spectacular U-turn only five days later the Assistant Postmaster General found himself announcing in Parliament that East Anglia would be ‘given priority in the next stage of the B.B.C.’s television development programme’. Television might not have been the only criterion for happiness, but it had clearly been decided that its absence was a potential cause for disruption and discontent in the region and that some advances would need to be at least announced.²⁸⁵

Whilst lobbying from both the National Television Council and the Popular Television Association continued on a national level throughout the remainder of 1953, in Norfolk discussion initially remained focused on encouraging the BBC to finally provide a television service for the East Anglia region rather than on the competition issue. R. A. Launchbury of Norwich wrote that ‘the whole point of the present agitation for a local television station is that Norfolk is entitled to the same facilities as the rest of the country’ and that it would be up to individuals as to whether they ‘avail themselves of these facilities’.²⁸⁶

Some of those who had already availed themselves of the existing facilities were understandably growing increasingly discontent. A letter from ‘Disappointed Television Set Owner’ during August 1953 exemplified these feelings when in it they suggested that television owners in the region should only ‘tender a sum of say 4s., proportionate to the reception we receive’ and that present or potential owners of televisions should ‘refrain from voting for the sitting Member in the Parliamentary constituencies of Norwich and Norfolk’ unless they could be ‘satisfied of reasonable reception within a short time’.²⁸⁷

A further sign that disillusionment was crystallising into a tangible, concerted effort to effect change appeared later in August. An advert appeared for the ‘Voice of the People Campaign’ appeared alongside the *Eastern Daily Press*’s coverage of the National Radio Show. The organisation, located at the premises of E.R.A. Co Ltd. in Norwich, seems to have been established to ensure that the television service provided 100% coverage of East Anglia and encouraged correspondence from the public and those already organising meetings about the issue. Given this it is surprising that there had been no coverage of the organisation in the newspaper prior to the appearance of this advert and it is unfortunate that no further detail about it has been discovered during this investigation.²⁸⁸

The region was not however completely excluded from participating in discussion of the wider future of television. During September the Publicity Club of Norwich hosted what was described as a ‘lively discussion on commercial television’, during which the invited speaker, Mr Ian Harvey, MP for Harrow East and a director of W. S. Crawford and advertising firm, explained, according to the *Eastern Daily Press* that ‘he had no doubt at all that the Government would bring in a measure to establish competition in the field of

²⁸⁴ ‘TV in East Anglia’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 17 July 1953, p. 4: ‘Mr Gammans’ Comment on East Anglian TV’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 17 July 1953, p. 5.

²⁸⁵ ‘Mr Gammans on TV for East Anglia’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 22 July 1953, p. 1.

²⁸⁶ ‘Television Query’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 1 August 1953, p. 4.

²⁸⁷ ‘Television in E. Anglia’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 11 August 1953, p. 4.

²⁸⁸ ‘Television for East Anglia’, Voice of the People Campaign’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 27 August 1953, p. 7.

television when Parliament reassembled'. This, it has to be said, was hardly breaking news.²⁸⁹

As the plans for the introduction of competition in television advanced in Westminster the *Eastern Daily Press* dutifully reported them to their readership. In October the newspaper reported that the Postmaster General had explained to the Conservative Party Conference that the time had come when the Party could proceed with their plans and in November the newspaper reported the publication of the Government's White Paper on the future of television.²⁹⁰

These proposals were described in the *Eastern Daily Press* as being 'a synthesis of the various ideas which have been propounded for introducing competition and a wider freedom into broadcasting while maintaining the sense of national responsibility for its vast and indeed formidable influence on the minds of the people' yet 'to a considerable number of people in East Anglia, still fretting for an opportunity to see television at all, the debate on commercial television is vexatious; at best it is one which to them is purely of academic interest.'²⁹¹

This cynicism about the importance of the issue in relation to the situation in Norfolk and East Anglia continued with the coverage of the first debate in the House of Lords on the Government's White Paper (Cmd. 9005). This time describing how the issue was 'surely not a matter to be taken seriously at a time when an economic – and atomic – sword of Damocles hangs over our heads' and explaining that it would be difficult to expect those in Norfolk who 'hear the B.B.C. with difficulty and who see it scarcely at all' to do 'much more than watch the present battle, smiling sardonically.'²⁹²

Whilst a battle was being waged across the United Kingdom for the introduction of competition in television a separate battle was taking place to ensure that viewers in the area had the chance to view a single television service before choice was introduced to the rest of the country. It was this battle that had true significance for East Anglians.

Consequently, it could be argued that despite the undoubtedly profound long term consequences that its introduction of commercial television would have on the British media landscape, the most important news regarding television for the people of Norfolk and East Anglia during 1953 was in fact the announcement in November that the BBC had made provisions in its budget for the construction of a television transmitter in East Anglia. This would receive broadcasts from the BBC's existing National and Midland services and re-broadcast them to the region. It would increase the strength of the signal and end the problems with reception that had plagued the region.²⁹³

The initially vague commitment evolved into a more solid proposal during the final month of 1953 when the Director-general of the BBC told the *Eastern Daily Press* that a site had been chosen for a television station for the region and that, according to comments made at an Ipswich dinner, there would be 'very much increased reception in television'. The

²⁸⁹ 'Lively Discussion on Commercial Television', *Eastern Daily Press*, 8 September 1953, p. 5.

²⁹⁰ 'Alternative Television Service Plans', *Eastern Daily Press*, 9 October 1953, p. 1; 'Commercial Television 'By Next Winter'', *Eastern Daily Press*, 14 November 1953, p. 1.

²⁹¹ 'Television', *Eastern Daily Press*, 14 November 1953, p. 4.

²⁹² 'A.D. and TV', *Eastern Daily Press*, 25 November 1953, p. 4.

²⁹³ 'Priority Soon for TV Link to East Anglia', *Eastern Daily Press*, 20 November 1953, p. 1.

Director-general's statement was followed up by an official statement from the BBC the following day in which they confirmed that a site at the village of Tacolneston had been identified but that work on it was unlikely to be begun 'before 1955, and it would then take a year to complete.'²⁹⁴

As 1953 drew to a close, great changes for television loomed, yet as the final correspondent of the year to the *Eastern Daily Press* on the subject of television observed there was 'still no television for our county in the coming year' and that if 'similar treatment had been served to Scotland, Wales or to the industrial or mining areas something tangible would have been demanded and granted.' The lack of a concerted lobbying effort involving politicians, local interest groups and the local media had meant that the more things seemed to be changing for television nationally, the more it seemed that they would in the short term be staying the same for Norfolk.²⁹⁵

Decision Time.

The start of 1954 brought surprisingly positive news for television owners in Norfolk, despite the initial suggestions by the BBC's Director General that it would be at least two years until television reception in the region matched that in the rest of the country, the Government announced in January that authority had been given to the BBC to set up a television station in East Anglia and that the corporation hoped 'to provide a temporary transmitter within 12 months to serve Norwich and the immediate surrounding area'.²⁹⁶

This announcement was made in reply to a parliamentary question from the Central Norfolk MP Frank Medlicott who followed up by asking the Assistant Postmaster-General what safeguards were proposed in reference to commercial television and whether it would be 'under any obligation to provide television coverage in rural areas'. Medlicott was clearly attempting to prevent a repeat of the situation that Norfolk had endured with the BBC's television service and stake an early claim for the right of East Anglia to receive equitable treatment by any new commercial service. Perhaps most importantly Medlicott also made clear that there would be a 'great feeling of resentment' arising in East Anglia if there were 'any suggestion that other parts of the country should be given alternative television programmes before East Anglia has even one programme'.²⁹⁷

The *Eastern Daily Press* recognised that local television enthusiasts were likely to be jubilant about the unexpected news and would regard it as a reward for 'months of heated argument that rural areas were in greater need of television than the big towns'. However it also urged caution by noting that although they had 'long protested that they won't be happy till they get it' it remained to be seen whether they would 'be happy when they've got it: for it is an expensive toy'.²⁹⁸

²⁹⁴ 'B.B.C. wants Tacolneston Site for TV Station', *Eastern Daily Press*, 8 December 1953, p. 4; 'B.B.C. Chooses Norfolk Site', *Eastern Daily Press*, 7 December 1953, p. 1.

²⁹⁵ 'Television for East Anglia', *Eastern Daily Press*, 30 December 1953, p. 4.

²⁹⁶ 'Television for Norwich Area Within 12 Months', *Eastern Daily Press*, 21 January 1954 p. 1.

²⁹⁷ *Hansard*, vol 522, cc987-91, 20 January 1954.

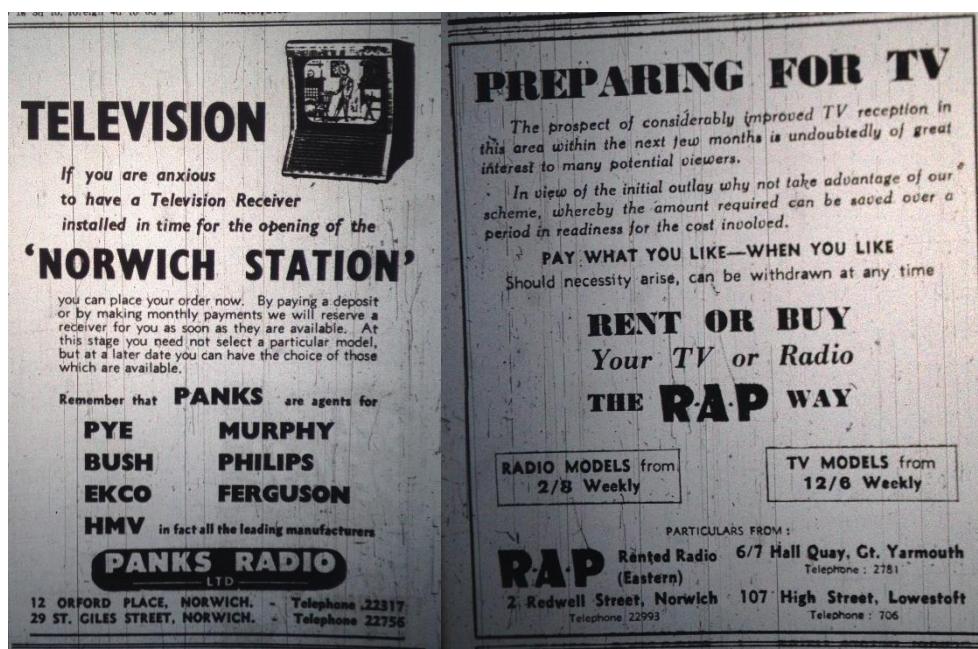
²⁹⁸ 'All This, and TV Too', *Eastern Daily Press*, 21 January 1954, p. 4.

No such thing as a free lunch.

Whilst this development was good news for the region and was seized upon by retailers looking to stimulate sales of television sets, see Fig. 13, some of the lustre of the announcement was removed when details began to emerge regarding the potential range of the proposed station. Not only would it not cover all of East Anglia, but it would not even cover all of Norfolk with coastal areas falling outside of its predicted range. This led Anthony Fell, MP for Yarmouth and staunch supporter of commercial television to claim that it was unreasonable that it would be another two years before viewers in his constituency would be able to receive television 'when private enterprise could have done it, and offered to do it, within nine to twelve months'²⁹⁹

Fig. 13

Panks Radio Ltd and R.A.P Adverts.³⁰⁰



Despite the news that there was now a firm plan and timeline for the arrival of television, some individuals still sought to downplay the importance of television in a region that faced other significant problems that were of a higher priority. Perhaps the best example of this came in the form of an article in the *Eastern Daily Press* by James Christie.

Christie suggested that he could not share the general enthusiasm that others had towards the decision to construct a television station at Tacolneston as there were many farmers, farm workers and rural dwellers 'still waiting and hoping for the day when they will have electricity on their farms and in their homes'. He argued that it was 'more important that farmers and householders in country districts should have lights and power than that others who have enjoyed such amenities for many years should now have television added to them.'³⁰¹

²⁹⁹ *Hansard*, vol 522, cc1734-5, 27 January 1954.

³⁰⁰ 'Panks Radio Ltd Advert', *Eastern Daily Press*, 27 January 1954, p. 5; 'R.A.P Advert', *Eastern Daily Press*, 28 January 1954, p. 2.

³⁰¹ 'Electricity should come before TV', *Eastern Daily Press*, 3 February 1954, p. 7.

The problem of electrification had long plagued many rural areas of the United Kingdom, as well as Norfolk. Whilst the situation had improved during the post war period of reconstruction and the establishment of the national grid in 1948, by 1953 it was still the case that nationwide only 47% of farms had been connected to the mains electricity supply. It is difficult to imagine that within a single county, indeed perhaps within individual rural districts, that some people would be demanding television whilst others were still waiting for a reliable supply of electricity. When looked at from this perspective it is easy to see television as only really relevant to the urban population of the region.³⁰²

Whilst those fortunate enough to have electricity and to be, or want to be, television owners in Norfolk had received positive news in January in March they were informed that the cost of the Television Licence would be raised by 50% to £3 per annum and that the BBC would need to provide £750,000 per year to its competitive rival as soon as it began broadcasting. For the Norfolk television viewer this would obviously mean that they were paying more for a BBC television service that was still officially only on its way to them and that they could soon be contributing to a commercial service that they may also have no access to. Unsurprisingly this news was not greeted with universal approval in the correspondence page of the *Eastern Daily Press*. Mr Legge of Kessingland argued that before being asked 'to pay this much for such little entertainment' the Postmaster-General should make sure that reception was improved in the region. In addition E. P. Williams of Overstrand went a step further by proposing that it was 'only fair' that those who owned television sets in parts of the country not officially covered by the BBC's service 'be exempted from the increase until such time as television is made properly available to them'.³⁰³

The beginning of March also heralded the publication of the Government's Television Bill, although it was only reported in brief within the *Eastern Daily Press* at the time. In fact far more attention was garnered by a public relations move by the BBC in which Denis Morris, the head of BBC Midland Regional programmes, visited the annual meeting of the Norfolk Federation of Women's Institutes in Norwich and proclaimed that the BBC really did mean business in East Anglia. That said he also emphasised that it 'was not likely that there would be many outside television programmes from Norfolk on television because production of these was extremely complicated and costly'. In line with its overarching policies for television, the BBC's plans involved bringing television to the region, not broadcasting television from the region.³⁰⁴

It was only after the Television Bill was passed in Parliament on 25 March that the *Eastern Daily Press* reported on it in any significant detail. It described how there had been strenuous opposition from Labour MPs to the Bill but that its second reading had been passed by a majority of twenty-seven. Yet it offered no comment on what this meant for television in Britain or Norfolk more specifically.³⁰⁵

Subsequent coverage of the amendments made to the Bill were also reported in the *Eastern Daily Press*, particularly when the Government's majority was reduced to extremely low levels, as was the case on 6 May when an opposition amendment regarding the appointment

³⁰² Leslie Hannah, *Engineers, Managers and Politicians* (London: Macmillan, 1982), pp. 21, 74

³⁰³ 'Cost of TV Licences', *Eastern Daily Press*, 6 March 1954, p. 4; 'TV Licence', *Eastern Daily Press*, 10 March 1954, p. 4.

³⁰⁴ 'Television Assurance to Norfolk WI Delegates', *Eastern Daily Press*, 20 March 1954, p. 7.

³⁰⁵ '27 Majority for Commercial Television', *Eastern Daily Press*, 26 March 1954, p. 1.

of members to the Independent Television Board was defeated by a majority of only three. Throughout June there was no coverage on the progress of the Bill or the amendments being made to it. In a repeat of previous events the announcement of the BBC's 'East Anglia Week' due to take place in July drew attention away from commercial television until Viscount Hailsham described the bill as a 'foolish and illiterate piece of legislation' and as a 'disreputable piece of chicanery' during its passage through the House of Lords.³⁰⁶

The Television Bill's passage through to its final stages was not cause for great fanfare from the *Eastern Daily Press* either. In fact the announcement that the Bill had received Royal assent was covered only within a small article informing the reader that the Parliament was rising until October and that that assent had been given to forty-four Acts, of which the Television Act was but one. A profound change in the nature of broadcasting in Britain failed to generate a standalone article within Norfolk's main newspaper.³⁰⁷

Conclusion.

Whilst the introduction of the Television Bill is a pivotal event in the history of television in Britain it was not reported on as such in Norfolk. This is not to suggest that there was any particular lack of awareness of the events that were taking place or the arguments that were being presented both for and against the introduction of commercial television, but rather to assert that it was often the case that as these events of national importance were taking place, events of specific relevance to Norfolk and East Anglia were taking place in parallel.

Announcements confirming the arrival of the BBC's television in the region were naturally of more immediate interest to the readers of the *Eastern Daily Press* and served as a distraction from the 'bigger picture' of the overall future of television.

It is interesting to note that during this period both viewers of television and the *Eastern Daily Press* recognise that television had the potential to be part of the public sphere, potentially acting as a conduit for a historically isolated area of the United Kingdom to engage with the rest of the world. The sense that the region had a lack of parity with the rest of the nation when it came to television and had therefore lacked access to the rest of the world was amplified as the discussion of commercial television took place. This highlighted that some areas of the country might have two television services before East Anglia even had one. It was also almost certainly a factor behind the appearance of threats of civil disobedience and a general sense of dissatisfaction that crept into some of the correspondence with the *Eastern Daily Press*.

Perhaps most of all it is 'absurdity' that characterises East Anglia's experience of this period. The absurdity that two of the MPs involved in the CBSG came from Norfolk, a region without television, the absurdity of the concept of competition in television for a region that did not have access to a single 'national' service and finally the absurdity of a county dreaming of television when large sections of the county were yet to be subject to electrification.

³⁰⁶ 'Three Majority for Government', *Eastern Daily Press*, 6 May 1954, p. 1; 'Over 30 Programmes in East Anglia Week', *Eastern Daily Press*, 16 June 1954, p. 7; 'Conservative Peer leads Attack against TV Bill', *Eastern Daily Press*, 2 July 1954, p. 1.

³⁰⁷ 'Parliament Rises until October', *Eastern Daily Press*, 31 July 1954, p. 1.

It is very clear that East Anglia's experience of these pivotal events was very different to the rest of the nation and surprisingly or not this is not represented in the existing historiography of the period.

Chapter 5: More Asymmetries and Inequalities?

Introduction.

Whilst the passing of the Television Act, 1954, as seen in the previous chapter, did have the obvious intended effect of breaking the BBC's monopoly over broadcasting in Britain, it was relatively non-prescriptive with regard to the form competition in television might take. This chapter initially focuses upon how this lack of detailed instruction impacted upon the development of television in Norfolk both in respect of the BBC and ITV's services before moving onto considering the establishment of East Anglia's first television transmission station in both its temporary and permanent forms.

A new Act, a new Authority; Same old East Anglia?

To begin it is necessary to summarise some of the more important policy points contained within the Television Act.³⁰⁸

The Act stated that an authority called the Independent Television Authority (ITA) would need to be created and that this Authority's function would be to provide 'television broadcasting services, additional to those of the British Broadcasting Corporation and of high quality, both as to the transmission and as to the matter transmitted, for so much of the United Kingdom, the Isle of Man and the Channel Islands as may from time to time be reasonably practicable.' The mention of the fact that the 'matter transmitted' should be of 'high quality' was clearly a concession to placate supporters of the National Television Council who feared that Gresham's Law would apply to television as soon as commercial interests were involved.³⁰⁹

The second part of the description of the Authority's function was of immediate relevance to the people of Norfolk. Whilst some in Norfolk might have hoped that commercial broadcasters would step in to provide a television service to those areas as yet unserved by the BBC, the ITA were not required by law to provide a service to all of the United Kingdom straight away. They were only mandated to cover areas when it was reasonably practicable to do so. Given that initial construction costs for the ITA would be substantial, that the level of finance available from the government was not infinite and that programme contractors would be under pressure to maximise profit on what was an unproven, high risk venture, it was likely that the ITA would be keen to begin their television service in urban areas with high densities of population: areas that would be an attractive proposition to advertisers. Areas such as Norfolk would therefore once again be at the back of the queue in respect of the roll out of television.

A more positive note for East Anglians was the fact that Act did at least make clear that the ITA had an obligation to ensure that 'the programmes broadcast from any station or stations contain a suitable proportion of matter calculated to appeal specially to tastes and outlook of person served by the station or stations'. This meant that when a station covering East Anglia was eventually established it would be required to broadcast content that reflected the lives of those living in the area. The Act granted the ITA a considerable level of autonomy,

³⁰⁸For more detailed discussion of the Bill see Bernard Sendall, *Independent Television in Britain Volume 1 – Origin and Foundation, 1946-62* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1982).

³⁰⁹Hansard, *Television Bill [As Amended in Committee]* Bill 127, 1954, p. 1.

comparable to that given to the BBC. Whilst the ITA would not be a producer of content, it would have control over all arrangements regarding programme contractors, including how many there would be and the criteria for awarding contracts, and would also have responsibility for judging the quality of the programmes and maintaining standards.³¹⁰

One of the first tasks faced by the ITA was to decide upon what model of broadcasting the Independent Television Service (ITV) should adopt. As Sendall points out, ‘Section 5[2] of the Act enjoined the Authority to do all it could ‘to secure that there is adequate competition to supply programmes between a number of programme contractors’ but offered no specific guidance on how they expected this to be achieved.³¹¹

The solution to this problem, which the ITA admitted had exercised them more than any other, was to be found in the use of a ‘network system’. Each of the Authority’s stations would serve a specific geographic area and each station would be ‘linked one to another by cable or radio link’ so that ‘programmes could pass between stations in both directions’. This meant that competition applied not just in respect of providing competition to the BBC but also in regards to internal competition within ITV. It also meant that when an ITV contractor was eventually established to serve Norfolk and East Anglia it would in theory be able to pass its locally produced programmes onto the other stations in the network.³¹²

Potentially this was a significant development in regards of the potential for television to act as part of the public sphere in Britain. It would allow provincial regions such as East Anglia to produce cultural and news content that could contribute to the nation as a whole. Rather than simply being a passive recipient of television broadcast from London or Birmingham, as had been the case with the BBC, East Anglia would have the potential to become an active participant in the national conversation, gaining the opportunity to regularly express itself in television for the first time.

Where to start?

Within two months of its first official meeting the ITA had decided that the first phase of the ITV network should consist of ‘three stations initially, one in London, one in the Midlands and one in the North’. Those stations would cover around 60% of the population and therefore would give the chosen programme contractors a large audience to attract potential advertisers.³¹³

Whilst Sendall suggests that this model and rollout was ‘not questioned’ within the ITA, the ITA had in fact received requests from interested parties that proposed a different way to organise the system and that were directly relevant to the development of television in Norfolk and East Anglia. During September 1954 PYE Ltd wrote to the ITA to ‘make a formal application for consideration as a programme contractor’. Pye wished to run a local television station that would ‘cover an area of approximately 15 miles radius around Cambridge’ and wanted to receive a licence of not less than five years in duration. Pye argued that in light of the fact that ‘the Authority has neither the resources nor at this early stage, the intention of providing low-power transmitters to serve the less densely populated

³¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

³¹¹ Sendall, *Independent Television Vol 1*, p. 63.

³¹² ITA, *ITA Annual Report and Accounts for the Period 4 August 1954 – 31 March 1955*, 21 November 1955, p. 4.

³¹³ Sendall, *Independent Television Vol 1*, p. 64.

areas of the country' they could use their existing resources, subject to a 'satisfactory financial arrangement', in order to provide a television service at a much earlier date in this area than would otherwise have been possible.³¹⁴

A similar letter was also received by the ITA from TV Manufacturing Ltd, an associated company of PYE. This letter requested a licence to become a programme contractor for an area of 10 to 15 miles in radius around Lowestoft and argued that 'at a time when other more fortunate areas are due to be offered a second programme a considerable effort should be made to provide at least one programme for the people of the East Anglian fishing ports'.³¹⁵

These applications did not fit neatly into the ITA's initial network plans and the receipt of them caused a lengthy document to be shared within the ITA. The document identified that these applications needed to be taken seriously and considered from three perspectives; legal, technical and in terms of policy. In respect of legality it was acknowledged that the arrangements proposed by Pye and TV Manufacturing would be permissible under the terms of the Television Act. Provision had initially been made for the ITA to share transmission facilities with the BBC and the wording of the Act was 'wide enough' to theoretically allow a private company to operate transmission facilities on behalf of the ITA. On a technical level the ITA felt that the re-broadcasting of the network signal to the identified local areas via booster stations was possible, although not necessarily feasible without generating interference.³¹⁶

However, the more interesting discussion on these applications clearly relates to their relationship with the ITA's proposed network policy. Wolstencroft, the ITA's Secretary, recognised that they were faced with a dilemma, refusal to agree to these proposals without good technical justifications could lead the ITA to be 'accused of depriving people in the areas concerned of a service which the Authority could not, or would not, supply for an indefinite period'. Given that the region had previously been left out of the BBC's expansion of television, the ITA risked starting off on the wrong foot with the region should they be seen to be wilfully ignoring the chance to bring television to the area at an early date.³¹⁷

Wolstencroft did however identify that there was one way in which the ITA might be able to reject the applications without either damaging the nascent relationship between the ITA and the East Anglia region or falling foul of a legal challenge from the applicants. He realised that because all of the applications were based upon the premise that a single company would own the transmission facilities as well as produce content there was a risk that a local monopoly of broadcasting might be established. This was directly contrary to the ITA's view that the allocation of a programme contract should be separate from the provision of a transmission station in order that the potential for competition within an individual region in the future was allowed for.

Discussion regarding these applications continued into December of 1954. The Director-General suggested that the overriding question was whether or not the two suggested sites

³¹⁴ ITA Archive, Box 3995178 – Selection of Contractors H-K, *Letter of Application from PYE Ltd*, 7 September 1954.

³¹⁵ ITA Archive, Box 3995178 – Selection of Contractors H-K, *Letter of Application from Television Manufacturing Ltd*, 13 September 1954.

³¹⁶ ITA Archive, Box 3995178 – Selection of Contractors H-K, *Memo between Wolstencroft and Fraser*, 19 October 1954.

³¹⁷ *Ibid.*

were rational sites for television stations and that if they were not then there was little point in discussing the matter further. However, he also admitted that if they denied the applications, and this were to become public knowledge, they would be unable to escape announcing roughly where they proposed to locate their station and when they thought it would be opened. The answer in respect of the timeframe, and just how long East Anglia might have to wait was unlikely to be well received in the region.³¹⁸

Whilst the ITA searched for an answer to this problem they engaged in what could best be described as stalling tactics in their communication with PYE and Television Manufacturing Ltd, sending out a series of interim replies explaining that they were looking in detail at the applications and that they would be in contact with more definitive information soon. It would seem that this delaying tactic worked. There was no further correspondence from either PYE or Television Manufacturing Ltd until nearly one year later when PYE wrote to the ITA suggesting that they were now 'very keen that there should be a service in the Cambridge area' and that they 'could be responsible programme contractors'. In essence the ITA were never required to make a definitive decision regarding these proposals as the applicants failed to sufficiently press the Authority on the issue.³¹⁹

In truth, few people in Norfolk would have been aware of the 'behind the scenes' discussions that were taking place within the ITA about this proposed vision of television for individual areas of the East Anglia region. The *Eastern Daily Press* did report on the ITA's first meeting and press conference at the beginning of August. It announced in its headline that commercial TV was to arrive in Britain in about a year, but there was no reference to the possibility of commercial television arriving in East Anglia in the near future.³²⁰

It seems that neither PYE Ltd nor TV Manufacturing Ltd explicitly attempted to use the *Eastern Daily Press* as a conduit to either promote their vision of highly localised television services in the region to the local audience or to place pressure further on the ITA to take their proposals seriously. Comprehensive searching of the newspaper during the period of August 1954 through to the end of December 1954 indicates that the only reference to either of the companies was in the form of an advert placed by TV Manufacturing Ltd in which they were recruiting for staff. When the ITA did mention in September that they had no specific plans for the region but had received an enquiry about the region the newspaper failed to investigate who the enquiry was from or what their plans were.³²¹

³¹⁸ ITA Archive, Box 3995178 – Selection of Contractors H-K, *Memo between Fraser and Wolstencroft*, 9 December 1954.

³¹⁹ ITA Archive, Box 3995178 – *Selection of Contractors H-K, Interim Response to PYE*, 6 October 1954; *Interim Response to PYE*, 24 November 1954; *Interim Response to TV Manufacturing Ltd*, 21 September 1954; *Interim Response to TV Manufacturing Ltd*, 6 October 1954; *PYE Ltd to ITA* 18 October 1955; *Interim Response to TV Manufacturing Ltd* 24 November 1954; and ITA Archive, Box 3995179 – *East Anglia Contract Applications*.

³²⁰ 'Commercial TV 'In About Year'', *Eastern Daily Press*, 5 August 1954, p. 1.

³²¹ The timing of the advert clearly gives the impression that TV Manufacturing Ltd were expecting the demand for television sets to increase as a consequence of the arrival of a commercial television service in Britain, but gave no indication that within a month of the publication of the advert they would be applying to the ITA to operate a commercial television station for the area surrounding Lowestoft. 'TV Manufacturing Ltd Advert', *Eastern Daily Press*, 18 August 1954, p. 2; 'East Anglia's Problem for Independent TV', *Eastern Daily Press*, 17 September 1954 p. 1.

Television as a Talking Point.

In fact, press coverage of television in Norfolk was still primarily focused on the BBC's activities within the region and how the opening of the transmission station at Tacobneston would alter the viewing situation in the county. For its part the BBC were attempting to temper any expectation that a temporary transmitter would allow all areas of the county to experience clear reception of television. Kenneth Bird, Publicity Officer of the BBC Midland Region, explained that although the BBC were hoping to have a temporary service operational by February 1955. This service would cover only 'Norwich and its very immediate surroundings'.³²²

The editorial column of the *Eastern Daily Press* followed up on this report two days later by reiterating that the BBC were 'making no promises of any reliable service beyond the neighbourhood of Norwich until a permanent station is built at Tacobneston'. It also pointed out that this delay may in fact be a blessing in disguise for the people of Norfolk as amongst those already receiving television there were 'a great many complaints about the quality of programmes' and that Norfolk was 'escaping the period in which the B.B.C. is trying it on the dog'. It is difficult to imagine that a large proportion of readers were particularly convinced by this argument.³²³

Whilst the *Eastern Daily Press* attempted to downplay the importance of television, rhetoric coming from within the BBC was trying to build up anticipation within the area. At a press conference in September the BBC's Midland Region Controller explained that 'We are really in sight of a better situation for East Anglia', one which involved the development of a high power VHF transmitter to provide better wireless reception and the broadcasting of a special East Anglia week during the December of 1954. This was a much brighter assessment of the future of broadcasting in Norfolk than the BBC had previously been able to provide.³²⁴

This positive publicity continued with the publication of the BBC's annual report during October 1954, when they announced their plan to provide television to 97% of the British population within the next ten years. When the *Eastern Daily Press* covered this story they also printed a picture of the construction of the transmission tower at Tacobneston on the following page; a useful visual reminder that Norfolk would be part of the 97% covered.³²⁵

Aware that the looming introduction of television to the region was a significant event, and spurred on by both the BBC's announcements and the appointment of the first three ITA programme contractors at the end of October, the *Eastern Daily Press* suggested in an editorial column that 'within the next few months there may begin a big change in recreational trends over a considerable area of Norfolk, extending into Suffolk' and highlighting BBC research which indicated that during the summer adult viewers in Britain had watched on average 40% of all evening broadcasts and that this may have an impact on

³²² 'B.B.C. Sheds More light on Norfolk TV', *Eastern Daily Press*, 19 August 1954, p. 1.

³²³ 'Television', *Eastern Daily Press*, 21 August 1954, p. 4.

³²⁴ 'Better Prospect for East Anglian Radio, TV', *Eastern Daily Press*, 24 September 1954, p. 7.

³²⁵ 'National TV Cover Within Ten Years', *Eastern Daily Press*, 15 October 1954, p. 5; 'TV Mast', *Eastern Daily Press*, 15 October 1954, p. 6.

participation in gardening and outside sports and that 'until some of the glamour fades', stay at home families would 'become an increasingly frequent phenomenon'.³²⁶

Saving the Date.

At the beginning of November it was confirmed that the Tacolneston transmitter would begin operation in February 1955. Whilst this failed to generate any editorial comment from the paper or its readers it did spur one local retailer to remind potential customers two weeks later that 'It won't be long before TV is a reality in East Anglia' and ask 'why not prepare for it now?' (Fig. 14).³²⁷

Fig. 14
Mann Egerton Advert.³²⁸

★ TELEVISION IS COMING!

Choose your set from this magnificent range

PYE ★ **PHILIPS** ★ **G.E.C.**
Marconi ★ **McMichael**
Decca ★ **Cossor** • •

P.Y.E.
 MODEL VT/2. Switch tuning on 13 channel 12" Black Screen. Impescable cabinet. Altogether wonderful value.
 PRICE (Tax Paid) 51 gns.

G.E.C.
 MODEL BT4743. A fine receiver with a 14" rectangular filter faced picture tube. Alternative programme selection, automatic vision and sound control, independent operation of valve and tube heaters are among the many fine features. Highly polished cabinet in selected hardwood. Remote control on casters for easy movement.
 PRICE (Tax Paid) 77 gns.

MARCONI
 MODEL VT60DA. A compact 14" two-band table receiver which can be easily tuned to Band 1 or Band 3. The picture is brilliant, sharply focused pictures with great depth of field. The screen is approximately 90 sq. ins. and has excellent definition (2.5 Mc/s. at 100% of screen area). It is a 1 ft. polished wood cabinet with a brown wood mounted control panel.
 PRICE (Tax Paid) 65 gns.

C.O.S.S.O.R.
 14" TABLE MODEL 938. Ready to receive the alternative programme selection. Specification includes 20" Cossor valves, automatic contrast control, interference suppression and many other features.
 PRICE (Tax Paid) 56 gns.

Call in, or phone, or post this coupon NOW!

FREE estimate for installing TV in all homes within 15 miles of Norwich.

MANN EGERTON

I would like a television engineer to call and give me, without obligation, a free estimate for installing a TV set.

M. _____
 Address _____

Television & Radio Engineers
 15 PRINCE OF WALES ROAD, NORWICH. Tel. 20481

On the day that the above advert was published the BBC also hosted an important meeting in Norwich at which they outlined, in further detail, their plans for East Anglia during the immediate future. Whilst much of the plan had previously been reported, the *Eastern Daily Press* claimed that as a result of the announcements:

³²⁶ 'Paper and Cinemas Offered TV Contracts', *Eastern Daily Press*, 27 October 1954, p. 1; 'Box of Magic', *Eastern Daily Press*, 27 October 1954 p. 4.

³²⁷ 'Television for Norfolk in February', *Eastern Daily Press*, 4 November 1954, p. 1.

³²⁸ 'Television is Coming!', *Eastern Daily Press*, 17 November 1954, p. 6.

Norwich, which has for so long been the centre of an area which has felt itself rather out of the picture in B.B.C. provision for adequate reception of sound and television, is to become a not unimportant provincial centre for broadcasting.³²⁹

Alongside the previously announced Tacobness television transmitter and planned VHF wireless transmitter, the Controller of the Midland Region also declared that the BBC planned to 'appoint a resident East Anglian representative based in Norwich' and that in addition it would set up a studio and regional office in Norwich.³³⁰

The significance of these announcements should not be underestimated, although it is necessary to clarify that the studio was intended to be for the wireless service only. Although the appointment of an East Anglian representative might on initial assessment seem a minor move, and would have been in many other areas of the United Kingdom, in actual fact it meant that for the first time in its history the BBC would receive regular feedback and information from East Anglia and the people of the region, including the press, would finally have a representative of the BBC that they could communicate with as necessary. A situation that most other regions of the country had taken for granted for many years.

The establishment of a studio in Norwich also had the potential to be a paradigm shift in respect of wireless broadcasting (and potentially setting a precedent for what could eventually be expected of television). The provision of a permanent base within the region meant that programming broadcast from the region need no longer be restricted to the BBC's annual 'East Anglia Weeks' that had long been a feature of the wireless schedules in the area. It could instead be expanded to include far more regular broadcasts. In fact, one of the *Eastern Daily Press*'s readers, A. P. Cooper, quickly identified the wider potential consequence of the establishment of the Norwich Studio, asking why given the existence of both a studio and a high power VHF transmitter, it would not be possible for East Anglia to become its own region, independent from the Midland Region?³³¹

In the course of a single press conference the BBC had re-confirmed that the arrival of television into Norfolk was imminent, promised that reception of the wireless service would improve, committed that the region would finally have a representative from the BBC and that broadcasting from the region would become far more common place in the future. In doing so it accidentally raised the possibility of East Anglia gaining autonomy as a BBC region.³³²

For East Anglians these announcements by the BBC were of more direct relevance than the appointment of the first ITA programme contractors or any news related to commercial television. Indeed, whilst the *Eastern Daily Press* did report on the political conflict that came from the appointment of the programme contractors, editorial coverage made clear that whilst 'to some people in Norfolk and Suffolk television is a novelty' to most 'it is not yet even that.' Whilst other parts of the nation were beginning to prepare for commercial

³²⁹ 'Norwich to Have B.B.C. Studio and Office Next Year', *Eastern Daily Press*, 18 November 1954, p. 5.

³³⁰ *Ibid.*

³³¹ 'East Anglian Radio', *Eastern Daily Press*, 20 November 1954, p. 4.

³³² In fact, East Anglia did not officially become a BBC Region until 1969 and a fully autonomous Radio Station for Norfolk did not appear until 1980, with the launch of BBC Radio Norfolk. Before then radio coverage of the region took the form of a daily regional opt out from Radio 4's national coverage.

television, East Anglians were still awaiting the full arrival of the BBC's service. As the end of the year approached the BBC continued to ensure that local interest in their actions was maintained by allowing the *Eastern Daily Press* to publish photos of the 'good progress' being made at the Tacobneston transmitter, Fig. 15.³³³

Fig. 15
Photo of Tacobneston Transmitter Tower.³³⁴



1954 was the year in which profound decisions regarding the long term future of television were made, including initial appointments of contractors which would later influence the shape and content of commercial television in East Anglia. The coverage of television in the *Eastern Daily Press* however reflected the reality that East Anglia was still in a period of anticipation not for competition in television but rather for access to a single television service from the BBC that was taken for granted elsewhere. It was therefore the decisions of the BBC, not those of the ITA that were of most importance in East Anglia. Consequently, as will be shown, it was the opening of Tacobneston transmitter rather than the opening of the ITV network that would be the biggest development in television during 1955 for those in East Anglia.

1955 – Tacobneston First.

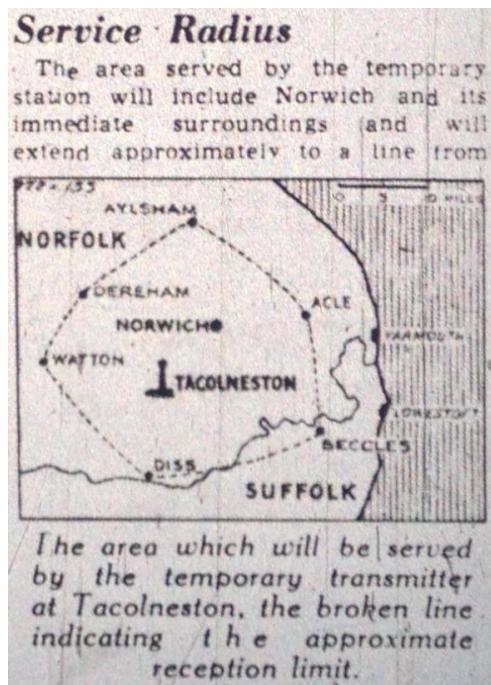
From the start of January 1955 the *Eastern Daily Press* continued to generate anticipation for the formal opening of Tacobneston, with a photograph showing the connection of the electricity supply to the TV testing hut on the site being featured on the front page of the

³³³ 'TV Politics', *Eastern Daily Press*, 23 November 1954, p. 4.

³³⁴ 'TV Just Around the Corner', *Eastern Daily Press*, 13 December 1954, p. 6.

newspaper on 4 January. This relatively banal news was however soon followed by a more exciting announcement, when on 7 January, the paper announced that low powered, test transmissions from Tacolneston would commence from 17 January and that, more importantly, a regular low power television service would begin on 1 February. The article is an important one not just because it announced a start date, but also because it featured one of the first public declarations of the extent of the area that would initially be served by the transmitter, see Fig. 16.³³⁵

Fig. 16
Service Radius of Tacolneston.³³⁶



Whilst the BBC could not exactly predict the limits of its service, the map shows that large proportions of Norfolk would fall outside of the initial limits, including areas that had been relatively vocal in their appeals for television such as Yarmouth and Lowestoft. Lowestoft could have received its own commercial station by this time if Pye's plans had been accepted by the ITA. Areas to the west of the county, including Swaffham and King's Lynn, failed to even feature on the fringes of the map let alone be part of the reception area. As a consequence whilst the opening of Tacolneston would herald the arrival of television to Norfolk, some clear asymmetries in access within the county would still exist. For many potential viewers television would remain tantalisingly out of reach.³³⁷

Regardless of the imperfect and limited nature of the television service that the BBC was offering the *Eastern Daily Press* celebrated the fact that satisfactory viewing would no longer require 'a high, steady barometer and an absence of wind'. It predicted that local

³³⁵ 'For TV Tests at Tacolneston', *Eastern Daily Press*, 4 January 1955, p. 1; 'Television for Norwich Area from February 1st', *Eastern Daily Press*, 7 January 1955, p. 1.

³³⁶ 'Television for Norwich Area from February 1st', *Eastern Daily Press*, 7 January 1955, p. 1.

³³⁷ Judging by the map the situation was even bleaker in other East Anglian counties. Only those who lived on Suffolk's border with Norfolk had a chance of receiving a signal from Tacolneston and there is no evidence that, at this point at least, Cambridgeshire was ever intended to be served by the transmitter.

retailers were about to ‘pass through a period of great demand for sets’ which would increase further when Tacolneston began transmitting on full power, resulting in ‘clusters of viewers around the magic screens all over Norfolk and Suffolk’. The editors of the *Eastern Daily Press* also realised that the arrival of television in the region would ensure that things would never be quite the same afterwards and that the effects would neither be universally bad or good:

What effect on the habits of the community will this new marvel produce? Here is a fascinating field for study. The new pattern will not evolve until much of the novelty of owning a television set abates, but the impact on social life, of visual entertainment and instruction thus brought into the home cannot be negligible. Upon the aged and lonely it can hardly be other than beneficial. It will please countless others, but in the case of the schoolchild, especially one grappling with homework or special study, overdoses can prove harmful – here there must be parental tact allied with firmness.³³⁸

The excitement and trepidation surrounding the imminent arrival of television can be seen clearly in the statement. Whilst the existing historiography identifies the Coronation as the moment that television transitioned into the mainstream in Britain, there is a sense that for the people of Norfolk the opening of Tacolneston, two years later, was the real watershed moment.

The sense of excitement in the region was further heightened by the publication of a special supplement on television on 11 January. This supplement featured a series of articles on television and just as importantly a vast array of adverts from local retailers and installers suggesting that they certainly believed that initial demand was likely to be significant. The *Eastern Daily Press* also took the opportunity to print an article describing the pressure that had been placed on the BBC over the years in an attempt to hasten the arrival of television in the region. Whilst it provides an insight into the variety of groups who had, over the period of over 15 years, attempted to influence the BBC, the conclusion that it reaches in regards to the efficacy of local MPs in relation to this issue does not, with the benefit of hindsight, hold up to close scrutiny.

The article claimed that following a letter writing campaign to local MPs, the BBC and the Postmaster-General organised by the Norwich and District Television Circle in 1950. MPs ‘promised to ‘press the matter to the best of their abilities’ and that ‘none can deny that East Anglia’s MPs since then have not been idle in this matter’. Whilst it certainly is the case that the regions MPs did play a more active role in advocating for the expansion of television into the region during the post 1950 period, this increase in activity must be considered in relation to the level of previous action, which in truth was minimal to the point of being virtually unobservable. Equally one should also keep in mind that despite acting to the best of their abilities, these MPs still conspicuously failed to successfully lobby for even temporary arrangements to allow the Coronation to be scene within the region with any reliability.³³⁹

³³⁸ ‘TV Imminent’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 7 January 1955, p. 4.

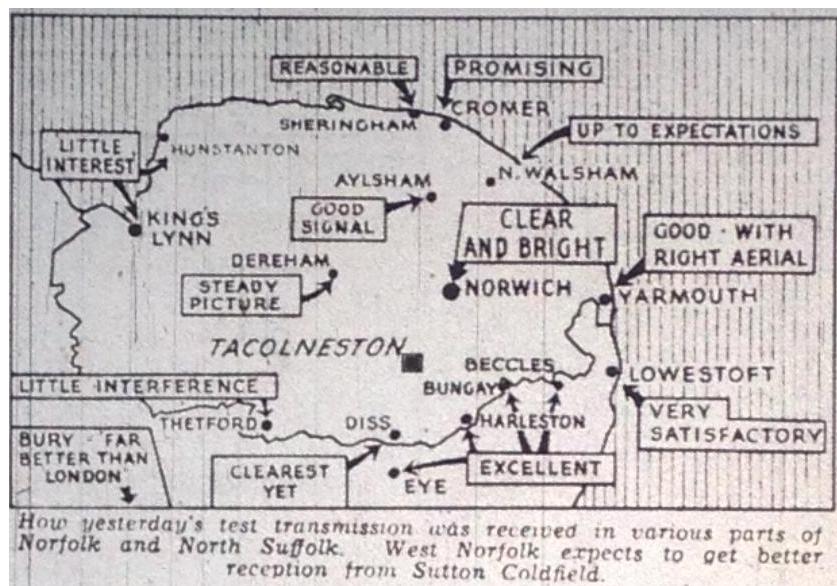
³³⁹ It should be noted that due to the policies of both the BBC and the Government during this time it was unlikely that any amount of lobbying by local MPS would have been ultimately successful. ‘East Anglia’s Years of Pressure for TV’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 11 January 1955, p. 10.

In contrast MPs from other regions of the country seem to have been far more active in their attempts to influence the development of the BBC's television service and were more open to taking action in collaboration with other similarly afflicted regions; as has been shown in chapter one, no MPs from East Anglia took part when such a coalition approached the BBC in 1949. When considered as a whole this evidence would suggest that the rather flattering portrayal painted by the *Eastern Daily Press* of the work of local advocates on this issue was not particularly justified.

Testing, Testing.

It is no surprise that the commencement of the initial test broadcasts from Tacolneston drew considerable analysis from the *Eastern Daily Press*. They were after all the first real indication of what the actual transmission range of the new service would actually be. The main article, published the day after the first test signal transmissions, featured anecdotal evidence from television set owners from around Norfolk who had all attempted to tune into the new broadcasts. The results of which were then presented in the form of a helpful map - see Fig. 17.³⁴⁰

Fig. 17
Reception from Tacolneston Tests.



Whilst only subjective assessments of the initial test broadcasts they do indicate that Tacolneston would indeed be a 'paradigm shift' in respect of television in Norfolk. This initial positive news was soon followed up by tidings from the BBC that the full power, permanent television station at Tacolneston would be fully operational by the middle of 1956 but that in the meantime there would be no official opening of the station to mark the beginning of low power transmissions at the start of February. The BBC 'thought it better to wait until we can give a signal to East Anglia as a whole' and that they had thus 'decided to take this stage very quietly'.³⁴¹

³⁴⁰ 'Excellent Reception of TV from Tacolneston', *Eastern Daily Press*, 18 January 1955, p. 5.

³⁴¹ 'Permanent TV Station in Norfolk Mid-1956', *Eastern Daily Press*, 21 January 1955 p. 5.

The people of the region were under no such obligation to take things quietly and discussion of the potential impact of television on the region continued to take place before the real transmissions started. These discussions included a speech by the retiring chairman of the Eastern Counties branch of the Cinematograph Exhibitors' Association in which he attempted to allay any fears that television might ultimately destroy the cinema industry. In addition there was an 'Any Questions?' session held in Norwich, during which the panel was asked whether television was a good influence now, and whether it would be after it was commercialised.³⁴²

The panel at the latter event were split on the likely impact of television. The Principal of the School of Commerce and Social Studies in Ipswich argued that its influence was not good for children or the family as it tended to distract when they should be reading or writing; whilst Sir Geoffrey Shakespeare (former MP for Norwich) 'imagined that if he lived in a rural area he would regard it as a godsend' and that 'it was a great thing for people to be able to see more of contemporary events than would actually be seen by being personally present at them'. Further Mr. Michael Bulman reminded the assembled audience that 'every innovation had been criticised destructively at its introduction, but each found its proper level'.³⁴³

Shakespeare's assessment of the potential positive impact of television in Norfolk highlights how it could play an important role in expanding the public sphere within the region. Allowing more people to witness contemporary events might encourage people to discuss within their localities events and ideas of local, national and global significance. Whilst this outcome was clearly not guaranteed the arrival of television opened up a new avenue of access to information and participation that had previously been denied to many in the region.

The Launch.

Tacolneston's 'soft launch' was covered in the *Eastern Daily Press* via a short article which also explained that the paper would subsequently be publishing daily comments and reviews about broadcasting. This was a significant step that reinforces the view that this was the moment when television took a significant step to becoming firmly embedded in the daily routine of the people of Norfolk.³⁴⁴

The first of these articles nevertheless highlighted the fact that despite the opening of Tacolneston, for many in Norfolk the arrival of television was still largely an irrelevance. Radio licences still outnumbered those for television in this area by 75 to one. From those who could view there were few complaints about the first day of transmissions from Tacolneston. Indeed the range of those able to receive the television service was wider than had been predicted with domestic viewers and retailers from both Yarmouth and King's Lynn reporting that they had been able to receive an 'excellent' and 'consistent' reception. In fact the only significant criticism of the first broadcasts originated from Watton, a small

³⁴² 'Cinemas face Norwich Television Calmly', *Eastern Daily Press*, 27 January 1955 p. 7; 'TV Discussed at Norwich 'Any Questions?' Session', *Eastern Daily Press*, 29 January 1955 p. 7.

³⁴³ Although not identified as such, Mr Bulman was a surgeon at the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital, who later became Mayor of Norwich and helped found the University of East Anglia.

³⁴⁴ 'TV Comes to East Anglia', *Eastern Daily Press*, 1 February 1955, p. 1.

town well within the predicted range of Tacobnesson, where ‘Grey shadows traveling from top to bottom of screen made very disappointing reception’.³⁴⁵

On the following day the first letters to the editor regarding the opening day of the new television service were published. They highlighted that enthusiasm and misgivings were still both present. An author previously known as ‘Disappointed Television Set Owner’ wrote under the new *nom de plume* ‘Delighted Television Set Owner’ to inform the newspaper of his pleasure in being able to experience ‘an excellent television service’ thanks to the work of the BBC technical staff and the ‘unremitting efforts of Brig. Frank Medlicott, M.P., in hammering away at the Postmaster-General’. Presenting a more pessimistic account of the arrival of television, J. Hampden Jackson, a Cambridge University Lecturer and tutor in Norfolk for the Workers’ Educational Association, argued that other parts of the country had been negatively affected by the arrival of this new medium, with individuals staying away from books, the theatre and lecture groups in favour of ‘taking whatever the TV authorities hand out to them’. Although confident in the ability of Norfolk people, who were ‘renowned for their discrimination’, to resist the temptations of television, Jackson concluded that ‘One cannot help feeling a little apprehension lest Norfolk people too, join the sheep who look up and are not fed’.³⁴⁶

Jackson’s fearful claims did not go unchallenged by those who were less pessimistic. One television viewer responded to say, that far from dissuading him to read, ‘The excellent documentary programmes have encouraged me in serious reading, and I turn to the library shelves for wider knowledge of subjects in which I was previously ill-informed or ignorant’. In addition few people of the author’s acquaintance could be termed as ‘theatre goers’ as the majority of his neighbours ‘haven’t even seen the inside of the “Royal” or “Maddermarket” in Norwich’. Again one can see how television could play a role in the public sphere in Norfolk at this point in time, bringing culture and information to those who may have previously ignored it and providing the impetus to learn more about a range of topics.³⁴⁷

The discussion inspired the newspaper’s editors to intervene in the debate, suggesting that ‘evidence from other parts of the country is not all so gloomy as Mr Jackson’s’ and that television was ‘something more than a nine-day wonder, but something less than a two-year wonder’. The first signs of the region getting a reliable television service had not assuaged the fears that television was a monster that would destroy more than it created. Yet the fact that the people of Norfolk were now talking about it in relation to their own experience was a signifier that Norfolk was finally becoming a truly televisual county.³⁴⁸

A Popular Medium?

The most immediate observable result of the opening of the Tacobnesson transmitter was a predictable increase in the number of television licences sold in the surrounding area. According to the *Eastern Daily Press* this increase was a dramatic one, with the number sold within the area covered by the Norwich Post Office increasing from 934 at the end of 1954

³⁴⁵ ‘TV – The First Day’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 1 February 1955, p. 7; ‘Few Criticisms of First Day of Television Service’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 2 February 1955 p. 7.

³⁴⁶ ‘Television’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 3 February 1955, p. 4.

³⁴⁷ ‘Television’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 7 February 1955, p. 4.

³⁴⁸ ‘Television’, *Eastern Daily Press*, Editorial, 7 February 1955, p. 4.

to 3,226 by the middle of February, 1,426 of which had been purchased after the opening of Tacolneston.³⁴⁹

As Table 5 shows, this increase in television licences purchased was echoed across the rest of Norfolk as well, with the number increasing by over 170% compared to the previous year. However, the opening of Tacolneston did not correlate with a similar level of increase in licences amongst the people of the neighbouring county of Suffolk, with that figure only increasing by over 31%, a level of growth that was below that experienced by England, Wales and Scotland as a whole (38%).

In fact, the Table shows that the only other region which witnessed a similar level of growth during the same period was that of Cornwall and Devon. The growth of circa 120% in these South-Western counties can be explained in a similar manner to the growth in Norfolk as the BBC opened a television transmitter at North Hessary Tor on 17 December 1954 to serve this area. In both Norfolk and the South-West of England there was a pent-up demand for television that was released as soon as the service was reliably delivered to them by a local transmitter.

Table. 5
Television Licences Sold: 1954 and 1955.³⁵⁰

Region	Television Licences in March 1954	Television Licences in March 1955	Percentage Increase from 1954 to 1955
Norfolk	4,344	11,846	172.7%
Suffolk	6,684	8,786	31.45%
Cornwall and Devon	14,915	32,771	119.72%
Northumberland and Durham	66,634	123,703	85.65%
Lancashire and Cheshire	460,332	665,361	44.54%
London and Home Counties	1,105,154	1,340,060	21.26%
England, Scotland and Wales	3,238,539	4,479,958	38.33%

In respect of the absolute number of television licences sold Norfolk remained comparatively small. It represented less than 1% of the total number of licences sold in England, Wales and Scotland, but in terms of annual growth the county was during 1954-55 an important area for the BBC. This would also prove to be the last year when any increase in the popularity of television could purely be explained by the actions of the BBC. By the

³⁴⁹ The article suggests that the area covered by the Norwich Post Office was roughly the same as the area the BBC had indicated was the area of reception from the temporary transmitter. 'Norwich Area TV Licences Trebled', *Eastern Daily Press*, 16 February 1955, p. 6.

³⁵⁰ Based on data from *The British Broadcasting Corporation Annual Report and Accounts for the Year 1953-54* Cmd. 9269, pp. 93-94; *The British Broadcasting Corporation Annual Report and Accounts for the Year 1954-55* Cmd. 9533, pp. 91-92.

end of 1955 commercial television would arrive in the United Kingdom for the first time and irrevocably change the broadcasting landscape.

A Competitor Arrives.

The build up to the arrival of ITV on British television screens is well documented in the official history of ITV and the ITA by Sendall, so the intention of this thesis is to provide only an outline of the process and instead concentrate on how these events were received and affected East Anglia specifically, something which has not previously been considered.³⁵¹

By the end of 1954 the ITA had awarded the franchises for the initial three areas to be served by ITV and construction work on transmitter facilities continued throughout 1955. The initial plans to locate the transmitters at the same locations used by the BBC had been abandoned in December 1954 when it was realised that the service for the Northern Region would be delayed by two years if they attempted to share the Holmes Moss site and also because they ITA 'felt strongly that the Lancashire and Yorkshire areas should if possible be treated in such a way that their respective regional interests could receive expression in the programmes.'³⁵²

The *Eastern Daily Press* produced relatively little coverage of the development of this new network of transmitters. This is understandable given that they were of little direct interest to their readership and that, in terms of television, Tacolneston was still clearly a more newsworthy topic. Nevertheless, the paper did provide some coverage of issues related to the arrival of commercial television. In March of 1955 it reported the visit to Norwich of Sir Ian Jacob the Director General of the BBC during which he explained that the corporation was facing a fight for television producers with the new ITV companies. The *Eastern Daily Press* also made announcements related to how commercial television would be funded and how adverts would fit into the service, particularly evident in articles on the price of advertising on ITV, the broadcasting hours of the service and the limit on the amount of advertising allowed.³⁵³

However, during April attention switched back to the BBC when they confirmed that they would be broadcasting the first 'East Anglia TV week' during the summer. The broadcasts would begin in Great Yarmouth on 25 June before moving on to include film about Norwich and other parts of East Anglia during the following week. Whilst the programmes would be broadcast to the entire nation, and are therefore historically significant due to being the first real attempt by the BBC to broadcast television from East Anglia, this was not to be the beginning of a regular attempt to provide content from the region to the nation as Tacolneston lacked a return link to the Alexandra Palace transmission station. It instead relied upon an ad-hoc series of temporary repeater towers located in Suffolk and Essex. In practical terms this means that the BBC were still not able to commit to regular broadcast television from the region. Instead they were adopting a similar policy to the one they had

³⁵¹ See Bernard Sendall, *Independent Television in Britain Volume 1: Origin and Foundation, 1946-62* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1982).

³⁵² Sendall, *Volume 1: Origin and Foundation, 1946-62*, p. 93.

³⁵³ Staff Shortage in 'New Era' of TV', *Eastern Daily Press*, 9 March 1955, p. 8; '£1000-a-minute TV Advertisements', *Eastern Daily Press*, 15 March 1955, p. 1; '50 Hours a week for Commercial Television', *Eastern Daily Press*, 23 March 1955, p. 1; 'Six Minutes an Hour for Television Advertising', *Eastern Daily Press*, 24 March 1955, p. 1.

used for the wireless service. A week of scheduled programming once a year would need to be enough for the region, although this would clearly not be adequate if and when a commercial rival arrived in the region.³⁵⁴

Nevertheless the BBC were keen to emphasise the seriousness with which they were now treating the region and announced that they had appointed a representative for East Anglia. Reported in the *Eastern Daily Press* at the end of April the BBC confirmed that the whole of the East Anglia region would soon fall under the control of the BBC's Midland Region and that this would 'result in more programmes of East Anglian interest being originated in Norwich and elsewhere in East Anglia'.³⁵⁵

Two days prior to the start of 'television week' the BBC confirmed that it was the desire of the Midland Region to 'foster local character and patriotism in all the widely varied counties and districts of the great area they serve' and that the establishment of the Norwich broadcasting facilities would mean that for the first time they would be able to 'draw upon the whole of East Anglia for their programmes'. Just as importantly it also meant that for the first time the whole of East Anglia would be able to 'see and hear what is broadcast in the name of a proud province'. Whether they would like what they saw and heard was quite another matter.³⁵⁶

Despite the impressive rhetoric from the BBC, critical reaction to the first East Anglia TV week was not entirely positive. Whilst the *Eastern Daily Press*'s critic recognised the historical significance of 'the first outside television broadcast from our part of the world' he also pointed out that some people in the region were 'growing tired of being regarded by the B.B.C. as a curiosity, as that strange, awkward area for which special arrangements must be made.' Given that some regions of the United Kingdom were anticipating the arrival of a second television service, it is not surprising that elements in East Anglia were expressing frustration with the fragmented and occasional visits to the region by the BBC's television service. Potential and promises were not adequate replacements for a service based in, and serving, the area.³⁵⁷

If a Television Station starts, but nobody is there to watch, does it make a noise?

Despite activities behind the scenes it was not until 14 September that the *Eastern Daily Press* published a significant article on ITV. At this point they were able to confirm the date of the launch and that the ITA had no plans to extend the ITV network to East Anglia before 1959 at the earliest.³⁵⁸

Given that there was no immediate prospect of ITV embracing East Anglia there was also no great announcement in the *Eastern Daily Press* on the actual launch day of ITV. The only mention of this pivotal event in British media history was found in the *Our London Letter* column, suggesting that the topic was only of passing interest to the general readership. The article concentrated more on the war of words about the new service that had been taking place in the *TV Times* and *The Radio Times* magazines in the run up to launch day than it did

³⁵⁴ 'Difficulty of TV 'Hops' from Norfolk', *Eastern Daily Press*, 7 April 1955, p. 9.

³⁵⁵ 'B.B.C. Representative for East Anglia', *Eastern Daily Press*, 30 April 1955, p. 5.

³⁵⁶ 'East Anglia Week', *Eastern Daily Press*, 23 June 1955, p. 4.

³⁵⁷ 'Can't the B.B.C. 'du different?''', *Eastern Daily Press*, 2 July 1955, p. 6.

³⁵⁸ 'Commercial Television to Start this Month', *Eastern Daily Press*, 14 September 1955, p. 1; 'Fingers Crossed', *Eastern Daily Press*, 14 September 1955, p. 4.

on the programming that might be seen. It did however claim that ITV had already had an impact on the BBC and that it would be ‘surprising if the Corporation’s programmes on both sound and vision do not show improvement’. Given the still limited access to television in the region, it is doubtful that many people in East Anglia would have been in a position to assess whether such an improvement existed.³⁵⁹

Coverage in the immediate aftermath of the launch was somewhat different. Perhaps anticipating that a large proportion of its readership would not have been able to witness the events for themselves, the first article reporting on the launch evening was largely concerned with describing to readers how advertising spots were mingled into the programming, with considerable emphasis given to informing the reader as to what products had been advertised. The list included toothpaste, drinking chocolate, margarine, petrol, cake mixture, detergent and beer.³⁶⁰

In presenting their coverage in this way the *Eastern Daily Press* had, consciously or otherwise, framed ITV as more of a conduit for advertising rather than as a genuine alternative source of television programming. This focus was in some ways understandable. Whilst local audiences may have been intrigued about what was shown, the programmes remained tantalisingly out of reach for most. As the newspaper’s critic pointed out, despite the launch of commercial television in London ‘East Anglia, not yet blessed or cursed by the I.T.A., had the mixture much the same as before’.³⁶¹

However, just as had been the case with the BBC’s television service, a number of enterprising pioneers were attempting to receive a television service before it was supposed to be available to them. One such person was Mr E.H. Brock from Lopham. Brock appears to be one of the few people who successfully managed to view the proceedings of the evening in Norfolk and was quoted as saying ‘I had two sets working side by side for about three hours... one of them on I.T.A. and the other on Tacolneston. They were almost identical in quality of reception’. Such an experience was not the norm. An unidentified expert from Norwich explained that the reception experienced by Mr Brock was a freak occurrence ‘rather like the reception we had before Tacolneston opened’ and that many owners of multi-channel sets in the region had been surprised when they got nothing when they switched to the commercial channel, having not realised that their existing aerial arrays would not be set up to receive the new broadcasts.³⁶²

The remainder of September passed by quietly in respect of coverage of the new ITV service, television generally and correspondence from readers, about their attempts to view commercial television. On 11 October 11 an article appeared detailing the experience of Mr C. C. Drury of Southrepps, a small village on the North Norfolk coast. Mr Drury, inspired by a recent visit to Southend where he had ‘been tantalised by the large number of I.T.A. aerials’, spent a Sunday morning erecting an 18ft aerial at his property ‘just out of curiosity’. He claimed that the result of his efforts was a picture ‘almost as clear as the B.B.C.’s with a sound level that was very good indeed’. He did however admit that his success in this venture was somewhat of a poisoned chalice as he ‘didn’t know which programme to

³⁵⁹ ‘Independence Day’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 22 September 1955, p. 4.

³⁶⁰ ‘Beer with Boxing in the New TV’s Debut’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 23 September 1955, p. 1.

³⁶¹ ‘Highlight’ – *Great Opportunities* in *Eastern Daily Press* 23 September 1955, p. 7.

³⁶² Ibid.; ‘Varied Reception of Commercial TV in Norfolk’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 24 September 1955, p. 7.

watch'. It should also be noted that Drury was something of an expert when it came to receiving television. The *Eastern Daily Press* suggested that he was 'the first man in the area to received B.B.C. transmissions from Alexandra Palace' in 1939 and it is obvious that few people in Norfolk were capable of handling an 18ft erection on their property.³⁶³

Commercial television had arrived in the United Kingdom, and would be here to stay, but the impact that it had initially on viewers in East Anglia was clearly very limited despite the desire from some within the region to access the new service.

Indeed, this desire to not once again be left behind the rest of the country when it came to television manifested itself during the October of 1955. On 11 October the *Eastern Daily Press* reported that East Anglia was in the 'back rank' of the queue for commercial television and that the area 'would not be in the commercial television picture for at least three years'. In the past news of this type may well have been simply shrugged off as being part of living in East Anglia, but in this instance one of the local MPs immediately stepped in with an impassioned attack on the policy.³⁶⁴

Sir Frank Medlicott expressed his 'deep disappointment' in the statement that had been made by the ITA's Director General. Medlicott argued that 'Lip service is paid by many people to the importance of the countryside and the necessity of preventing the drift from the land. And yet when a real opportunity occurs of adding to the amenities of the rural area we are put at the very end of the queue.' Although still reactive rather than proactive, the rapidity of the statement from Medlicott, as well as its forceful wording, were a departure from the relative silence of local MPs that had accompanied the early days of the BBC's television service or the unsuccessful lobbying actions that had manifested before the Coronation. It is certainly difficult to imagine a statement with similar wording to this one being release by one of the local MPs during the late 1940s or the early 1950s. At least one of the county's MPs had found their voice when it came to demanding television and was not afraid to use it.³⁶⁵

Growth, Change and the Absence of Choice: 1956-1958.

The first anniversary of the opening of the transmitter at Tacolneston in February 1956 provided the *Eastern Daily Press* with the perfect opportunity to assess the highlights of Norfolk's first year of TV. Moments identified as being particularly memorable included two live events, the General Election of 26 May 26, and a 10,000m race at White City on 11 October 11, whilst series that had begun during 1955 that had proven popular included *Highlight, At Home* and *This is Your Life*.³⁶⁶

Yet although the provision of TV in Norfolk had improved after the opening of Tacolneston, the situation across East Anglia was still far from ideal. The editors of the *Eastern Daily Press* reminded their readership that the 'unexpectedly wide range of TV reception' had 'soothed the fury of this part of the country at being left at the end of the queue for the new entertainment of television'. But it remained the case that there were 'many people outside

³⁶³ 'Watched I.T.A. Show at Southrepps', *Eastern Daily Press*, 11 October 1955, p. 7; 'I.T.A. Reception' in *Eastern Daily Press* 14 October 1955, p. 4.

³⁶⁴ 'Commercial TV Queue', *Eastern Daily Press*, 10 October 1955, p. 7.

³⁶⁵ 'M.P.'s Protest at Delay Over Commercial TV for East Anglia', *Eastern Daily Press*, 10 October 1955, p. 1.

³⁶⁶ 'Highlights in Norfolk's First Year of TV', *Eastern Daily Press*, 30 February 1956, p. 5.

the range of the temporary transmitter'. The eventual opening of permanent, high power facilities at Tacobnesson, it was suggested by the newspaper, would result not just in clearer reception, but that might also 'draw East Anglia together as no other form of communication has ever done'. Although people in the region had shared characteristics there was a relatively low level of bonding social capital. Something that had been well demonstrated by the fact that there had historically been no real collective effort to lobby the BBC on behalf of the whole East Anglia region. A genuinely local television service might address that issue.³⁶⁷

Despite the limitations of the television service in Norfolk in respect of both the BBC and ITV, interest in television and the size of the local audience continued to grow. As Table 6 shows, by the end of March 1956 the number of licences in Norfolk had increased to over 36,000, an annual growth rate of over 200% which dwarfed the other regions which have served as sources of comparison and was over seven times larger than the increase across England, Wales and Scotland.

Table. 6
Television Licence in 1955 and 1956.³⁶⁸

Region	Television Licences in March 1955	Television Licences in March 1956	Percentage Increase from 1955 to 1956
Norfolk	11,846	36,192	205.52%
Suffolk	8,786	12,545	42.78%
Cornwall and Devon	32,771	68,454	108.89%
Northumberland and Durham	123,703	188,322	52.24%
Lancashire and Cheshire	665,361	841,818	26.52%
London and Home Counties	1,340,060	1,563,565	16.68%
England, Scotland and Wales	4,479,958	5,697,387	27.18%

Although these figures were extremely impressive some in Norfolk remained unconvinced about the value of having a television in their household. During May 1956 a discussion of the merits of the medium and its impact on life in the region appeared in the *Eastern Daily Press*. The first article published, written by Jonathan Mardle, argued that the money spent on television equipment could be better employed elsewhere and that when he was asked by 'television addicts' to think about what he was potentially missing out on as a non-viewer he responded by asking the questioner to think about what they were missing out on. He

³⁶⁷ 'Broadcasting', *Eastern Daily Press*, 9 February 1956 p.4

³⁶⁸ Based on data from *The British Broadcasting Corporation Annual Report and Accounts for the Year 1954-55* Cmd. 9533, pp. 91-92; *The British Broadcasting Corporation Annual Report and Accounts for the Year 1955-56* Cmd. 9803, pp. 99-100.

suggested that they could use their television budget to buy ‘a small library, or four good pictures’ or to ‘see at least a hundred and sixty plays or have a sailing boat or go to Italy.’³⁶⁹

Mardle’s critique of television went further than it just being a waste of money. He argued that its presence had a negative effect on local communities, particularly those in the new suburbs. As more and people started to live in industrialised towns, they had become isolated from one another, people lived in brick and tile boxes and ‘inside most of these boxes’ was ‘another box, a talking box, whereby the inhabitants may occupy their leisure in watching in a glass screen the shadows of other people playing games, running races, acting plays, making music, dancing, travelling.’ These suburbanite viewers faced pressure from advertisers encouraging them to ‘go to cinemas, watch games played by professionals’ or to ‘buy television sets’ rather than to engage and invest in the local community. Mardle’s lament of television and its impact on communities and social cohesion brings to mind the work of Robert Putnam in *Bowling Alone* almost forty-five years later in which he argues that television had played a pivotal role in reducing civic engagement and participation in community events.³⁷⁰

Two weeks later Mardle’s negative assessment of television in Norfolk was challenged by Jean Goodman. She took the opportunity to offer a more nuanced, and positive assessment of the impact that television was having on family life.³⁷¹

Goodman began by suggesting that her family were now ‘over the worst’ of the ‘disease of television’ that Mardle had referred to. She admitted that initially her family had ‘hired a set as soon as possible’ and ‘settled down to let the disease run its course.’ After an initial period in which television became the central focus of life, during which her family ate ‘TV dinners’ in front of the set whilst in semi-darkness, Goodman described how ‘curtains were not closed quite as early, meals tended to resume a more normal pattern, and finally, at spring cleaning time, the furniture was restored to the old familiar places’. Consequently television had shifted from being the focus of life in the household to becoming ‘as much a part of the background pattern of our lives as the radio and the telephone, and, like these, used in moderation it has practical compensations for intrusion’. Rather than simply resist its arrival, or attempt to deny its existence, Goodman advocated adopting ‘television as an inevitable part of our complicated way of life’ and to ‘use it, whenever possible, to the best advantage’.³⁷²

The manner in which both articles discussed television, in particular the references to lived experiences with the medium, suggests that whilst television still remained a minority interest in the county - evinced by the licence fee statistics and the fact that these discussions were based on the question of whether people *should* purchase or hire a television – for

³⁶⁹ ‘Having Television’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 2 May 1956, p. 4

³⁷⁰ Ibid.; Robert Putnam *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000).

³⁷¹ Jean Goodman later became a broadcaster who worked for both the BBC in East Anglia as well as Anglia Television and was also a journalist and short story writer. ‘Jean Goodman’, *Times*, 28 Oct. 2003, p. 34.

³⁷² <http://find.galegroup.com.ueaezproxy.uea.ac.uk:2048/ttda/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=TTD A&userGroupName=univea&tabID=T003&docPage=article&searchType=BasicSearchForm&docId=IF501139967&type=multipage&contentSet=LTO&version=1.0> [accessed 26/03/2017]

³⁷² ‘Having Television – II’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 16 May 1956, p. 4.

those who had been adopters during the first year of broadcasts from Tacolneston it had been accepted as part of their everyday routine.

Whilst viewers in the region adjusted to television, the BBC continued to adjust to East Anglia. The BBC's Midland Regional Controller made clear that East Anglia was now, in reference to the wireless service, considered to be a separate province and that it was therefore right that 'there should be some area programmes'. The BBC's approach to East Anglia was evolving and they seemed to be trying to build loyalty to the BBC in advance of any competition reaching the area.³⁷³

This shift in approach can be seen in two announcements. The first at the end of June, when the BBC announced that 1956 was to be the last year that an East Anglia 'Radio week' would take place. Having run since 1946, the BBC felt that as Norwich was soon to have its own studio and engineering staff 'appropriate programmes will be broadcast more regularly' and that 'the annual visit will no longer be necessary'.³⁷⁴

The second announcement concerned a meeting held in the House of Commons between the BBC's Midland Regional Controller, the Corporations East Anglian programme organiser and a group of East Anglian MPs. During the meeting, chaired by Sir Frank Medlicott, the BBC outlined their 'plans for improving television and radio in the region'. It described 'the facilities to be provided by the Talconeston station in the autumn' that would allow for 'special East Anglian programmes'. It is unfortunate that greater detail of the content of this meeting was not provided in the *Eastern Daily Press* report of the event. However, the mere fact that the meeting took place is further evidence that the BBC were taking a much more proactive approach to Norfolk and East Anglia and were keen to promote their new activities in the region to a much greater extent.³⁷⁵

This approach included the penning of a column in the *Eastern Daily Press* by the Controller of the Midlands Region to coincide with the national radio show in which he explained that the BBC had for a long time realised that a large number of places in East Anglia were subject to poor reception and interference. He stated that the BBC were now embarking on a 'broader and more emphatic solution to the problem', which would increase the area covered by the Midlands region and would allow the 'infusion of more East Anglian material both into the Midland Home Service and into other B.B.C. programmes' as well as the creation of a 'limited amount of area broadcasting, catering specially for East Anglian listeners'. The article also included a brief reference to the improvements that would be made to the region's television service over time, suggesting that the erection of a higher mast would 'enable the signal to reach a wider area' but with the caveat that 'the strengthening may be a gradual process in order not to interfere with Continental television stations'.³⁷⁶

The BBC predicted that by the end of 1956 '97 per cent of the population of Great Britain' would be served by B.B.C. television transmitters'. Whilst a growing proportion of Norfolk would be included within these figures there were still areas within East Anglia that fell outside of the television system, leading to the bizarre situation of some people in the region

³⁷³ 'B.B.C. 'Means Business' Over East Anglia', *Eastern Daily Press*, 17 May 1956, p. 5.

³⁷⁴ 'Last of Radio East Anglia Weeks Begins on Sunday', *Eastern Daily Press*, 28 June 1956, p. 5.

³⁷⁵ 'M.P.s Hear of B.B.C. Plans for East Anglia TV, Radio', *Eastern Daily Press*, 6 July 1956, p. 5.

³⁷⁶ 'The VHF Era', *Eastern Daily Press*, 21 August 1956, p. 6; 'VHF Era in East Anglia', *Eastern Daily Press*, 21 August 1956, p. 5.

still waiting to access the BBC's television service after the timeline for the arrival of ITV in East Anglia was announced.³⁷⁷

Frustration with this situation was evident in a letter from W.C. Fenwick, of Well-next-the-sea. He pointed out that whilst it was 'interesting to note that East Anglia may have ITV by 1960' some in the area were more interested in discovering when they might 'expect a decent transmission of TV from Tacobneston' as for 'four years' they had been 'compelled to pay full *table d'hote* prices, but have received no more than the crumbs which fall from the master's table!'.³⁷⁸

Fenwick might have been disappointed to read in the following day's newspaper that the new, taller mast at Tacobneston was unlikely to be at full power 'for some time' as a consequence of the fact that the BBC had to work within international agreements of frequency usage and also due to the fact ITV had been allocated the wavelength that the BBC had planned to utilise. Ironically the introduction of choice into television broadcasting was delaying some viewers in East Anglia from even having reliable access to a single channel.³⁷⁹

However, the increase in the size of the transmitter tower at Tacobneston did provide some benefit for Mr Fenwick, although the experiences in other areas in the county remained mixed. Fenwick was interviewed as part of an article reporting on opening night transmissions from the new 500ft tower and said that he thought the picture was '50 per cent better than yesterday'. Those in areas such as Lowestoft, Beccles, Fakenham and Thetford also reported improvements but the situation in Norwich was even more mixed. One retailer in the city suggested that they had noticed 'no difference' whilst another said that there was 'quite an improvement' and that the interference level was lower. The experience of actual television owners in the city varied even more. One experienced programmes with a 'negative finish', where 'artists appeared with black faces and hands and wearing white dinner jackets', whilst one housewife in the suburb of Thorpe reported disappointment that there was 'no difference'. Yet a different housewife in the same area described the service as 'frightfully good' in patches.³⁸⁰

Even with the establishment of a much taller transmitter tower viewing television in Norfolk during 1956 could still be a frustrating experience compared to the rest of the country. Further even within the confines of the county, some areas were more equal than others when it came to the viewing experience.³⁸¹

Whilst television's relationship with Norfolk remained prickly, the popularity of television across the country was continuing to grow. Across Great Britain 45% of the adult population now had television sets and the *Eastern Daily Press* reported that for better or for worse, the arrival of ITV meant that those 'who had been paupers in the B.B.C. workhouse found they

³⁷⁷ 'East Anglia Will Have ITV 'By 1960'', *Eastern Daily Press*, 2 October 1956, p. 1.

³⁷⁸ 'Independent Television', *Eastern Daily Press*, 4 October 1956, p. 4.

³⁷⁹ 'Tacobneston TV Not at Full Power 'For Some Time'', *Eastern Daily Press*, 5 October 1956, p. 1.

³⁸⁰ 'Artists with Black Faces and White Dinner Jackets', *Eastern Daily Press*, 5 October 1956, p. 5; 'Mixed Views in Norwich', *Eastern Daily Press*, 5 October 1956, p. 5; 'New 500-Foot TV Mast is in Service', *Eastern Daily Press*, 9 October 1956, p. 5.

³⁸¹ The difference of the 'Norfolk experience' can be seen in the experiences of a recent arrival to the county from York who was surprised to find the Eastern Counties 'so many years behind the times regarding television'. *TV Interference* in *Eastern Daily Press* 10 December 1956, p. 4.

were to be honoured guests in the ITV hotel' and that although 'we East Anglian paupers have no direct access to the new institution we will certainly feel the effects of its more liberal policy'. Decisions taken outside the region had affected television within it. Progress was being made even if the pace of improvements seemed to still be glacially slow.³⁸²

1957.

1957 would prove to be a year of comparative stability rather than dramatic change in respect of television in the East Anglia region. It did however begin with a milestone event when on the 26 January 1957 the BBC broadcast the first television programme from Tacolneston that was intended only for the people of East Anglia. For ten minutes the regular television service included a programme hosted by a Midland Region producer, the BBC's East Anglia representative and the engineer in charge of Tacolneston.

It featured a discussion of the technical aspects of broadcasting and improvements that they hoped to make in respect of the quality of reception, Mr Bryson, the BBC's representative for East Anglia, also acknowledged that there had in the past not been enough programmes about East Anglia and that 'East Anglia is a province on its own and deserves a programme of its own'. This statement was a departure from the BBC's previous approach to arguments that East Anglia required an independent place within the BBC's regional system, but it was not a signal that a change in the region's fortune was imminent. Once again this was a one off rather than the start of regular series of programmes.³⁸³

Following the opening of the Tacolneston transmitter the BBC also changed the way they recorded and presented the number of television licences purchased in Norfolk and Suffolk. Prior to the BBC's Annual Report of 1956-57 the figures for the two counties had been presented separately, but from this year onwards the figures from each were combined and presented as a single entity. The result of this is that comparison of the growth in the number of television licences purchased is now based upon those in Norfolk and Suffolk combined.

Table 7 shows that the growth of television licences sold in Norfolk and Suffolk from March 1956 to March 1957 continued to outstrip those in other areas of the United Kingdom. There is no sign that growth in the area was about to immediately plateau as can be seen by the shrinking growth rates in areas such as Lancashire and Cheshire, and London and the Home Counties. Areas that were much closer to reaching a point of market saturation.

³⁸² '45 Per Cent. Have TV', *Eastern Daily Press*, 23 October 1956 p. 1; 'Shout, and You Will Get it', *Eastern Daily Press*, 29 October 1956, p. 6.

³⁸³ 'B.B.C. Promises New Deal: 'No More Screeches', *Eastern Daily Press*, 28 January 1957, p. 5.

Table. 7
Television Licences in 1956 and 1957.³⁸⁴

Region	Television Licences in March 1956	Television Licences in March 1957	Percentage Increase from 1956 to 1957
Norfolk and Suffolk	48,737	78,631	136.22%
Cornwall and Devon	68,454	115,763	69.11%
Northumberland and Durham	188,322	257,086	36.51%
Lancashire and Cheshire	841,818	1,001,052	18.92%
London and Home Counties	1,563,565	1,792,343	14.63%
England, Scotland and Wales	5,697,387	6,902,908	21.16%

By the middle of February the Press Officer of the ITA had suggested that they hoped to site their transmitter in Norfolk and reasonably close to the Tacolneston and that the region might receive ITV earlier than expected. The news that the region might in fact receive ITV as early as 1958 was warmly greeted by Kenneth Willmott, one of the local electrical retailers. He said 'It is an excellent thing it will give us an alternative programme which I think people want. At the present moment there are some very good programmes on the B.B.C., also some very poor efforts. ITV will bring fresh faces, fresh ideas and presentation.'³⁸⁵

By March 1957 the BBC marked the expansion of its wireless and television service in the region by holding a meeting of its Midland Regional Advisory Council at the BBC's new Norwich office and studio in St. Catherine's Close. This suggests that the BBC were paying more attention to its visibility within the region and indicating an intention to make the area a more fundamental part of the Midland Region. At this point the BBC also became more explicit in attempting to explain exactly why the television service in the area was of a lower strength compared to the rest of country. At the official opening of Tacolneston's new VHF transmitter they explained that television transmissions from the site would still not be at full power due to past agreements with continental stations and that if Tacolneston had gone to full power for television transmissions 'there would have been some very curious results for Belgian televiewers'. In the battle for the radio spectrum between North-West Europe and the United Kingdom, East Anglia was 'right in the firing line' of any battle involving countries trying to 'out shout' or 'out broadcast' each other. As the BBC acknowledged, Yarmouth was 'nearer to the Dutch station at Hilversum than it is to its regional

³⁸⁴ Based on data from *The British Broadcasting Corporation Annual Report and Accounts for the Year 1955-56* Cmd. 9803, pp. 99-100; *The British Broadcasting Corporation Annual Report and Accounts for the Year 1956-57* Cmnd. 267, pp. 105-6.

³⁸⁵ 'I.T.V in Norfolk Next Year?', *Eastern Daily Press*, 15 February 1957, p. 1.

headquarters in Birmingham'. A confession that accidentally highlighted the absurdity of East Anglia being part of the BBC's Midland Region!³⁸⁶

Fortunately, it did not become necessary to engage in a war of the airwaves with any of Britain's European neighbours in order to increase the power output of Tacolneston. In June 1957 the Postmaster General confirmed to Colonel J. Harwood Harrison, MP for Eye in Cambridgeshire, that successful negotiations had been concluded with the Belgian authorities and as a result it would be possible to increase the power of the transmitter 'to a useful extent' in December with a 'further increase in the power of Norwich during the first half of 1958'.³⁸⁷

This promise of improvement by the end of the year did not satisfy everyone in the region. J.N. Rounce of Great Walsingham and S.W.G. Reynolds of Briston both wrote to the *Eastern Daily Press* to voice their displeasure at the fact that they had recently had to 'endure serious interference with sound and vision, originating apparently from the television transmitter at Liège in Belgium'. Rounce found the fact that the BBC were deliberately restricting the power of their transmitter, whilst the Belgians seemingly made no such efforts to be frustrating. He described it as 'a peculiarly, one-sided attitude.' Given the history of broadcasting in the region, it is understandable that many would feel that this was yet another example of the BBC and national government failing to adequately serve the interests of the local populace. Once more the *Eastern Daily Press* failed to explore whether this sense of frustration was commonly felt in its readership.³⁸⁸

Further coverage of anything related to television in the region was extremely limited during the summer and autumn months of 1957. Whilst the usual annual coverage of the National Radio Show appeared in August, it was not until the end of November that a development of any significance was covered. On this occasion it was the formal announcement that the power of Tacolneston would indeed increase on 1 December, initially doubling its power with a further doubling of power taking place in the spring of 1958. Together this would have the effect of extending the service area to include 'Saxmundham in the south, Ely in the west and Hunstanton in the north'. This was a long way from providing a service to the whole of East Anglia but a considerable improvement on the solution that had been in place up until this point.³⁸⁹

The Invisible Impact of ITV.

Whilst East Anglia remained free of ITV, commercial rivals to the BBC had begun to broadcast in other regions. By the end of 1957 the initial stations in London were joined by services in the Midlands, the North of England and Central Scotland. The first four English station franchises would come to form the backbone of the ITV network, providing the bulk of material which would be shown across the country. Although the smaller, regional companies were able to exercise an opt out from the network if they wished to show their

³⁸⁶ 'Official Opening of Full-Power VHF Radio from Tacolneston', *Eastern Daily Press*, 1 May 1957, p. 10; 'First Meeting in Norwich of B.B.C. Advisory Council', *Eastern Daily Press*, 30 April 1957, p. 5.

³⁸⁷ 'East Anglian TV Power Increase in December', *Eastern Daily Press*, 10 June 1957, p. 5.

³⁸⁸ 'TV Reception', *Eastern Daily Press*, 27 June 1957, p. 4; 'TV Reception', *Eastern Daily Press*, 1 July 1957, p. 4.

³⁸⁹ 'East Anglian TV Power to Be Increased', *Eastern Daily Press*, 29 November 1957, p. 12.

own content in their region and could also attempt to sell their productions to either the national network or other individual franchises.³⁹⁰

Whilst much attention has been focused on the expansion of the network and the impact it had on the regions that became part of the network as well as on British broadcasting more generally, it is important to also consider the experiences of those regions that were outside of the network during this period. The opening years of ITV were a period when a considerable amount of experimentation took place and where television's potential role in society was being found by programme makers. As Janet Thumim points out, television during this period attempted to get 'issues onto the agenda for public discussion. Race relations, homosexuality, prostitution, unmarried mothers, teenagers, venereal disease, the contraceptive pill: these and other contentious and difficult subjects were examined in a variety of documentary series and one-off specials from the BBC and ITV.'³⁹¹

Consider, for example, Granada Television's *Searchlight* series. Thumim identifies this as an example of the type of programme that was able to place social issues on the agenda for public discussion, as it 'specialized in the investigation of 'social scandals', producing fortnightly reports between March 1959 and September 1960 including programmes on venereal disease, the contraceptive pill, and homosexuality'. In the case of Norfolk and East Anglia, any editions of this programme broadcast before October 1959, when the area became officially linked into the ITV network, were unlikely to have been seen in the region on a substantial scale. This meant that viewers in the region missed out on seeing, and perhaps taking part in, discussions on issues such as the abuse of children by their parents, the sale of dirty food by retailers and teenage rebellion.³⁹²

Missing out on a small number of documentaries may seem to be a relatively trivial issue but as has been seen earlier in this chapter, some viewers in the region were already embracing the possibilities of television. They discovered topics that they did not realise they had an interest in and used it as a platform from which to learn more. If we are to argue that television, and in particular commercial television, is part of a Habermassian public sphere, or even part of McGuigan's 'cultural public sphere', at this point in time, then we must consider how the exclusion of certain geographic areas from the ITV network might impact upon the extent to which television fulfils the required criteria. This is a topic explored in more detail during the conclusion of this thesis.

Conclusion.

Although on a national level the implementation of the Television Act, 1954 and the opening of the ITV service were the most significant developments in respect of television during the mid-1950s, the story in Norfolk and East Anglia is rather different, or at least the impact of these events was felt in a different way.

³⁹⁰ Associated Television (ATV Midlands) and Associated British Corporation (ABC) were awarded the weekday and weekend franchises for the Midlands Region respectively, Granada Television and ABC received the same for the North of England Region and a single franchise for both weekdays and the weekend was awarded to Scottish Television for the Central Scotland region.

³⁹¹ Janet Thumim, *Inventing Television Culture: Men, Women and the Box* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 73.

³⁹² *Ibid.*

Had the ITA chosen to embrace the plans put forward by PYE and Television Manufacturing Ltd then Norfolk would have been at the forefront of the development of commercial television and the network model of British television would have been even more localised than the one that emerged. Structurally it would have been a closer match to the system seen in the USA, with a large number of television stations serving local areas with a mix of local interest and nationally syndicated programmes.

In reality the establishment of ITV impacted upon the people of East Anglia in two significant ways. Firstly, the arrival of ITV seems to correlate with an increased focus by the BBC on the region and an accelerated attempt to develop transmission facilities in the area. Although it is not possible to claim that this is definitely caused by ITV, it would be surprising if following years of rhetoric and feet dragging this change of heart was completely coincidental. Secondly, the exclusion of East Anglia from the ITV network raises an important question about how that exclusion might have affected the ability of the local population to be full participants in a public or cultural public sphere. How could East Anglians be part of a national debate on important social issues, that were stimulated by television, if they were unable to watch the relevant programmes.

Norfolk and East Anglia were untouched by ITV during this period. Whilst in other regions the main impact of ITV was to provide choice in television for the first time, in Norfolk its main effect may have been to act as a catalyst to ensure that access to a single BBC television service was achieved. Norfolk continued to 'do different'.

Chapter 6: Knights in Shining Armour?

Introduction.

This chapter details how the relationship between East Anglia and television begins to shift even further. The region experienced considerable change during the previous chapter, due in particular to the establishment of the transmitter at Tacolneston which genuinely brought it within the BBC's television service for the first time, but in respect of commercial television it remained an interested observer rather than an active participant.

This chapter shows that irrespective of East Anglia's position outside of the ITV system, events that occurred within ITV during the period from 1955-1958 had a significant subsequent impact on the region and its eventual role as a participant within the ITV network. The early financial troubles of some of the ITV companies, their subsequent drift towards chasing a mass audience and move away from their public service commitments all helped to shape the ITA's approach to the allocation of the smaller regional programme contracts.

In addition the ITA's desire to involve the *Manchester Guardian* within the ITV network following its failed attempt at gaining the contract for North East England may have influenced the eventual awarding of the contract to the application involving Laurence Scott but fronted by Lord Townshend rather than any of the other shortlisted applicants, including one which offered a genuine alternative to any model of broadcasting seen in the United Kingdom at this point.

Although in many ways the status quo of television is maintained during this period, the steps that the ITA take in the region have consequences for the future shape of television in the region, not just in terms of ITV but also in respect of the BBC.

Cause and Effect: The Nation and East Anglia.

Whilst East Anglia still awaited the arrival of an ITV station of its own other areas of the country were already benefiting from the expansion plans of the ITA and by the end of January 1958 London, the Midlands, the North of England, Central Scotland and South West Wales/West England had all been officially absorbed into the ITV network.

Progress in this expansion had not been entirely smooth, the financial stability of ITV companies had always been a concern. Indeed the ITA had attempted to account for the fact that the programme companies would be under considerable financial strain; the experiences of companies in America predicted that there would be 'heavy losses by the companies in the first year, smaller losses in the second, 'break even' in the third, and thereafter profitability'. In fact, the losses turned out to be larger than even the ITA imagined. Associated-Rediffusion lost £2.7m between November 1954 and July 1956 and Associated Television (ATV) lost £1m per annum, and this caused the first four companies of the network to approach the Authority in April 1956 to discuss the situation and attempt to negotiate a reduction in their annual payments.³⁹³

³⁹³ Bernard Sendall, *Independent Television in Britain Volume 1: Origin and Foundation 1946-62* (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1982), pp. 151-2.

This situation meant that in 1956 the ITA made an application to the Postmaster-General and Treasury for access to a £750,000 grant that provision had been made for within Clause 8 of the Television Act, 1954. Although the clause failed to explain exactly what the grant was intended to be used for, the ITA's Secretary, Alan Wolstencroft identified that there was a 'possibility of one or other of the companies collapsing and the Authority having to fill a programme gap at short notice' and that should this occur then the grant could provide the necessary funding to ensure a continuity of service.³⁹⁴

The losses and associated financial instability did not just impact upon the actions of the ITA, it also encouraged the first ITV companies to attempt to move away from their commitment to public service broadcasting as they sort to produce programmes that would attract the largest possible audience and therefore generate the greatest revenue from advertisers. By November 1955, just two months after the launch of ITV, Associated-Rediffusion had already shortened and rescheduled its fortnightly Hallé Orchestra programmes, justified at the time by the company's director of programmes as giving 'the public what they want'. Indeed a year later their Chairman suggested that he could not accept the premise that the company had a duty to educate and improve the public taste, as its audience had 'the intelligence to elect what programme he wishes to see during his hours of leisure'.³⁹⁵

Ultimately a combination of Government hesitation in providing the financial grant and a change in the financial fortunes of the ITV companies meant that it became unnecessary for the ITA to pursue the £750,000. As the network began to reach across the country by the end of 1957 the financial situation became much closer to the prediction of Roy Thomson, the owner of Scottish Television, when he described an ITV franchise as a 'licence to print money'.³⁹⁶

Regardless of the eventual positive outcome, the financial troubles of the larger, well capitalised ITV companies alongside the willingness of some companies to abandon their commitments to public service broadcasting troubled the ITA and undoubtedly influenced how they approached the allocation of future contracts in the provincial areas of the United Kingdom. Companies in those areas would be serving much smaller audiences, have much smaller potential advertising revenue and might therefore be even more keen to produce only programmes that brought in a mass audience. The ITA needed to ensure that the companies that they chose for these areas had sustainable business models and that they were committed to serving the public in their region and East Anglia would be a test of the ITA's ability to do this.

As Fig. 18 clearly shows, Norfolk and Suffolk remained officially outside of the ITV network as 1958 began, but the absence of a choice of television channels seems to have had comparatively little impact on the growth of television with the area. Like all the regions in Table 8 the rate of increase in the number of television licences purchased was decreasing but it was still the case that during the period of 1957-1958 the number of television licences

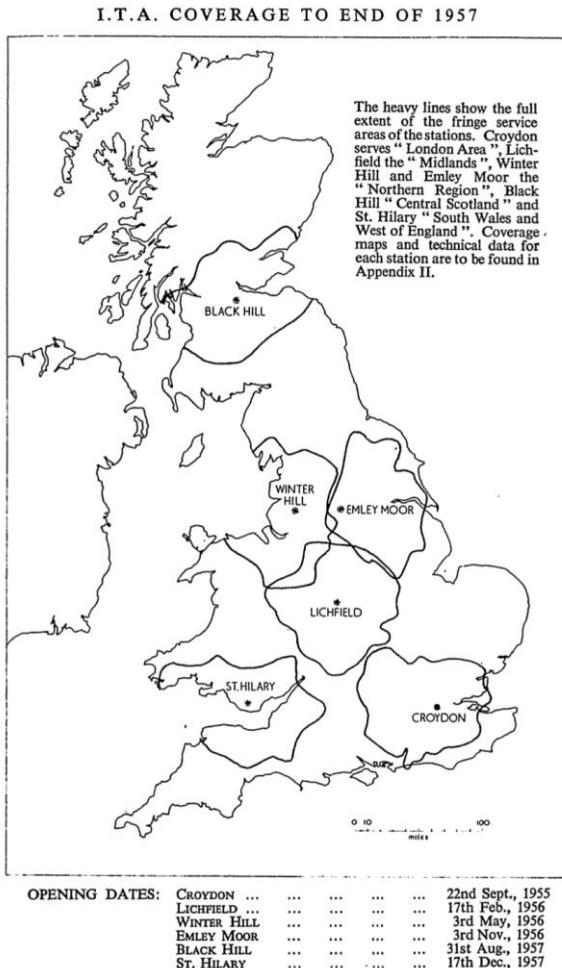
³⁹⁴ Ibid. p. 161.

³⁹⁵ Ibid. p. 139; 'I.T.A. Firm Lost over £3 Million', *Eastern Daily Press*, 19 December 1956, p. 1.

³⁹⁶ Colin Seymour-Ure, *The British Press and Broadcasting since 1945* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), pp. 90-1.

in Norfolk and Suffolk continued to grow at a faster rate than in other comparable regions and at over double the rate of the United Kingdom as a whole.

Fig. 18
ITA Coverage Map 1957.³⁹⁷



East Anglia would clearly be one of the smaller regions within the ITV network in terms of the size of its potential audience and would therefore never be as profitable as some of the larger and more densely populated areas of Britain. However the continued growth in the number of television licences in Norfolk and Suffolk specifically did indicate that an interest in television was well established within the region. They suggested that there was a readymade audience for an ITV company to tap into and that whoever won the contract to supply the region would have the benefit of joining the network without exposing themselves to the high levels of financial risk that had been faced by the original programme contractors. For some entrepreneurs, this made running a commercial television station in East Anglia an attractive proposition.

³⁹⁷ *Independent Television Authority Annual Reports and Accounts for the year ended 31st March 1957* p. 3.

Table. 8
Television Licences in 1957 and 1958.³⁹⁸

Region	Television Licences in March 1957	Television Licences in March 1958	Percentage Increase from 1957 to 1958
Norfolk and Suffolk	78,631	108,816	38.39%
Cornwall and Devon	115,763	154,130	33.14%
Northumberland and Durham	257,086	320,867	24.81%
Lancashire and Cheshire	1,001,052	1,133,004	13.18%
London and Home Counties	1,792,343	1,978,756	10.40%
England, Scotland and Wales	6,902,908	8,004,513	15.96%

Early Interest and Applications.

As previously seen, applications to provide a television service for parts of East Anglia predated the ITA officially inviting inquiries. Whilst Pye and Television Manufacturing Limited were the earliest to apply, they were not the only parties to express an interest at an early stage. In December 1957 Vann, Burton, Costello & Co, a firm of Chartered Accountants, wrote a speculative letter on behalf of some of their clients asking for details regarding the procedure for applying and the ‘conditions under which contractors are allowed to operate’, although the letter failed to identify who their clients were nor which region they were interested in applying for. The ITA’s reply is significant as alongside pointing out that contracts for new stations were advertised ‘in the national press and papers local to the area as soon as construction is ready to start’ it also featured what seems to be the earliest acknowledgement that the East Anglian station would be the next to be advertised and that the ITA hoped this would ‘be early in the New Year’.³⁹⁹

However, before the ITA could countenance the prospect of announcing the opening of applications for the East Anglian service, they first needed to address some of the problems that the BBC had also faced, namely to define the area that would be served and how to approach the issue of interference with and from other broadcasters. Whilst the BBC had only faced the problem of interference with foreign services, the ITA was confronted not only with this issue, but also with the fact that there would be some crossover between the area covered by the existing London stations and the East Anglian one.

³⁹⁸ Based on data from *The British Broadcasting Corporation Annual Report and Accounts for the Year 1956-57*, Cmnd. 267, pp. 105-6; *The British Broadcasting Corporation Annual Report and Accounts for the Year 1957-58*, Cmnd. 533, pp. 101-2.

³⁹⁹ Bournemouth, Sir Michael Cobham Library, ITA Archive, *Vann, Burton, Costello & Co Chartered Accountants to Independent Television Authority*, 6 December 1957; *Independent Television Authority to Vann, Burton, Costello & Co.*, 9 December 1957.

This was discussed in a memo between the Authority's Secretary and the Director-General at the end of December 1957, when it was estimated that 'the overlap between the secondary area of Mendlesham and the secondary area of Croydon' contained '180,000 people'. In addition there would be 'a further substantial inroad into the Mendlesham coverage area' by the fringe contour of the Croydon transmitter, i.e. viewers in areas such as Cambridge, St. Ives and Colchester might be able to receive a tolerable, but less than perfect, service originating from London. The memo also highlighted that the total coverage from the Mendlesham transmitter had been estimated at 2.05 million people. Any serious applicant would be assessing what value this potential audience would have to advertisers and how they could persuade those in the overlap areas to retune their television sets and watch the East Anglian service.⁴⁰⁰

At least one interested party was thinking about the size of the potential ITV audience in East Anglia. Laurence Scott, Chairman of *The Manchester Guardian and Evening News Limited*, wrote to the Director-General of the ITA in January 1958 to discuss his concerns with the issue. Scott, clearly well informed on the issue, suggested that whilst a local audience of 1,600,000 was 'plausible on paper', residents in Colchester and Ipswich were already 'getting good reception from Croydon'. Scott felt that those 'already adequately catered for' were unlikely to be willing to switch to the East Anglia service when it arrived and, therefore, that it was inappropriate to include the population of these areas in the potential audience for the new station. Scott's informal calculations suggested that this might shrink the potential audience down to around one million and that at this level it would be a 'hard struggle to make a decent job of the station there and to make it pay'.⁴⁰¹

Scott's inquiry at this stage is interesting and requires some explanation. A number of national newspaper groups and 'press barons' were involved in ITV companies including Associated Newspapers (publishers of the *Daily Mail*), Lord Kemsley (publisher of the *Sunday Times*) and Roy Thomson (Scotsman Publications Limited), but the *Manchester Guardian* had failed to apply during the initial round of applications, causing the ITA to approach them to establish if the absence of their application was 'a deliberate decision on their part or was due to misunderstanding'. The ITA would not have reached out to the *Manchester Guardian* if they had not expected to receive a bid involving the group, a view supported by the fact that Sendall wrote that a 'hoped-for application from the *Manchester Guardian* had not materialised' during the application process for the first programme companies.⁴⁰²

Following the 'fishing expedition' that the ITA embarked on the 'hoped-for application' involving the *Manchester Guardian* did eventually emerge when the franchise for North East England became available. Although the ITA received eleven applications for the region, only four were shortlisted by the time that the interview process began, of which two became clear favourites. The *Guardian* group application was headed by Laurence Scott and also included support by John Woolf of Romulus and Remus Films. Their chief rival was in the form of a bid led by Sir Richard Pease, a local industrialist, and featuring support from

⁴⁰⁰ ITA Archive, *ITA Secretary to Director-General; Mendlesham Coverage*, 30 December 1957.

⁴⁰¹ ITA Archive, *Laurence Scott to ITA Director-General*, 13 January 1958.

⁴⁰² Sendall, *Independent Television: Volume 1*, pp. 70-71.

the *Daily News* company and ‘George and Alfred Black, members of a long-established North Eastern family firm of theatrical impresarios’.⁴⁰³

Whilst the Authority, and its Director-General in particular, were ‘reluctant to forego’ the ‘glittering talent’ offered by the *Guardian* led group, the contract was awarded to the group led by Pease. In this instance the decision was not guided by the involvement of a significant press interest but rather by the fact that Pease’s group had strong connections to the local area and proposed to produce programmes ‘on matters of topical regional interest, children’s programmes and informative, even specifically educational output’. They had also made a ‘firm commitment’ to become involved in ‘regional community life’; the *Guardian* led group simply could not compete on this level, but Scott would not fail to learn lessons from the experience and it is obvious from the flattering language used that within the ITA there was significant support for involving the *Guardian* within the network if it was possible, any future application which included its presence would certainly be looked upon with considerable favour.⁴⁰⁴

Were Anglians dreaming of Competition?

Whilst attention outside of the region was being directed towards the future of commercial television in East Anglia, within the region press focus continued to remained directed towards the activities of the BBC in the region. The BBC continued to engage in a public relations campaign in the region, organising a two-day show in Norwich to promote the benefits of VHF radio and the possibilities of hearing local voices and dialects on the airwaves. However, they fell silent conspicuously on the issue of the continued development of television in the region.⁴⁰⁵

Broadly speaking the BBC were satisfied with the outcome of the show. Internal documentation shows that an audience of roughly 4300 people witnessed the live broadcasts and demonstrations that took place over the two days of the show, but noted that the *Eastern Daily Press*, which according to the BBC controlled ‘most of the newspapers within a radius of some 30 miles’, were ‘not willing to undertake sponsorship’ but ‘promised good editorial support’. A similar show in Southampton during 1957 had been sponsored by Southern Newspapers Ltd who had taken responsibility for booking the venue and provided and distributed promotional materials in the local area. Quite why the *Eastern Daily Press* chose to refuse an active role is not clear but may have been influenced by having one eye on applying for the region’s ITV contract when it became available.⁴⁰⁶

Despite the BBC’s overtures towards the region, within the local television audience there were some signs that tolerance of the BBC’s monopoly over television in the region, and the service that they had thus far delivered, was now beginning to wane. In a letter published to coincide with the first day of the BBC’s exhibition, William Morrison of Cringleford, attacked the overly paternalistic nature of some of the BBC’s television programming. which he suggested were not ‘of entertainment value to more than a minute percentage of viewers’. Morrison explained that on ‘the last three Sundays’ the local television audience had been

⁴⁰³ Bernard Sendall, *Independent Television in Britain Volume 2 – Expansion and Change*, (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1983), p. 4.

⁴⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 4-5.

⁴⁰⁵ ‘B.B.C. Invites Public to Two-day Norwich Show’, *Eastern Daily Press* 3 January 1958, p. 6; David Bryson, ‘Norfolk Dialect on the Air, Thanks to Local VHF’, *Eastern Daily Press* 9 January 1958, p. 7.

⁴⁰⁶ BBC WAC, R34/731/5 *V.H.F. Promotion*, 28 January 1958, pp. 1-3.

‘served up with this sort of material’ and that the BBC was sorely misguided if it seriously believed that it ‘had any hope of success in “educating” the dwindling millions with classical productions’ on a Sunday evening when ‘most viewers expect to be entertained, not educated’.⁴⁰⁷

For Morrison, the arrival of commercial television in the area could not occur too soon, as its executives had shown that they ‘were all out to entertain as many people as possible’ and approached ‘programme planning much more realistically than the B.B.C. “intellectuals”’. Morrison’s complaint, and a similar one from Bernard Lingwood in which he claimed to be speaking ‘on behalf of the thousands of middle and lowbrows in East Anglia who cannot escape to ITV’, served to highlight that not all viewers in the region were satisfied with having endured the long battle to get access to a single television service; some now wanted choice as well.⁴⁰⁸

Behind the Scenes.

As this mini-revolt against the BBC’s television service was taking place in Norfolk the ITA were fielding an increasing number of letters of interest from parties wishing to tender their interest in running the East Anglian ITV franchise. Early in January 1958 Sir Basil Mayhew wrote to the ITA on behalf of the Norfolk News Company Ltd (parent company of the *Eastern Daily Press*) to inform them that they had been approached by several interested parties and that they now wished to meet with the ITA to discuss an application. Shortly after, Associated British Picture Corporation Limited made contact to confirm that their subsidiary, ABC Television, would be applying for the contract when it was available.⁴⁰⁹

By February the ITA was confronted with a new situation to resolve, one completely unique to East Anglia, when one of the Investment Managers at the Norwich Union Society (Norwich Union) contacted the Authority to explain that they had been ‘approached for support by a number of different groups who intend to make applications’ for the East Anglian contract. Whilst the Directors of the Society were willing to consider making an investment, ‘the number of applications’ that they had received was putting them in a ‘somewhat embarrassing position’ about which they sought the ITA’s advice. This request for advice does not appear to have been a shock for the ITA, the Director-General promptly responded, confirming that he had ‘heard that the knockers on the Norwich Union door were being pretty continuously banged’ and inviting them for a meeting.⁴¹⁰

Although there are no minutes from the meeting between the ITA and Norwich Union, correspondence following the meeting seems to indicate that the meeting was a fruitful one. Norwich Union confirmed that as the ‘leading financial institution in East Anglia’ they had been approached by various ‘friends of the Society’ and that of these multiple approaches three seemed ‘to be deserving of the Society’s sympathetic consideration’, but that their

⁴⁰⁷ William Morrison, ‘B.B.C. Television Programmes’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 15 January 1958, p. 4.

⁴⁰⁸ Ibid.; Bernard Lingwood, ‘TV Programmes Criticised’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 16 January 1956 p. 4.

⁴⁰⁹ ITA Archive, *Sir Basil Mayhew to ITA Director-General; East Anglian TV Area*, 10 January 1958; *Sir Phillip Warter to ITA Director-General*, 24 January 1958.

⁴¹⁰ ITA Archive, *Norwich Union to ITA Director-General*, 1 February 1958; *ITA Director-General to Norwich Union*, 4 February 1958.

Directors were ‘reluctant to select any particular one of these applicants for support’, lest they end up backing the wrong candidate.⁴¹¹

Instead of backing a single applicant Norwich Union proposed to offer financial support of up to 7.5% of the money each required, with a limit of £25,000, to each of the three candidates they had identified as most promising, but that they would not seek a seat on the Board of any of the companies they were willing to support.⁴¹²

This was an entirely new scenario for the ITA to deal with and they admitted in their written correspondence that ‘normally, the Authority would not expect to see the appearance of any shareholder in more than one application’. However, the ITA decided that because the Society had a ‘special standing’ in East Anglia, that the planned investment had a relatively low ceiling, and as the Society had no intention to seek a seat on the Board of any successful applicant. they had no objections to the Society being a contributor to multiple applications.⁴¹³

In reaching this decision the ITA would have had one eye on the recent history of the ITV companies, although the financial situation of the programme companies had improved dramatically since the early days of the service, there was no guarantee that the smaller companies would prove to be able to weather any financial storms, that a core investor would not withdraw from them or that they would not underestimate the cost of producing programmes. Whilst the presence of investment by Norwich Union could not ensure that these events would not take place, it would add financial stability and some gravitas to each bidder and perhaps ensure that the total failure of the company was reduced.⁴¹⁴

The ITA were understandably keen for their approval of this unconventional arrangement to remain as private as possible, awareness of its existence could have caused applicants in other regions to demand similar treatment, and perhaps anticipating the fact that questions regarding this arrangement could arise from either internal or external sources, the Director-General sent a memo to the Authority’s Secretary stating that it ‘might be wise to circulate to members of the Authority copies of this Norwich Union correspondence, or else a summary of the exchange.’ The application process for the ITV franchise in East Anglia had not even be officially announced or advertised by this point, yet it was already proving to have some very individual problems. Based on the experiences of the BBC in the region perhaps the ITA should not have expected anything else.⁴¹⁵

Advertising a licence to print money?

As the ITA fielded enquiries from potential applicants and their financiers, the *Eastern Daily Press* became sufficiently interested in the arrival of an East Anglian commercial television station to undertake some investigation into the most recent developments in the process,

⁴¹¹ ITA Archive, *Norwich Union to ITA Director-General*, 12 February 1958.

⁴¹² *Ibid.*

⁴¹³ ITA Archive, *ITA Director-General to Norwich Union*, 13 February 1958.

⁴¹⁴ The withdrawal of Kemsley from the Kemsley-Winnick Group applications for the Midland and North of England regions had demonstrated the logistical problems that could be caused by an interested party leaving a successful applicant, and the financial failure of Wales West and North Television in 1964 would later prove that the total collapse of one of the smaller companies was more than a theoretical possibility.

⁴¹⁵ ITA Archive, *ITA Director General to ITA Secretary*, 13 February 1958.

undoubtedly spurred on in part by the fact that the newspaper's publisher was one of the parties interested in obtaining the franchise for the region.

The *Eastern Daily Press* readership first heard of these developments in an article from 19 February in which a 'Special Correspondent' of the newspaper reported that of the three sites that had been shortlisted by the ITA, the site at Mendlesham in Suffolk was favoured, as long as certain technical difficulties could be overcome. More importantly the article also identified that it was already the case that 'a number of rival interests' were 'expected to compete for the opportunity to run the station'. As mentioned above, the publishers of the *Eastern Daily Press* were part of one of the groups expressing initial interest in the station. The group of which they were part included the *East Midlands Allied Press* who published papers 'in the western part of the area to be served by the station' and other 'local interests' would be represented as well. The Chairman of the group would be the Earl of Cranbrook.⁴¹⁶

The author of the article obviously had a reliable source in respect of knowing the intentions of the group involving the *Norfolk News Company*, and was able to obtain a statement from Sir Basil Mayhew the Chairman of *Norfolk News* confirming they were 'naturally interested in any development of this kind'. However, the article went further and speculated, with some accuracy, that other groups that were interested in the opportunity too, suggesting that the *Manchester Guardian* were 'reported to be associated with another group' that was 'considering putting forward an application' with 'the Marquis Townshend of Raynham Hall' (Lord Townshend) as its Chairman and, finally, that there might be a third potential applicant involving Odhams Press, although little further detail was known about this group.⁴¹⁷

Quite how the *Eastern Daily Press* came to know of the involvement of the Marquis is unclear. The ITA archive contains no correspondence from, or even mentioning, his name at this point in time, suggesting the Authority were unaware of the involvement of this local landowner in any bid. However, the autobiography of one of the region's first television celebrities, Dick Joice, does confirm that during the opening few months of 1958 Lord Townshend, who was Joice's landlord, had told him that he was working with a group on an 'application for the franchise to transmit commercial television programmes to East Anglia'. In addition a few weeks after the initial conversation between Townshend and Joice, Townshend arrived at Joice's house 'with two very smartly dressed, obviously city, gentlemen' who Joice learned were John Woolf, head of Romulus and Remus Films and Laurence Scott of the *Manchester Guardian*.⁴¹⁸

Whilst potential applicants waited for the application process to officially open, the *Eastern Daily Press* cast light on an imminent battle between the BBC and the ITA over television in East Anglia. It had been announced that a new type of radio link would be used to transmit ITV television broadcasts from London to the transmitter in East Anglia and that this would result in better reception in the region for the commercial service than for the BBC. As a result of this the BBC had approached the Post Office to request that they provide a similar

⁴¹⁶ 'New Moves on ITV for East Anglia', *Eastern Daily Press*, 19 February 1958, p. 1.

⁴¹⁷ Ibid.

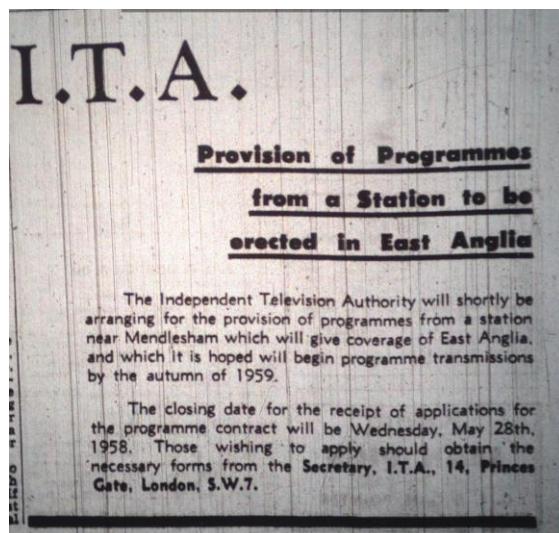
⁴¹⁸ Dick Joice, *Full Circle* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1991), p. 141.

new link between the Midlands headquarters in Birmingham and Norwich so that they could ‘start on level terms with the I.T.A’.⁴¹⁹

Although this may seem to be an inconsequential, technical detail, it is in fact an important early example of how the policy decisions of the ITA could act as a catalyst to spur on the BBC to improve their television service in the region. As this thesis has shown, for many years East Anglia had been forced to put up with the scraps of the BBC’s service, but the mere threat of the arrival of a competitor was forcing a much more diligent approach to the region. It is not just with the benefit of hindsight that we can see this, a correspondent calling themselves ‘Pioneer’ wrote to the *Eastern Daily Press* following the publication of the article. They expressed the hope that ‘the spur of competition’ would also make the BBC realise that ‘it is ludicrous to treat East Anglia as either “South-East England” or the Midlands’ and that the local audience had been left disappointed by the opening of the Tacolneston transmitter and the studio in Norwich, as it had failed to result in East Anglia becoming an independent BBC region or getting a ‘a better “look in” where television is concerned’.⁴²⁰

Whilst the BBC had enjoyed a significant head start over ITV, albeit one that had been constrained by various restrictions, it would soon be faced with a competitor with specific responsibilities to the area that would be regularly broadcasting television programmes about the region as well as from the region, as well as providing access to the best that commercial television had to offer. The prospect of that rival arriving moved another step closer in April as the ITA simultaneously announced that they had chosen Mendlesham as the site for the East Anglian transmitter, that applications to be the provider of programmes for the East Anglian station were officially open, (see Fig. 19) and that transmissions were planned to begin in the autumn of 1959.⁴²¹

Fig. 19
ITA Advert for East Anglia Contractors.⁴²²



⁴¹⁹ ‘Television Battle for East Anglia’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 8 March 1958, p. 1.

⁴²⁰ ‘The B.B.C. in East Anglia’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 14 March 1958, p. 6.

⁴²¹ ‘Suffolk Chosen for I.T.A. Station’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 10 April 1958, p. 1.

⁴²² ‘I.T.A. Advertisement’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 10 April 1958, p. 4.

Within the region, the reaction of David Bryson, the BBC's representative in the region, to these announcements was a combative one. A week after their publication the BBC's representative declared that the number of licences in the Norwich postal area had increased by 25 percent in the final three months of 1957, 'much more than anywhere else in the country' and that the BBC was 'beating commercial TV into a cocked hat' on Saturday nights whilst 'fighting back for the mass audience during the week', Bryson and the BBC, welcomed the competition that ITV's arrival in the area would bring.⁴²³

Whilst Bryson was welcoming competition in East Anglia on a general level the BBC had maintained a sense of barely concealed ideological contempt for commercial television since its inception, with both Sir Ian Jacob and Sir Hugh Greene, the Director-Generals during the period, hesitant to use the term 'independent' when talking about companies that 'could only be described as commercial'.⁴²⁴

The extent to which the BBC was in fact 'beating commercial TV into a cocked hat' during its fight back for the mass audience was also debatable. The Deputy Director of the Television Service, Cecil McGivern reported to the BBC's Board of Governors in March 1957 that the competition from ITV was 'the sternest fact of life' and in a further report at the end of 1957 the Director of the Television Service, Gerald Beadle, confirmed to the Governors that in the third quarter of the year ITV 'achieved a 72 per cent share of the viewing public wherever there was choice'. Whether the BBC were quite as welcoming of competition in East Anglia as they had proclaimed in public, was clearly in doubt.⁴²⁵

Regardless of the BBC's views on the matter the race to provide ITV to East Anglia and for the BBC to compete with ITV in the region would now begin in earnest, all that was needed was for the runners and riders to make themselves known.

Just who does apply for a licence to print money?

Only one day after the ITA's notice appeared in the local and national press the Authority began to receive correspondence from interested parties. An undated internal memo from the Authority, which can be placed between 21 April and 8 May 1958, indicates that fifteen individuals or groups had expressed interest and requested the application document. The applicants were: Messrs, Cardew-Smith & Ross (Solicitors for the Manchester Guardian), Mr. Norman Miller, Van, Burton and Costello Chartered Accountants, Monsignor News Theatres Ltd, Messrs Mallet & Wadderburn (Solicitors for Viscount Tenby), Mr. T Coleman, Sharpe Television Services Ltd., Mr S Flock (Solicitor for Alliance Television Ltd.), Lysander Television and Film Productions Ltd., T.P Distributors Ltd., Sir Bernard Docker, Rivlin Electronic Instruments Ltd., ABC Television Ltd., Associated Television Ltd. and Associated Re-diffusion Ltd.⁴²⁶

Although the ITA welcomed all applications, some did exercise the Authority more than others. An internal memo, on the subject of the application from ABC, from the Director-General to the Chairman of the ITA highlighted this well. ABC had written to the ITA requesting a meeting in which they could plead their case in person but Fraser was hesitant

⁴²³ 'I.T.V. Competition in East Anglia Welcomed by B.B.C.', *Eastern Daily Press*, 18 April 1958, p. 5.

⁴²⁴ Briggs, *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom Volume V: Competition* (1995), pp. 4-5.

⁴²⁵ *Ibid.* pp. 19-20.

⁴²⁶ ITA Archive, *Hallett to Director General, East Anglia*, Undated.

to do so as not only had the Authority previously attempted to vigorously encourage ABC to apply for earlier regional franchises, to no avail, but also because granting an additional franchise to one of the existing ‘parent companies’ might upset the already established balance of independent television. The memo also confirmed that whilst ‘all the “parent” companies’ had ‘made it a practice to apply formally for all our new stations’ the ITA had adopted a formal policy in the past to tell them politely that they ‘did not mean to interview any of them unless we were dissatisfied with the quality of the new applicants’. Adherence to this policy would clearly have an impact on who would be granted the East Anglian station, effectively excluding the bids from ABC, Associated Television and Associated Rediffusion at the first stage.⁴²⁷

By the closing date for applications the ITA had received eight formal applications, four from the existing parent companies and four from new applicants. As per the ITA’s pre-existing policy the applications from the existing companies would only be considered if none of the new applications were judged to be of a high enough standard.⁴²⁸

This meant that applications from the following four groups would be discussed within the ITA and following this the groups would be invited to an interview with Authority’s Board on June 17th 1958: ‘(i) Lord Townshend and Associates, (ii) Alliance Television, (iii) Norfolk News, East Anglian Daily Times and others, and (iv) Viscount Alexander of Hillsborough and associates.’⁴²⁹

Requirements for Applicants.

Throughout the ITA’s history, and that of its successor the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA), the application process and awarding of contracts was always a contentious subject. It was never an entirely transparent process and whilst it was acknowledged that it was a ‘beauty contest’ rather than a ‘highest bidder wins’ process, the criteria by which the ‘beauty’ of an application was judged was always rather opaque. This was particularly evident in respect of the applications for the East Anglia contract.

The guidance documentation sent out to applicants featured a set of ‘General Requirements for Contractors’ explaining that the ITA mandated that 15% of transmissions consisted of ‘locally originated programmes’, that no more than six minutes per hour were given to ‘spot adverts’, that no ‘disqualified persons’ (defined to include individuals or corporate bodies not normally resident in the United Kingdom or working as advertising agents) be in total or part control of an applicant and that each applicant was financially independent of each other, and existing programmes companies.⁴³⁰

In addition to this general guidance, applicants were provided with a list of 19 questions to answer in their application. Sections ‘A’ and ‘B’ of these questions, covering 12 questions in total, were focused upon the identities of those involved with the application (ensuring that no ‘disqualified persons’ were involved and that there were no financial links with existing ITV companies) and establishing the financing arrangements of the companies (as

⁴²⁷ ITA Archive, *Director General to Chairman, A.B.C. & East Anglia*, 7 May 1958, pp. 1-2.

⁴²⁸ ITA Archive, *East Anglian Programme Contract, ITA PAPER 50(58)* 3 June 1958; *Hallett to Deputy Director General, East Anglia – Interviews*, 11 June 1958.

⁴²⁹ ITA Archive, *Director-General, East Anglian Programme Contract Applications*, 29 May 1958.

⁴³⁰ ITA Archive, *East Anglia Application for Appointment as Programme Contractor, Part II. General Requirements for Contractors*, [Undated].

previously mentioned in this chapter the financial stability of programme companies had previously been a concern for the ITA).⁴³¹

It was only the final seven questions that dealt with the experience of each applicant in respect of television and their overall plans and only four of these questions related to the programme content that each applicant imagined supplying. The phrasing of these questions was also extremely open, applicants were asked to ‘describe their general programme policy’, what their plans were in respect of the ‘quantity and nature’ of ‘locally originated programmes of special interest’, what their plans were for ‘securing network programmes’ and whether they foresaw the ‘production of programmes for distribution outside the service area’.⁴³²

No guidance appears to have been offered to applicants about the relative importance of each question or the level of detail that the ITA expected from the answers. It was entirely up to the applicants to use their own judgement as to how to best answer and present their case. What follows is the first scholarly assessment of the four applications that were shortlisted and an assessment of their relative merits and weaknesses.

(i) Lord Townshend and Associates.

Summary.

This application was led by, or at least submitted under the name of, Lord Townshend rather than under the auspices of Laurence Scott and the *Manchester Guardian*. According to the opening paragraph of the application it included ‘responsible citizens from the principle towns within the area and representatives of the principal activities and occupations’.⁴³³

The application stressed the importance of agriculture to the region and promised to ‘pay particular attention to this subject and will be well placed to do so’ as two of the Directors, Lord Townshend and Sir Peter Greenwell were practical farmers. It also recognised that other industries were growing in importance in the region (including clothing and shoe manufacture, engineering and electronics, insurance and food processing amongst others) and emphasised that the group also contained representatives from these sectors. Perhaps most interesting is the fact that the application confirmed their intention to appoint Sir Robert Bignold of the Norwich Union to the board of Directors, this despite the fact that in its initial correspondence with the ITA about their involvement with multiple applicants Norwich Union indicated that they would not seek a place on the board of any applicant.⁴³⁴

The presence, and prestige, of Cambridge University was also recognised in the application, as Dr Glyn Daniel and Miss Audrey Richards were both involved in the group, the former an ‘eminent archaeologist and television personality’, the latter an ‘author and social anthropologist’; both clearly added a sense of intellectual gravitas to the bid and ensured that it would be difficult to accuse the group of wishing to only engage with the lower end of the

⁴³¹ ITA Archive, *East Anglia Application for Appointment as Programme Contractor, Part III. Questions for Applicants*, [Undated].

⁴³² Ibid.

⁴³³ ITA Archive, *Application, Lord Townshend and Associates*, p. 1.

⁴³⁴ Ibid.

cultural spectrum. The same could also be said of the involvement of Aubrey Buxton, a prominent local natural historian and trustee of the Norfolk Naturalists Trust.⁴³⁵

It is of particular interest to note that whilst the application did involve local press interest in the form of local newspapers in Cambridge and Colchester, alongside the *Daily Farmer Co.*, the applicants were ‘aware that certain other local newspapers’ were not involved and that the group had ‘decided that, if selected by the Authority’ they would ‘offer an investment to those newspapers, and £35,000 of capital has been reserved for this purpose’. Clearly this was intended to reach out to the Norfolk News Company and involve them in the bid if they so wished.⁴³⁶

The overarching ethos of the bid was to demonstrate that this was to be, above all other things, a truly regional company. The opening statement explicitly stated that ‘the television station shall not be exploited by outside interests but shall always be run for the benefit and welfare of the area itself’. To ensure that this was the case, and that overall control always remained in the region, the application proposed that shareholdings originally allocated to local interest could only be disposed of within the region and that ‘local people or organisations shall always nominate a majority of directors’.⁴³⁷

Of course, this did not preclude the involvement of interests from outside the region, particularly when they offered specific knowledge and skills. Thus the *Manchester Guardian*, Romulus Films Ltd, Remus Films Ltd and Wyndham Theatres Ltd. were all included as ‘substantial but minority’ shareholders who offered ‘knowledge of advertising and of public entertainment’ that would be ‘essential to success’. In fact the ‘substantial but minority’ holding of the *Manchester Guardian* would actually make them the single largest holder of shares in the new company, only the combined holdings of the ‘Local interests’ would be larger.⁴³⁸

Throughout their application the group made clear that its ultimate responsibility was to viewers within the region and that ‘as far as possible the East Anglia station’ would ‘represent the life and ideas of the area it serves’. In a sense the approach advocated by the group was one that had a great deal in common with the ideals of the BBC, indeed the group explicitly stated that they believed ‘that television should be approached as more than a commercial venture. The power of the medium imposes on its controllers a social responsibility. They must not merely entertain, amuse, and inform their public; they must seek to stimulate the minds and sharpen the perceptiveness of viewers’. It is difficult to imagine a more public service orientated approach.⁴³⁹

To this end the group imagined not only producing 15% of their programming output for themselves, but also distributing some of their programmes to the ITV network in order that it be seen nationally. As the group phrased it ‘television can only benefit by having as many people as possible contributing to its programmes. We do not believe that the parent

⁴³⁵ Ibid.

⁴³⁶ Ibid.

⁴³⁷ Ibid., p. 2.

⁴³⁸ Ibid., pp. 2-4.

⁴³⁹ Ibid., p. 5.

companies alone should produce for the network' and that 'programmes produced by our Company can be fully good enough to merit inclusion in the network services'.⁴⁴⁰

The type of content that the group suggested it would produce for both local and national audiences included; farming shows, produced in alliance with the National Farmers Union and including a magazine show that would include market and show reports, full weather reports and items of topical interest; music and theatre shows involving the co-operation of local theatres, musicians and playwrights such as John Mortimer; women's programmes in the form of a woman's magazine show involving items on East Anglian recipes, women farmers and do it yourself advice; a sports magazine involving the coverage of minor sports which were popular in the region such as badminton, table tennis and pike and coarse fishing alongside more illustrious sports such as horse racing, motor racing and football; and finally a long list of potential topics that could generate either 'one off's' or series, including subjects as diverse as: local archaeology; local artists; regional social issues such as unemployment; the urbanisation of the rural area; local ghost stories, strange occupations in the region; interviews with 'village folk' about their lives and Americans living in East Anglia.⁴⁴¹

(ii) Alliance Television.

Summary.

The Chairman of the Alliance Television Company was Sir Gordon Craig of Hertfordshire, with members of the Board of Directors originating from a variety of locations, including local involvement in the form of Alistair Philip Cobbold and Arthur Bostock from Ipswich, Sir John Greaves of Colchester, the Earl of Leicester from Holkham, Peter Pointer of Wroxham, and Eric Sexton in Norwich.⁴⁴²

The application stressed that the share structure of the company had been designed to ensure that 'control of the Applicant will be held by the East Anglian Subscribers'. This group held the whole of the 'A' variant shares and would enjoy 51% of the voting power, the 'B' shares would be split between Odhams Press and Sir Gordon Craig who would be able to exercise the remaining 49% of voting power.⁴⁴³

Much of Alliance's application was dedicated to explaining the credentials of its board members and the technical requirements and intricacies of operating a television station in the region, including detailing the equipment that would be needed. When discussing their proposed programme policy, Alliance suggested that because Norwich was 'removed physically from the main pool of artistic talent' the 'bulk of entertainment and national programmes' would need to be drawn from the main network Contractors and that they would also 'avail itself of every opportunity of expanding the coverage of special programmes' including 'religious and school's programmes'.⁴⁴⁴

In reference to locally originated programming the overall policy was described as endeavouring to schedule these to give 'East Anglian viewers the feeling that the

⁴⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁴⁴¹ *Ibid.*, *Appendix B*, pp. 15-22.

⁴⁴² *ITA Archive, Application, Alliance Television Company Limited*, 27 May 1958, pp. 1-2.

⁴⁴³ *Ibid.*, pp. 3-4.

⁴⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

programmes broadcast from their transmitter were genuinely designed to fulfil their local requirements and further their interests and knowledge'. They also aimed to 'provide a balanced programme in accordance with the Television Act', which would 'by the careful placing of locally originated programmes' provide 'East Anglian viewers with a television service which they can truly feel is their own'.⁴⁴⁵

Alliance predicted that at the beginning of their service they would be originating a minimum of six hours per week of local programmes, a total including local scheduled news bulletins and would meet the initial weekly output that the ITA wished to see from the regional companies. Other proposed local content included a daily five minute show on agriculture, two 'advertising magazines' each week featuring local traders as well as specific programme ideas including; *Congratulations*, featuring announcements of congratulations for events such as engagements, coming of age, anniversaries, prowess in all field of endeavour and abnormality (examples cited included 'cow with the biggest yield' or 'sow with biggest litter'); *It's Your Money They're Spending*, a discussion group programme based on the information 'contained on the reverse of a rate demand'; *Top of the League*, a quiz competition between different towns in the region; and *Visiting Hours*, an opportunity for patients at local hospitals to send greetings to friends and family whilst they were convalescing.⁴⁴⁶

In respect of its relationship the overall ITV network, Alliance had already reached an agreement with Associated Television for the supply of networked shows to the local audience, but believed that 'with the exception of an occasional event', specifically one of national interest, 'there would normally be but little material which one could reasonably ask the main network Contractors to include in their schedules'. They argued that their primary duty would be to provide 'East Anglian viewers with the best programme content available from within the area and from outside it'. In their view presenting the region to the rest of the country was not part of their plan.⁴⁴⁷

(iii) Norfolk News, East Anglian Daily Times and Others.

Summary.

This application included the Norfolk News Company, the East Anglian Daily Times company and the East Midland Allied Press Limited. Together these press interests covered Norfolk, Suffolk, most of Cambridgeshire and Lincolnshire, Leicestershire and Huntingdonshire.⁴⁴⁸

The application explained that although from an early stage it was decided that the group 'should be essentially East Anglian in character, with two thirds of the capital raised locally', outside interests were involved in the group too, though a deliberate decision had been taken to refrain from including 'any persons actively engaged in Television Broadcasting' until after the award of the contract had been confirmed. Those from outside

⁴⁴⁵ Ibid., p. 14.

⁴⁴⁶ Ibid., pp. 15-16.

⁴⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 18.

⁴⁴⁸ ITA Archive, *Application, Norfolk News Company Limited, East Anglian Times Company Limited, East Midland Allied Press Limited, George Newnes Limited, Sir Malcolm Balcon, The Honourable Gavin Astor, The Honourable Hugh W. Astor, J.P. and The Right Honourable The Earl of Cranbrook, C.B.E., D.L.*, 27 May 1958, p. 1.

the region involved in the group included: George Newnes Limited, a Publishing group; Sir Michael Balcon, the director of Ealing Films Limited; and the Honourable Gavin Astor and Hugh W. Astor, Directors of The Times Publishing Company Limited.⁴⁴⁹

Although a comparatively short application, it featured a sizeable discussion on possible production locations, identifying two possible sites. One was a purpose-built facility in the 'central residential area of the city', the other was described as an existing building situated 'on the main street in the very heart of Norwich' which had previously used for exhibitions and shows. Although never named officially this second location is clearly the Agricultural Hall in Norwich, a location which would eventually become synonymous with television in the region.⁴⁵⁰

In respect of local programming the group believed that 'the loyalty of viewers to the East Anglia station will depend to a large extent on the quantity and quality of the locally produced programmes' and that they as a company 'would be in a unique position to cover all aspect of local news and events' as the participating members already had eighty reporters and fifteen photographers in the area.⁴⁵¹

Beyond the provision of news programming the group suggested that they would provide weather reports, sports programmes, interview shows and panel games. They hoped to create a regular entertainment programme to be broadcast at lunchtime featuring local artists and which would be 'essentially East Anglian in character'. The application specifically mentioned the importance of agriculture in the region and the desire to 'make a special feature of agricultural programmes' that were 'centred around specially selected personalities' and 'designed to appeal to all sections of the farming community'. It is also intriguing to note that the application is the only one to highlight the possibility of broadcasting programmes performed in Norfolk and Suffolk dialect, showcasing the distinctiveness of East Anglian culture.⁴⁵²

The application also made clear that it was their intention, once the station was fully established, to ensure that over 15% of the material broadcast on the station was of local origination. Thus they planned to go beyond the minimum target that the ITA had set, but thought that initially it would be unrealistic for the station to produce programmes for network, though 'from time to time' it might produce programmes of 'national interest' and would be able to make 'its own special contributions to the network'.⁴⁵³

It is clear from the application document that although 'exploratory discussions' had taken place between the applicant group and the existing programme contractors, no agreement had been reached in terms of the provision of network programmes. The group could only

⁴⁴⁹ The involvement of George Newnes Limited was potentially problematic. The application made clear that the company had an existing financial interest in a programme contracting company, although it did plan to divest itself of this interest if the application for the East Anglia region was successful. *Ibid.*, pp. 1-2, 4.

⁴⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

⁴⁵¹ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

⁴⁵² *Ibid.*, pp. 7, 15-16.

⁴⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 7.

state that it was their ‘intention to retain a complete freedom of choice between all network companies’ and that they had been able to estimate the expenditure required to do so.⁴⁵⁴

(iv) Viscount Alexander of Hillsborough and Associates.

Summary.

Although Chaired by Viscount Alexander of Hillsborough, it is the makeup of the rest of the parties involved in this group that differentiates this application from the others. As with other applicants the press had some involvement in the application, this time in the form of Reynolds News, and the bid also featured some ‘star power’ in the form of investment from the film actress and singer Anna Neagle and her husband Herbert Wilcox, a film Director and Producer. However uniquely one of the major equity holders was to be a conglomeration of local Co-Operative Societies, who between them would provide over 33% of the equity and control 22% of the voting rights.⁴⁵⁵

The involvement of local Co-operative Societies within the application makes the group different to other applications. One of the prime aims of the group was to run a television service for the benefit of the local population, who would not simply be an audience that could be targeted but potentially stakeholders too, directly sharing in the success of the business. The application promised that the company would ‘plough back into East Anglia both directly in terms of television output and indirectly in education and community purposes a large proportion of our profits’. This was capitalism but with a streak of social enterprise running through it. This approach, bordering upon being socialist, was in stark contrast to the way that commercial television had been run up until this point, and in some ways, can be seen as an attempt at creating a ‘third way’ of organising television in Britain.⁴⁵⁶

Perhaps in an attempt to further reaffirm the applicant’s regional credentials, the application document features a lengthy section of ‘General Observations’, which attempts to describe and define the character of East Anglia and how a television station run by the applicant might reflect and add to it. This section suggested that the region’s ‘distinct sense of individuality as a community’ had not been urbanised away and nor had it ‘been swamped in outlook by the metropolis’, due to the fact that it had historically had poor communication links with the rest of the country.⁴⁵⁷

The application argued that this isolation had both negative as well as positive consequences. Whilst fostering a sense of regional individualism, it also meant that too often the region had failed to receive the ideas and entertainment that the nation had to offer and as corollary of this there had been a failure to ‘spark off the rich cultural potentialities in East Anglia for the East Anglians’. In a particularly snappy sentence it is suggested that ‘East Anglia is inclined to feel a little off the map’. The application suggested that under their control the East Anglia station could ‘give new sinews and purpose to the long-maintained individuality of the area’ whilst also infusing a ‘sense of joint identity into a

⁴⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 7.

⁴⁵⁵ ITA Archive, *Application, Viscount Alexander of Hillsborough and Associates*, [Undated].

⁴⁵⁶ Ibid., p. 6.

⁴⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 5.

scattered and sparsely populated' area, bringing to East Anglia the 'cream in ideas and entertainment from other parts of the country'.⁴⁵⁸

The application suggested that initially it would be necessary to procure the 'great bulk of the programme material' from other companies in the network, arguing that this would enable them to pick and choose only the best that was on offer and also to select 'from a backlog of the previous three to four years'. However in the longer term they hoped to 'do rather better' than the ITA's requirement of six hours per week of locally produced content although in respect of providing their own programmes to the network the group suggested in their view, their primary duty was 'to provide a first class local programme' and that only after achieving that would they consider what possibilities existed in 'networking programmes of East Anglian origin'.⁴⁵⁹

Like the other applications agricultural programmes featured heavily within the proposed local programmes of the application, with the suggestion that there be a specific programme of thirty minutes or more in length once per month and a fortnightly forum for agricultural workers and farmers during which 'ideas helpful to each other would be exchanged'.⁴⁶⁰

Female viewers would be served by a daily programme of fifteen minutes 'dealing with matters of interest to housewives both of local concern and of national concern where local interests are affected'. Presumably housewives were not expected to be interested in anything that did not directly affect their daily lives. Whilst East Anglians in general would be reminded of their shared heritage and identity by a series entitled *Revealing East Anglia to East Anglia* in which the audience would be reminded of 'the remarkable stock from which they come'.⁴⁶¹

A final unique suggestion in respect of local programming came in the form of educational programming. The company suggested that once they had begun to accrue sufficient profits they intended to investigate the possibility of broadcasting 'directly educational programmes', matching the requirements of both 'local schools and of Cambridge University', with the hope of filling in any gaps that existed and broadcasting them at hours 'not normally used for viewing'.⁴⁶²

Assessment of the Applications.

The four applications understandably contain a number of shared characteristics, given the importance of agriculture within the region it is inconceivable that any of the applications would fail to make reference to the provision of programming about farming and/or targeted at farmers. In addition the presence of press interests and local shareholders within all the applicant groups is highly predictable. It is clear that all the applicants realised that having links to the local community was something that the ITA were very keen on.

Yet there are also striking differences that should be recognised. The Townshend application shows a remarkable level of ambition when contrasted with the other groups in respect of the desire to be an active and regular contributor to the network. Where other groups were

⁴⁵⁸ Ibid., p. 5.

⁴⁵⁹ Ibid., p. 6.

⁴⁶⁰ Ibid., p. 6.

⁴⁶¹ Ibid., p. 7.

⁴⁶² Ibid., pp. 8-9.

comfortable with simply bringing national commercial television to East Anglia, Townshend's group saw an opportunity to show East Anglia to the rest of the country in a way that the BBC had not managed, or even really attempted, to achieve.

This ambitious attitude seems distinctly lacking in the application from Alliance Television, not only in respect of their attitude towards supplying content for the network but also in terms of the example programmes which they suggest could be made for the local audience. It is difficult to imagine that the audience would be permanently enthused by the prospect of daily doses of shows such as *Congratulations* or *Visiting Hours*. Although undoubtedly of some social value, it would be hard to claim that they would stimulate the audience in any significant way.

Townshend's application also contained a tactical masterstroke in the inclusion of the invitation to local press interests to join in with their bid if they wished to do so. The hand of Lawrence Scott and to some extent that of the ITA itself can be seen in this manoeuvre. Having previously lost out to an application from a group with a greater level of local participation, Scott was now involved in a group that was not only fronted by a respected local figure, and which had the support of some local press interests, but that was also openly welcoming the prospect of other local, rival press interests joining the bid. Scott's knowledge of the criteria that the ITA were assessing in the bids was priceless in this regard.

Two of the applications, Townshend and Hillsborough, also stand out as being more closely aligned to the public service model of broadcasting, with openly discussing the social responsibility of running a commercial television station and seeming to embrace the responsibility as an opportunity, rather than simply paying lip-service to it as some of the original ITV companies, see the earlier reference to Associated Re-diffusion, had previously done.

Yet, perhaps the most intriguing prospect in all of the applications was contained in the application from Viscount Hillsborough. The involvement of Co-operative Societies within an application for an ITV station was something genuinely new and innovative, if the ITA had awarded the station to this group then for the first time it would be the case that a programme contractor would be effectively 'owned' by a large proportion of its audience and could be held directly responsible by it.

The ITA were faced with an intriguing range of options from which they had to choose and the possibility of Norfolk and East Anglia 'doing different' when it came to commercial television remained tantalisingly on the table.⁴⁶³

The winner takes it all.

The collection of extracts from the minutes of the interview meetings held in the ITA archives are limited in their scope but do give some insight into the questions asked by the ITA Board members. It is also important to consider that each interview had only been allocated a forty-five minute block, so opportunities to question the applicants were clearly

⁴⁶³ The financial details of the application led by Viscount Hillsborough were questioned by the ITA prior to the interview stage when it was discovered that two of the debenture holders had financial links with existing ITV companies, something not allowed under the ITA's rules. However, this did not prevent the group from being interviewed by the ITA. ITA Archive, *ITA Assistant Secretary to Vernon Burns Esq*, 12 June 1958.

very limited and one must assume that the in-depth analysis of the applications had been undertaken before the meetings took place.⁴⁶⁴

Alliance Television were the first applicant to be interviewed and were questioned by the ITA Chairman about the fact that those directly responsible for programme output were not themselves East Anglian. Speaking in response Sir Gordon Craig made clear that it was the intended that the East Anglian members of the board would 'have control of the company and direct impact upon its operation'. The interviewing panel also asked the group to clarify what it thought was missing from ITV programming and in response Sir Gordon explained that 'television was at its best in pictorial journalism' and that the company was proposing to create a 'news department larger than anything previously attempted in a programme company'.⁴⁶⁵

The group led by the Norfolk News Company were the next to be interviewed. During the process Sir Michael Balcon spoke on behalf of the group to express the view that currently they felt that 'there was a little too much entertainment material' being broadcast, whilst Mr Colman suggested that the group 'wanted no company or individual to dominate their programme' and that they had reached no agreement with any of the existing programme contractors regarding the supply of programme as 'the best men' would 'not commit themselves until the contract was awarded'.⁴⁶⁶

The third interview was of the group led by Lord Townshend. Townshend explained that his group was 'predominantly local' and that it was 'constitutionally impossible for control to go outside the area'. When questioned on why the group had reserved £35,000 of capital for investment by local newspaper interests, Townshend explained that they recognised that 'local newspapers were valuable for their connections and the services they could provide' and that despite the fact that most papers within the region were already connected with other applicant groups, they felt that if they were awarded the contract it would be beneficial to offer them the opportunity to invest. Finally, when asked about local material Prof. Glyn Daniel suggested that the group would have 'no difficulty in providing local material of high quality' some of which 'might find a market on the network', a further clarification of the ambition that the group had for television from the region.

It is interesting to note that the only individuals from the applicant group recorded as answering questions during the interview were those who originated from, or lived in the region. Although Laurence Scott of the *Manchester Guardian* and John Woolf of Romulus Films were both present at the meeting, it seems that both were content to allow Townshend to lead the way, reinforcing the impression that this was a truly local application.⁴⁶⁷

The Hillsborough application drew the interview process to its conclusion. During the meeting, Viscount Alexander reaffirmed that the aim of the group was 'to spread the dividends from television among as many local people as possible' rather than 'to give them to a few individuals' and doing this would allow 'a large part of the profits' to be devoted to 'education and community activities in the area'. The ITA board also took the opportunity to

⁴⁶⁴ ITA Archive, *ITA Assistant Secretary to Deputy Director-General*, 11 June 1958.

⁴⁶⁵ ITA Archive, *Interview with applicants for East Anglia Contract Alliance TV Ltd*, 17 June 1958.

⁴⁶⁶ ITA Archive, *Interview with applicants for East Anglia Contract Cranbrook*, 17 June 1958.

⁴⁶⁷ ITA Archive, *Interview with applicants for East Anglia Contract Lord Townshend and Associates*, 17 June 1958 ITA.

express some concern about the financial arrangements of the company, particularly in respect of the possibility that the debentures could be converted into ordinary shares, altering the balance of control. In response Vernon Burns pointed out that even if this was to happen they would still only have one-third of the equity and voting rights and that in any event ‘some 30 per cent of the clients represented by the first six names on the list of debenture holders were East Anglian’, meaning that control would always remain in the hands of the local population.⁴⁶⁸

Decision Time.

The ITA were swift in reaching their decision as to which group should be awarded the contract, taking it on the same day as the interviews. Initially the Authority narrowed the choice to either the Townshend group or the Norfolk News Company applications. After a ‘full discussion’ it agreed that the contract should be offered to Townshend ‘on condition that that the £35,000 reserve capital’ be offered to ‘those local newspaper interests connected with the application of Lord Cranbrook and his Associates’, i.e. the *Norfolk News Company* and the *East Midland Allied Press*. The ITA’s solution was a compromise that offered some level of satisfaction to two of the interested parties rather than just one.⁴⁶⁹

Lord Townshend was informed of the good news by the ITA’s Director-General in a letter dated 20 June 1958, in which it was confirmed that the offer was contingent of the group offering a shareholding of £50,000 (an increase on the originally proposed figure) and ‘one place on your Board to the Norfolk News Company, the East Anglian Daily Times Company, and the East Midland Allied Press’. The letter also contained a request from the ITA that Lord Townshend and his associated partners refrain from making any public comment or confirmation until the outcome of any negotiations with the relevant newspaper interest had been concluded.⁴⁷⁰

Those negotiations did not prove to be longwinded and as a result the ITA were soon able to prepare a press notice announcing their decision, but embargoed until after 6pm on the 25 of June. Amusingly this embargo was only broken by one newspaper, *The Manchester Evening News*, a publication run by Laurence Scott. This resulted in Scott having to write a letter of apology to Robert Fraser in which he admitted that he had ‘inadvertently dropped a brick’ and had allowed a pre-prepared statement to be published before the embargo was lifted.⁴⁷¹

The *Eastern Daily Press* made no so much mistake, publishing the press release in its entirety and thus confirming that the press interests that had formed a bid under the leadership of Lord Cranbrook had accepted the offer to become stakeholders within the new contract holders.⁴⁷²

Given that the publishers of the *Eastern Daily Press* were now shareholders in the area’s ITV company it is a little surprising that the reaction in the editorial column of the newspaper was relatively muted. Whilst the column suggested that there would be ‘great interest in Norfolk and throughout the region’ at the announcement, the article then

⁴⁶⁸ ITA Archive, *Interview with applicants for East Anglia Contract Viscount Alexander of Hillsborough and Associates*, 17 June 1958.

⁴⁶⁹ ITA Archive, *Appointment of East Anglian Contractor*, 17 June 1958.

⁴⁷⁰ ITA Archive, *ITA Director-General to Lord Townshend*, 20 June 1958.

⁴⁷¹ ITA Archive, *Laurence Scott to ITA Director-General*, 25 June 1958.

⁴⁷² ‘ITA Decision on East Anglian Television’, *Eastern Daily Press* 26 June 1958, p. 1.

suggested that had this development ‘come a few years ago’ they ‘might have written “excitement” rather than interest, since at that time ITV was experimental; optimists could dream dreams and the morbid conjure up horrors’ and that ‘the enormous costs of the new medium exclude at present, and no doubt for many years to come, any possibility of a truly local TV station’; hardly the type of rhetoric one would expect from a publication now linked with commercial television in the region.⁴⁷³

A company had been chosen and the location of the home base had been picked. Now it was just a case of getting on with the small matter of starting a television station from scratch and beginning broadcasting for the first time.

Conclusion.

Although not initially directly affected by the appointment of the early commercial television contractors, the choices made during the initial years of ITV did have consequences for the region. The combination of initial losses suffered, followed by high levels of profits ensured that by the time it was East Anglia’s turn to gain a station the ITA’s criteria for choosing a company to run the station needed to balance the need for the company to be financially viable with a belief that it would also not be too greedy. This provides some explanation for why the ITA saw fit to allow Norwich Union to act as a financial backer for multiple applications, it ensured a certain level of financial stability as well as financial prudence.

The ITA’s keenness to involve the *Manchester Guardian* within the ITV network at some level following their previous failed application meant that any bid for the East Anglia station contract involving them would immediately have a competitive advantage. Whilst not suggesting that a deal was explicitly done behind closed doors, the combination of the ITA’s positive attitude towards Laurence Scott and his experience of knowing exactly what the Authority was looking for from its regional stations (experience gained through losing out previously) did shorten the odds of the application by Lord Townshend’s group being successful and should force us to question whether the application was one that genuinely represented local interests.

One effect of the possible bias in the ITA’s process may have been that Viscount Hillsborough’s application involving the collaboration of local Co-operative societies failed to receive the consideration from the ITA that it truly deserved. Certainly some of those involved in the bid felt this was the case, as Jenkins reports one of the members of the group thought that ‘after the first five minutes’ of the meeting with the Authority that they ‘were out’. Although in some ways flawed and certainly not as ambitious as other plans, had this application been successful it would have created a genuinely new and innovative form of independent television in the United Kingdom, one which could have played an interesting role within East Anglia’s public sphere. The fact that this possibility is barely mentioned in existing histories of broadcasting in Britain demonstrates that there is something to be gained from looking closely at regional experiences and variations.⁴⁷⁴

⁴⁷³ ‘ITV Service’, *Eastern Daily Press* 26 June 1958, p. 4.

⁴⁷⁴ Clive Jenkins, *Power Behind the Screen*, (London: Macgibbon & Kee, 1961), p. 240.

Chapter 7: You wait for a bus and then two come along at once...

Introduction.

Although significant steps had been made towards bringing commercial television to the region for the first time, a great deal of further work, negotiation and application of pressure needed to take place during the next sixteen months before broadcasts from the region could begin. However, as shall be seen it was not just the holder of the commercial television contract that would be hard at work, the BBC also had plans to ensure that 1959 would be a pivotal moment in the history of East Anglian television.

A Rivalry Forms?

Lord Townshend's group wasted little time in getting down to work after having been formally announced as the ITA's choice. The group's solicitors wrote to the Registrar of Companies to register the name 'Anglia Television Limited' on 25 June and the group's chartered surveyors also agreed, subject to approval from Norwich City Council, to lease the Agricultural Hall in Norwich at a cost of £5000 per year only a day later; a location which the Norfolk News Company had rejected in their application document.⁴⁷⁵⁴⁷⁶

Before analysing the actions of Anglia Television (Anglia) and the BBC during this period it is also worth acknowledging that some other interested parties were quick in their attempts to leverage interest in the arrival of commercial television to the region, with Willsmore & Tibbenham, a local firm of 'Incorporated Practitioners in Advertising', placed an advert proclaiming their expertise and 'know-how' on 'the newest form of media – TELEVISION – based on actual experience in acting on behalf of clients in East Anglia'. This is a reminder that the arrival of commercial television would have an impact on businesses in the region as well as on viewers. Local businesses would have a new way to advertise their products and services to potential local customers and that there was expertise in the region ready to exploit the opportunity.⁴⁷⁷

Anglia's first attempt at publicising themselves to the local community took place during July when Lord Townshend took part in an in-depth interview with the London editor of the *Eastern Daily Press*. During the interview Townshend attempted to communicate the ambition of the company, stating that, 'East Anglia has taught the world something about agriculture. Perhaps it may teach the world something about television' whilst also claiming that they recognised that 'television is more than a business. It's a social responsibility and we're very conscious of the fact'.⁴⁷⁸

Clearly this refrain was an echo of the rhetoric used within the original application to, and interview with, the ITA and much of the remainder of the interview followed a similar theme. Townshend emphasised their ambition to not only 'show East Anglia to East Anglia' but also to show the region 'to the rest of the country'. It aimed to produce eight hours of

⁴⁷⁵ Letter, *Cardew -Smith & Ross to Registrar of Companies*, 25 June 1958, ITA Archive.

⁴⁷⁶ 'I.T.V. Studios Proposed for Agricultural Hall', *Eastern Daily Press*, 27 June 1958, p. 1.

⁴⁷⁷ 'Advertisement, 'WT and ITV', *Eastern Daily Press*, 30 Jun 1958, p. 1.

⁴⁷⁸ 'Independent Television Plans for East Anglia', *Eastern Daily Press*, 16 July 1958, p. 10.

locally produced programmes per week (15% of the weekly total of hours broadcast) from the very start of transmissions and to later 'improve upon the proportion of 15 per cent'.⁴⁷⁹

The interview was also an opportunity for Townshend to share with the general public the types of programmes they could soon expect to see and which had impressed the ITA during the application process. Predictably he mentioned the provision of a daily news bulletin from the region, alongside the special attention that would be given to farming programmes as well as shows on sport, music, social and industrial matters, women's topics and natural history. Townshend also confirmed that it was the intention to employ people from within the region when possible, and that Anglia would differ from other programmer producers because of 'its genuinely regional approach to its responsibilities' and the fact that two thirds of the company's directors were East Anglians.⁴⁸⁰

However, Townshend was forced to admit that despite their ambition to broadcast East Anglia to the rest of the country this would not always be possible, or at least not at first. The link between Norwich and London would be 'one-way' and to broadcast to London and beyond would require a two-way link that they may ask the ITA to provide 'in due course'.⁴⁸¹

In fact to their surprise the ITA received a request from Anglia about the cost of a two-way link only a few weeks later. The surprise was in part due to the fact that they had met with Lord Townshend, Laurence Scott and John Woolf to discuss this issue and the ITA had expressed the view that they 'had not thought that it would ever be economic for a programme company in East Anglia to pay the high rental for a full-time return vision circuit'. The rental was estimated at £24,000 per annum, and that regardless of this price, restrictions on capital expenditure imposed by the Postmaster-General on the ITA meant that construction would not be able to begin until the spring of 1960 anyway.⁴⁸²

Keen to not be left in the wake of Anglia's wave of publicity, the BBC soon announced that a permanent television link between Birmingham and Norwich was to be constructed. Whilst the primary aim of this was to improve reception in East Anglia of the 'main network programme', in its 'final two-way form' it would also allow 'picture signals from East Anglia and the East Midlands to be fed direct into the national programme'. These developments were accompanied by an announcement from the BBC's Midland Regional Director that it was also their intention to introduce a regular East Anglian news service beginning at some point in 1959.⁴⁸³

The *Eastern Daily Press* correctly recognised that the timing of the announcement from the BBC was not coincidental and that they had 'not wasted much time in arranging to meet the challenge of the Anglia Television Company'. Acknowledging that the BBC needed to fund both sound and television broadcasting from its revenue, the paper paid tribute to the corporation's ability to make its 'slender resources go a long way' in the region. It complimented the recent announcement but stated that there would be even greater interest

⁴⁷⁹ As Townshend pointed out this was a more ambitious target than the ITA had set. The contract agreed allowed them to produce only six hours of local content per week during their first year of operation. *Ibid.*

⁴⁸⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁸² ITA Archive, Letter, *Secretary ITA to Marshall, Chief Engineer Anglia Television*, 14 August 1958.

⁴⁸³ 'Norwich-Birmingham TV Link Planned', *Eastern Daily Press*, 6 August 1958, p. 8.

in the result of the ‘approaching competition’ between the BBC and Anglia ‘to develop a local TV service’. As the article incisively pointed out this competition was to be ‘for the voice as well as the ears of East Anglia’.⁴⁸⁴

If the intent of the Television Act, 1954 had been to create genuine choice and in doing so to wake the BBC from its slumber, then East Anglia during this period was an example of it achieving exactly what had been hoped for.

But not everyone was happy...

Perhaps due to receiving, and accepting, an invitation to become shareholders in Anglia Television the *Eastern Daily Press* never publicised the fact that their application for the East Anglian commercial television contract had been rejected. The same could not however be said of the application by Viscount Hillsborough involving local Co-operative groups. On 10 August *Reynolds News*, who it should be remembered were also part of the application, published details of the failed bid and the fact that although a ‘New kind of TV company’ had been turned down there was no criticism of the winning applicant as it was ‘a good and enterprising group of its own kind’.⁴⁸⁵

However, and probably unbeknownst to many in the region, the choice of the Anglia Television group as the chosen contractor for the region had in fact previously provoked some criticism of the ITA from certain quarters. At the beginning of July an article on the supposed biases of the ITA in awarding contracts appeared in *The Spectator* in which doubts were cast about the neutrality of the ITA during the application process for the East Anglia area.

The article explained how one of the applicants included ‘the local Retail Co-operative Societies of East Anglia’. It had ‘ample financial backing’, was more than capable of ‘producing the small amount of local programmes required by the Authority’, and if successful ‘would have partly offset the manner in which any interest connected with Labour had been excluded from the other awards’.⁴⁸⁶

Controversially the article also made the claim that the ITA had decided that as the group featuring the *Manchester Guardian* and Romulus and Remus Films had ‘narrowly failed’ to succeed in applying for the North East of England contract, ‘they should be given the East Anglian station as a consolation prize’. Furthermore, the article alleged that after the closing of applications it allowed the *Manchester Guardian* group to ‘strengthen its local associations’ and that if they included the local newspapers that were involved in a ‘quite separate applying group’ they would be given the station. This was according to the article an opportunity not afforded to any of the other applicants.⁴⁸⁷

The ITA and the Director-General were clearly angered by the article and had suspicions as to who might have been the source of the information that *The Spectator*’s allegations were based upon. Writing to Woodrow Wyatt in mid-July, Fraser said that he was certain that ‘there was contact between the *Spectator* and someone in your group, for some of the

⁴⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁴⁸⁵ ‘What Co-ops Planned for East Anglian TV’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 11 August 1958, p. 8.

⁴⁸⁶ ‘Sharing the Spoils’, *The Spectator*, 3 July 1958, p. 15. <<http://archive.spectator.co.uk/article/4th-july-1958/15/sharing-the-spoils>> [accessed 01/03/2017]

⁴⁸⁷ Ibid.

information in the article could not have come from anywhere else'. The letter went on to state that the suggestion that the Townshend group was 'allowed to improve its chances by making internal changes after the interviews' was 'utterly false'. It was offered the contract because it was 'as constituted in its application, in the view of the Authority, the best group'. Further the group had made it known, without any prompt from the Authority, that 'it would wish to offer membership to the East Anglian newspapers' and that regardless of whether or not this offer was accepted the Townshend group application was still the best.⁴⁸⁸

The response from Woodrow Wyatt is best described as curt. Writing to Fraser on the 30 July he apologised for not responding sooner before then simply writing 'I am afraid that I cannot agree with your observations'.⁴⁸⁹

Who was right?

As the previous chapter showed, there is little doubt that within the ITA there was considerable good will towards the *Manchester Guardian* and a desire to see them involved in the ITV network on some level. However, there is no evidence to suggest that a decision had explicitly been made to award them the East Anglian station as a 'consolation prize' as the *Spectator* article suggested. Nevertheless, it is easy to see why Woodrow Wyatt, or whoever leaked the story to the *Spectator*, felt that something underhand had taken place. The correspondence between Laurence Scott and Fraser is, with the benefit of hindsight, indicative of a friendly, close relationship between the two, and the internal use of the phrase 'glittering talent' in relation to the previously failed application involving the *Manchester Guardian* could be considered to be lacking in impartiality.

There is however no evidence in the ITA archive to support the claim that the Anglia Television group were allowed to alter their application after the deadline on the advice of the ITA. It must be remembered that Laurence Scott and John Woolf had the benefit of being able to learn from the experience of their previous failure when applying for the East Anglian contract. They knew, more or less, the criteria the ITA would use to judge the applications and were therefore able to tailor their approach to suit. This included making sure that the links to the local community and the local culture of the proposed programming mix were much more apparent than had been the case in their previous bid.

Whilst the application from the group led by Viscount Hillsborough was an interesting one, much of that interest, both then and now, stems from the involvement of the Co-operative Societies and the intent to distribute profits back to worthy projects in the region. This would certainly fit neatly into the desire of the ITA for the regional companies to serve their local audiences, perhaps more so than any application before or since, and it would have been a truly fascinating moment in British television history had it come to pass.

But in contrast the local programming that it proposed producing, with perhaps the exception of its ideas regarding education, was comparatively generic and lacked vigour and ambition. The successful application from Anglia Television was much more specific in its programme ideas, more creative in its approach, and importantly more ambitious in its desire

⁴⁸⁸ Letter, *Fraser to Woodrow Wyatt*, 16 July 1958, ITA Archive; Minutes, *East Anglia Programme Contract*, 29 July 1958, ITA Archive.

⁴⁸⁹ Letter, *Woodrow Wyatt to Fraser*, 30 July 1958, ITA Archive.

to show the rest of the country what East Anglia was really like. These were appealing and convincing ideas backed up by the presence of established media figures.

It is true that any application for the East Anglia contract involving the *Manchester Guardian* did have an advantage over its competitors, but this was not *just* because of an inherent bias within the ITA. The advantage was also because of the groups experience with the application process and in this instance was further aided by the fact that the application that they submitted was also comprehensive and ambitious. The *Spectator's* article was an interesting one and did justifiably question the relationship between certain press groups and the ITA, as well as highlighting the opaque nature of the ITA's decision making process. Something that remained an issue throughout the ITA's existence as well as that of its successor the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA). But the article failed to take into account the fact that on this occasion it was just possible that the best applicant had won.

An excuse to publicise: The National Radio Show.

Although Anglia's inaugural broadcast was still far in the distance, the company did use the *Eastern Daily Press's* coverage of the annual National Radio Show as an excuse to promote itself to the regional audience again. This time it was a fellow director of the company, Aubrey Buxton rather than Lord Townshend, who acted as the spokesperson, writing a column in the *Eastern Daily Press* with the title *A Provincial Renaissance? The Role of Independent Television*.

Rather than simply focusing upon the programming that Anglia would be bringing to the region, although this did feature, the article began by looking at the impact that Anglia Television would have on the region. It stressed the creation of new employment opportunities which would make it 'possible for a few young people to make their careers within daily distance of their homes' although with the caveat that this was no 'nine-to-five' job, but rather 'more often than not "nine to midnight"'. Buxton also argued that the creation of a new television centre in Norwich had the potential to act as a magnet in drawing creative and intellectual talent to the region. He suggested that the 'glamorous pop singer or the distinguished archaeologist may soon be heard declaring with undisguised relish, "I am off to Norwich"'.⁴⁹⁰

Anglia also once again took full advantage of the opportunity to declare their ambitious nature. Whilst explaining how the network system allowed for the exchange of programmes, Buxton pointed out that 'The ambitious station will hope to produce as much material as possible for national viewing. Anglia Television is ambitious'. He also suggested that competition between the BBC and ITV had already benefited local viewers, as only a few days after Anglia had announced its plans for a telephone link to London the BBC had declared their own plans to improve the technical qualities of their broadcasts by linking with the Midlands.⁴⁹¹

Public silence, private pressure.

There was little public coverage in the *Eastern Daily Press* of any developments in respect of either the BBC or Anglia during early autumn. The coverage of television related issues

⁴⁹⁰ 'A Provincial Renaissance? The Role of Independent Television', *Eastern Daily Press*, 27 August 1958, p. 4.

⁴⁹¹ *Ibid.*

was limited to fears about the volume of American programming on television and the impact of television on the lives of children, which the paper pointed out in an editorial column covered 'only areas where ITV and B.B.C. programmes are available'.⁴⁹²

However, lack of coverage in the regional press did not mean that nothing was taking place behind the scenes. During this period material in the ITA archive suggests that the Authority remained relatively happy with their appointment of Anglia and the progress that was being made by the company. Perhaps the clearest example of this comes in the form of correspondence between Bernard Sendall, the Deputy Director-General, and A.E. Scott-Piggott.⁴⁹³

Scott-Piggott had written to Sendall asking for information about Anglia Television on behalf of a friend who was interested in working for them in a technical capacity. In his reply Sendall described the company in positive terms, suggesting that there was 'every indication that Anglia will be a good and lively organisation to work for. The ideas they have about servicing regional interest in East Anglia are most promising'. This general sense of approval of Anglia was tempered slightly by tension between the ITA and Anglia over the timing of the launch of the new service. An internal memo reported that Fraser had an 'agreeable meeting over luncheon' with 'the four leading characters in Anglia Television' on the 16 September. However a significant amount of time during the lunch was spent discussing Anglia's wish to have the earliest start date possible, something that the ITA did not feel they could accommodate.⁴⁹⁴

This was to prove to be something of a bone of contention between the two organisations. On the one hand Anglia Television had very real financial justification in wanting to start broadcasting as early as possible as they had no ongoing income stream until they did. Whilst on the other hand, in order to provide a service to the entire region, without interfering with mainland Europe, the ITA had been forced to commission a special directional transmitter to be mounted on a 1,000ft tall mast, a task that could not be rushed.

Fraser, in particular, seemed concerned that there was 'just a little tendency developing in Anglia Television to talk about the "delay "in the East Anglian air date'. The word 'delay' was one that Lord Townshend had used in a letter to him after their luncheon meeting and Fraser was worried that Anglia might actually have grounds for its use. This caused Fraser to contact Pragnell, the Secretary of the Authority, in order to confirm what had actually been said, both in writing and in person, in regards to a start date for Anglia.⁴⁹⁵

Pragnell's response did not provide good news for the Authority. He was unable to confirm whether or not a specific start date had been mentioned during the interview process, but

⁴⁹² 'U.S. Volume of Material on TV Deplored', *Eastern Daily Press*, 6 September 1958, p. 5; 'TV and the Child', *Eastern Daily Press*, 25 September 1958, p. 6.

⁴⁹³ It is difficult to ascertain exactly who A.S. Scott Piggott was. The only online record that refers to someone of this name pertains to correspondence about the Festival of Britain in 1951. As Sendall was Controller of the Festival of Britain it seems likely that they met there. The tone of the correspondence held in the ITA Archive certainly indicates they were on friendly terms.

⁴⁹⁴ Letter, *A.E. Scott-Piggott to Bernard Sendall*, 7 September 1958; *Bernard Sendall to A.E. Scott-Piggott*, 9 September 1958; Memo, *Director-General to Chief Engineer*, 16 September 1958, ITA Archive.

⁴⁹⁵ Letter, *Lord Townshend to Director-General*, 1 October 1958 and Memo, *Director General to Secretary*, 3 October 1958, ITA Archive.

was able to confirm that alongside the use of the phrase ‘early autumn’ in the application form, the Authority had released two press notices that used similar phrasing. One from 8 April 1958 said that the Authority planned ‘to open this station in the autumn of 1959’, whilst the other from 25 June 1958 explained that the Authority planned ‘to begin transmission of programmes from Mendlesham during the second half of next year’. This meant that, in Pragnell’s words, it might not be ‘wholly unreasonable for Anglia, despite the fact that we are not committed to any opening date, to think of the date as being delayed’.⁴⁹⁶

Concerned about how Anglia might use the notion of a delay to their advantage, Fraser attempted to persuade Townshend that the Authority had never actually committed themselves to a date and that careful analysis of their public statements would show that all they had committed to was a launch window between 21 September and 31 December. He did make the concession that as they had at one point mentioned a starting date of early autumn in the application form. But that this only meant that the latest possible date would be 1 November 1959. Townshend accepted the points that Fraser made but emphasised that Anglia had been using the start of November as a target for all their planning and operations.⁴⁹⁷

The ITA had found itself in a sticky situation and putting a small amount of pressure on the ITA had certainly done Anglia no harm in trying to speed things up. It proved that the words of ambition that they had shown in their application were backed up by a determination to succeed as soon as possible. A characteristic that had often been absent from the region when it came to television.

Indeed, rather than simply wait for the Authority to officially confirm a start date Anglia adopted a different tactic in an attempt to accelerate the process. This time rather than making contact with Fraser directly, Townshend wrote to Pragnell, informing him that his Chief Engineer had been in negotiation with the General Post Office to secure the necessary telephone circuits for an ‘an Air Date of 1st November’ only to be told that the ITA circuits had been ordered for a start date of 1 December and they saw no point in arranging for facilities to be available to Anglia before then.⁴⁹⁸

Knowing how impatient Anglia were to secure an early start date, or to just know the official start date to aid with their planning, Townshend’s actions, and those of his chief engineer, can be seen as a clear attempt to circumvent Fraser and thus discover from another source what the Authority’s plans were. It was another insight into how determined, and cunning, Anglia could be. The era of East Anglia sitting back and waiting for someone else to determine when television would arrive was well and truly over.

Pragnell discussed these developments with the Authority’s Head of Planning and Construction, and the Senior Engineer for Lines, before passing the issue onto the Director-General, via his deputy. In a memo he raised the possibility of telling Anglia that if by some chance the station was completed by 1 November, they might have the option to reduce their high-powered tests in favour of getting an earlier start in mid-November. The Deputy Director-General added a hand written note suggesting to both Fraser and Sendall that a

⁴⁹⁶ Memo, *Secretary to Director-General East Anglia Opening Date*, 13 October 1958, ITA Archive.

⁴⁹⁷ Memo, *Director-General to Lord Townshend*, 14 October 1958; Letter, *Lord Townshend to Director-General*, 24 October 1959, ITA Archive.

⁴⁹⁸ Letter, *Townshend to ITA Secretary*, 18 November 1958, ITA Archive.

‘piece of fatherly advice’ be added to any response to Anglia emphasising that a new programme company ‘would be taking a big risk in regard to initial coverage’ if it failed to undertake adequate high-power testing before beginning broadcasting. Unsurprisingly this attempt to scare Anglia into slowing down was a feature of the letter sent to Townshend at the start of December. As there is no record of any immediate response from Anglia it seems reasonable to assume that at least temporarily Anglia took the advice on board.⁴⁹⁹

Indeed by the end of the year Anglia had switched its focus away from the start date of their service and instead pestered the ITA for the provision of a ‘return video link’ from Norwich ‘back into the network’. In a letter to the ITA, Townshend suggested that Anglia would be far more likely to use such a link than they had initially anticipated and that ‘several of the other contractors’ were ‘already anxious to take regularly programmes which we shall be originating in Norwich’. He argued that its absence would be a ‘considerable handicap’ which put them at a ‘serious disadvantage *vis-a-vis* the other provincial contractors’.

Townshend therefore requested that the Authority re-examine its decision to not supply them with such a link from the opening date of the service.⁵⁰⁰

This request was not a simple one for the ITA to grant as it was not actually under their control. Decisions regarding unplanned capital expenditure of this type and scale, the GPO estimated the cost of providing the link from 1959-1962 as being £57,940, could not be made by the Authority alone. They required as Authority’s accountant pointed out, the relaxation of the capital restrictions that affected the Authority. The best that the ITA could do, and the route that the Director-General took, was to place an order for the return line with the Post Office and add the capital expenditure to the estimates submitted by the Authority to Government in the hope that they would be approved. In any event the Director-General was sceptical about the extent to which the return link would actually be used, he argued that very little had been supplied from the existing regional companies, why would Anglia be any different.⁵⁰¹

All I want for Christmas is...

As the year began to draw to a close there continued to be relatively little coverage in the local press of any developments to either the BBC or ITV’s television service in the region. Stories related to television in a more general sense did appear occasionally. These included the case of the Lowestoft butcher who was able to receive broadcasts from continental Europe on his television due to freak reception conditions and the announcement that Associated-Rediffusion had recorded a £5m trading profit during the last financial year. If

⁴⁹⁹ Memo, *Secretary to Director-General (through Deputy Director-General) Anglia’s Opening Date*, 26 November 1958; Letter, *ITA Secretary to Townshend*, 2 December 1958, ITA Archive.

⁵⁰⁰ Letter, *Townshend to ITA Secretary*, 31 December 1958 ITA Archive

⁵⁰¹In response to the concern about actual usage of the link Anglia said that they had a commitment for a ‘six-weekly’ drama contribution to the Network that would have to be produced in London if no return link was available (in fact Anglia had already announced in the *Eastern Daily Press* that these dramas would be made in studios located at Wembley). These were a serial of 26 episodes about an East Coast fishing family, a new series on ‘household treasures’, archaeological and science based series using the talent and personalities of Cambridge University, a major news agricultural series on different lines to existing ones and a natural history series based in East Anglia. Although Anglia accepted this was a big investment for a company of its size, they were convinced of its necessity in order to do their job properly. Memo, *ITA Accountant to Chief Financial Controller*, 8 January 1959; *Director-General to Chief Financial Controller*, 13 January 1959; letter, *Stephenson to ITA Secretary*, 27 January 1959, ITA Archive.

nothing else this reminder of the potential rewards available to those running ITV stations would have further encouraged Anglia television to push the ITA for the earliest possible start date for their service.⁵⁰²

The publication of the Nuffield Foundation's report on the effect of television on children also featured in the pages of the *Eastern Daily Press*. Aside from the obvious news value of a report on the seemingly perennial concerns about how television might be damaging young people there was an additional point of interest for local readers. The 'controversial' involvement of Norwich schoolchildren in the study.⁵⁰³

Norwich's involvement with the study was in fact rather interesting. The surveying stage of the study began prior to the opening of the transmitter at Tacobleneston and therefore meant that Norwich provided the researchers with a 'natural before-and-after study', i.e. they could investigate the behaviour and values/attitudes of children both before and after their exposure to television. The study involved surveying over 2,000 children in Norwich alongside children from London, Portsmouth, Sunderland and Bristol. Whilst the survey largely passed by without incident in the other cities, for reasons that are not entirely clear the Director of Education and the Chairman of the Norwich Education Committee took exception to some of the questions being asked, specifically those related to 'the domestic arrangements of mothers and fathers and children'. Their concern over the issue ultimately resulted in the Committee physically removing the questions they objected to from the questionnaires being used and the eventual withdrawal from the study of two of the participating Norwich schools.⁵⁰⁴

The conclusions of the study did not completely separate the Norwich results from the other participant cities, but the *Eastern Daily Press* did suggest that 'four main qualities' tended to characterise the children of families that bought televisions during the study period.

Although it is not the intention of this study to look at this story in detail, it is worth noting that one of the paper's claims, that the Norwich children with television 'tended to have lower and more limited aspirations for their future', is demonstrably false. The report actually suggested that those who had become viewers of television were now 'more ambitious in their expected job choice and also in their dreams about jobs' compared to the children without access to television.⁵⁰⁵

The *Eastern Daily Press* was more accurate in reporting that the study had challenged a number of established views on television, showing as it did that children did not tend to become addicted to it, that it had no negative impact on schoolwork, that it did not make children either more passive or more aggressive, and that it did not keep children away from attending youth clubs. The relatively clean bill of health given to television was good news for Anglia, in that it might provide useful material for rebuttal against anyone who attempted to claim that the arrival of commercial television in the region was a negative thing. However the revelation that the opening of a second television station in a region had no

⁵⁰² 'TV from Continent Picked Up at Lowestoft', *Eastern Daily Press*, 31 October 1958, p. 7; '£5m. Profit for Independent TV Company', *Eastern Daily Press*, 1 November 1958, p. 1.

⁵⁰³ 'Norwich Children's Reaction to Television', *Eastern Daily Press*, 12 December 1958, p. 9.

⁵⁰⁴ 'Norwich TV Survey: Some Questions Out', *Eastern Daily Press*, 14 June 1955, p. 7. See Hilde Himmelweit et al, *Television and the Child*, (London: Oxford University Press, 1958), pp. 6-7 and Appendix A for details of the role of Norwich within the study and the 'controversial' questions.

⁵⁰⁵ 'Norwich Children's Reaction to Television', *Eastern Daily Press*, 12 December 1958, p. 9; Himmelweit et al, *Television and the Child*, p. 235.

impact on the amount of television children watched meant they would, at least when it came to children, be battling the BBC for existing, not extra ‘eyeball time’.⁵⁰⁶

In terms of publicising television Anglia were understandably far more active than the BBC in the region at the end of the year. In truth news from, and about the BBC in the region, was non-existent after the summer months when discussion had focused on the budgetary limitations of the BBC’s television service. This was an issue that was also discussed within the BBC during November as well as the slow progress that the BBC was making in respect of producing television in the Midland Region.⁵⁰⁷

In contrast Anglia ended the year with a trio of public relations exercises and announcements. First John Woolf, one of the company’s directors, announced further details of the type of programmes that viewers could expect to see when the station launched. Whilst much of this was a repetition of information that Lord Townshend had communicated in his earlier interview with the newspaper, Woolf added something new by announcing that the company intended to broadcast a play from studios in Wembley every six weeks and that the expertise of his fellow director, and West End impresario, Donald Albery would be employed in doing so. These dramas would become something of a hallmark for Anglia, although the fact that they would be produced in London rather than Norwich did rather call into question the local credentials of the station.⁵⁰⁸

The second example of public and press engagement was in the form of the appearance of Anglia’s Chief Executive at a meeting of the Norwich Rotary Club, during which he fielded questions from the attended members. He confirmed that whilst the *Manchester Guardian* was one of the principle investors, the company remained a profoundly local one, structured in such a way as to make it impossible to fall under the control of any group ‘not directly linked to the interests of East Anglia’.⁵⁰⁹

The final announcement came with a report from a statutory meeting of Anglia held in Norwich, the first since they had been awarded the East Anglian contract. Lord Townshend announced to the shareholders that work on the company’s headquarters and studios was ‘proceeding rapidly’ and that the company planned to open a London office in January. Townshend emphasised that no start date for broadcasting had been set beyond autumn 1959. Although as has been shown they had been pushing the ITA for a start date no later than 1 November. This start date was due to the complexity of the required transmitter, which ‘would be the highest in Europe’ and of a unique design as the ITA ‘was sparing no effort to ensure that every home in East Anglia had perfect reception’.⁵¹⁰

⁵⁰⁶ ‘Norwich Children’s Reaction to Television’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 12 December 1958, p. 9.

⁵⁰⁷ ‘B.B.C. Limited by Tight Television Budget’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 20 August 1958, p. 5; Minutes, *Regional Controllers’ Meeting Wednesday 5th November, 1958 ‘Television Regional Policy’* BBC WAC R34/733/3; ‘B.B.C. Progress with TV from Midlands’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 27 August 1958, p. 7.

⁵⁰⁸ Anglia clearly had concerns at the time about whether content produced by themselves in London would be included in their ‘regional quota’ by the ITA as their solicitors contacted the Authority’s legal representatives to seek clarification on this matter. Letter, *Cardew-Smith & Ross to Allen & Overy ‘Anglia Television Limited’*, 9 December 1958, ITA Archive; ‘Anglia TV’s Plans for Local Shows’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 16 December 1958, p. 8.

⁵⁰⁹ ‘Anglia TV ‘Cannot be Monopoly’’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 18 December 1958, p. 6.

⁵¹⁰ ‘Anglia TV’s Mast to be the Highest in Europe’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 19 December 1958, p. 12.

There can be no doubt that Anglia were doing their level best to persuade the local population that their service would be worth waiting for. It would feature drama produced especially for them by a company that would forever be controlled by local interests and be brought to them via the tallest transmitter mast in Europe. The BBC might have had a television service that was operational in the region, but as 1959 began it is arguable that it was Anglia that had all the momentum. As the *Eastern Daily Press* reported in an article on Christmas shopping trends in Norwich, shops were reporting that ‘rented television sets’ were ‘going out at a fantastic rate’ and that ‘demand exceeds supply’. The people of Norwich and Norfolk were continuing to embrace television and possibly anticipating a new era of it in the region.⁵¹¹

New Year, New Possibilities?

As 1959 began Anglia continued with its public relations activities. It invited representatives of the press to witness the building works at the newly named Anglia House, showing off the progress made in the construction of two studios, technical installations, control rooms and office space. But Anglia was not the only party that needed to undertake construction work in advance of the launch of the regions commercial television service later in the year.⁵¹²

Some viewers would be able to adapt their aerials to receive the new service, but others would need to install another aerial in order to view Anglia. This information was announced at a lecture to television engineers and retailers in Norwich, where it was explained that ‘normally, composite aerials may be installed to take both channels because it is usual for the rival transmitters to be close to each other’. However Norfolk was ‘an exception’ due to the distance between the Tacolneston and Mendlesham sites and that ‘only those householders living in a direct line with both transmitters’ would be able to use a single ‘composite installation’. Once again the simple act of watching television would be more difficult in Norfolk than it was in the rest of the United Kingdom.⁵¹³

Perhaps anticipating public concern following this report, the ITA were quick to issue details on the expected reception area of the new service. They confirmed that over 1.15 million people were within the ‘primary service area’ and would be able to receive a ‘consistently satisfactory’ service. However areas to the North and West of Norfolk, including Sheringham, Cromer and King’s Lynn, would be in a ‘secondary service area’ where some of the potential 500,000 viewers might experience poor reception and that a further 300,000 people would be in a fringe area where reception was acceptable but not guaranteed.⁵¹⁴

Whilst Anglia was continuing to build anticipation for its arrival the BBC were briefly forced into defending the television service that it already operated. The residents of the Ormesby area took exception to the representation of their villages as neglectful towards the elderly in an edition of *Tonight*. The complaints, directed to the BBC both in the *Eastern Daily Press* and in correspondence to the Director General, resulted in a response from the

⁵¹¹ ‘Christmas Shopping Reaches Peak’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 20 December 1958, p. 10.

⁵¹² ‘Anglia TV has the Builders in’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 6 January 1959, p. 5: ‘E. Anglia Television Starts in Autumn’, *Times*, 6 January 1959, p.5

<http://find.galegroup.com.ueaezproxy.uea.ac.uk:2048/tda/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=TTD A&userGroupName=univea&tabID=T003&docPage=article&searchType=BasicSearchForm&docId=CS85548070&type=multipage&contentSet=LTO&version=1.0> [accessed 26/03/2017]

⁵¹³ ‘Some Viewers of Anglia TV will need extra Aerial’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 20 January 1959, p. 8.

⁵¹⁴ ‘Reception Area for Anglia TV Outlined’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 21 January 1959, p. 8.

BBC's Director of Television in which he pointed out that one of the original complainants had not actually seen the programme in question and that a number of their criticisms were misplaced. It would be several months before Anglia had to deal with complaints from viewers and non-viewers. Although not helpful in respect of building the BBC's relationship with the area, events such as this did prove that they had some skill in responding to such situations, Anglia would need to quickly develop a similar skillset.⁵¹⁵

News related to either Anglia or the BBC was in short supply during February, although Anglia did drop another non-committal hint about the potential start date of the service at a meeting with local television traders at the end of the month. Michael Norman, the company's Senior Controller, announced that he thought that test transmissions would begin in June or July and that they would be 'open for business on October 29th, but that is not official'. The ITA archives do not contain any record of the Authority's reaction to this statement, nor is there any correspondence between the two organisations during this time. However it can be assumed that they would have been frustrated by the announcement of a specific date when they had been so clear in their advice to Anglia to not mention a start date more specific than the autumn of 1959.⁵¹⁶

During March Anglia provided further detail on its aims as a regional broadcaster. During a press conference held in 'a Cambridge Don's rooms' Dr Glyn Daniel, Fellow of St. John's College and one of Anglia's directors, explained that the company intended 'to screen programmes with a higher-than-usual intellectual content' but that they were still a commercial service looking to make a profit and deliver content that national and local audiences would appreciate. To this end the company had agreed a deal with Associated Rediffusion that meant they would be broadcasting drama programmes from Anglia to the whole nation. A striking achievement from one of the smaller regional ITV companies that was yet to broadcast a single programme. Daniel also took the opportunity to reinforce the, by now well worn, line that the company would have a 'bias towards regional programmes' and that it aimed to broadcast around 105 minutes of programmes per day that originated in East Anglia and would appeal specifically to the local audience.⁵¹⁷

After this neither the activities of the BBC nor Anglia featured heavily in the *Eastern Daily Press* in the remainder of March. There was however a minor controversy in the region relating to television when Mrs Elaine Kellett, a candidate in the South-West Norfolk by-election, refused an invitation from the BBC to appear on television on the grounds that she believed that 'the issues of this election are too serious to permit her appearing on the same programme as a candidate, who does not represent anybody of responsible opinion, and who clearly commands very little support'.⁵¹⁸

Although a minor event within the bigger picture of television in East Anglia during this period, the controversy about the non-appearance of Kellett does signify that the potential of television to play an important role in facilitating the political process and bringing it to the

⁵¹⁵ 'Ormesby Angry After Seeing Themselves on TV', *Eastern Daily Press*, 23 January 1959, p. 7; 'B.B.C. Reply to Ormesby 'No Suggestion That Aged Were Neglected'', *Eastern Daily Press*, 29 January 1959, p. 5.

⁵¹⁶ 'No Firm Date Yet for I.T.A. Programmes', *Eastern Daily Press*, 26 February 1959, p. 5.

⁵¹⁷ 'Regional Bias Promised by Anglia TV', *Eastern Daily Press*, 12 March 1959, p. 5.

⁵¹⁸ The candidate that Kellett was referring to was Andrew Fountaine, a former Conservative politician running as a National Independent. 'Norfolk Election Row over TV', *Eastern Daily Press*, 20 March 1959, p. 12.

attention of a wider audience had been recognised by the local press. It also demonstrates that even in 1959 some politicians remained extremely wary of appearing on television.

Television Licence Ownership before the arrival of Anglia.

The licence fee data for the period ending 30 March 1959 is the last available before the launch of Anglia Television. Once again it shows that growth in the ownership of television licence in Norfolk and Suffolk was higher than in any of the comparable regions. Although the gap between it and Cornwall and Devon had reduced considerably, and the rate of year-on-year growth in the two counties continued to decline. In comparison to the United Kingdom as a whole Norfolk and Suffolk continued to grow at a rate that was double that of the national average, see Table 9.

Table. 9
Television Licences in 1958-1959.⁵¹⁹

Region	Television Licences in March 1958	Television Licences in March 1959	Percentage Increase from 1958 to 1959
Norfolk and Suffolk	108,816	145,667	33.87%
Cornwall and Devon	154,130	196,464	27.47%
Northumberland and Durham	320,867	392,464	22.31%
Lancashire and Cheshire	1,133,004	1,263,688	11.53%
London and Home Counties	1,978,756	2,153,348	8.82%
England, Scotland and Wales	8,004,513	9,248,834	15.54%

Although it is impossible to assign causality to any individual factors, the combination of a maturing television service from the BBC, that now at least occasionally featured content from the region, alongside the promotional activities of Anglia Television must be considered to be potentially significant driving forces behind the continuing increase in licence fee purchases beyond the rate seen in the rest of the country.

A spanner in Anglia's plans.

Up until this point much had gone to plan for Anglia. The ITA had largely responded positively to their plans and requests, even if they remained sceptical about some of them. The presence of the Norfolk News Company as shareholders within the company had, if nothing else, ensured that they received coverage in the local press. However in April the first significant challenge to Anglia's plans appeared.

⁵¹⁹ Based on data from *The British Broadcasting Corporation Annual Report and Accounts for the Year 1957-58* Cmnd. 533, pp. 101-2; *The British Broadcasting Corporation Annual Report and Accounts for the Year 1958-59* Cmnd.834, pp. 109-10.

Part of Anglia's larger plan involved the station having control of the so called 'Kent satellite', a transmitter that would, as the name suggests, bring ITV programmes to the Kent area. The ITA recognised that the area did have a distinctive regional identity but also felt that the size of the area, when combined with the fact that broadcasts from three existing ITV companies would be able to be received by a large proportion of the audience, meant that the 'prospects of financial disaster' if a new contractor were appointed to serve the area were 'all too real'.⁵²⁰

The ITA's proposed solution was therefore to allow one of the existing companies to operate Kent as a satellite spin-off of their main operations. They invited all the existing companies to apply for the right to operate it. Anglia applied with the view that as they were close by and would have one of the smaller audiences, their application would be looked upon favourably. Despite these facts and Anglia's enlistment of 'eminent local Kent supporters' the ITA's decision was to award the satellite station to Southern Television instead. A decision which deeply frustrated the Anglia board.⁵²¹

Townshend wrote to Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick, the Chairman of the ITA, to express his disappointment at the decision and to inform him that the effect of the decision was one that left the company with 'an ambitious programme and possibly even fewer people to pay for it than originally envisaged'. Although the area in question had obviously never been promised to Anglia by the ITA, the fact that it was geographically closer to the Mendlesham transmitter than Southern's transmitter at Chillerton Down, clearly suggested to Anglia that they were the logical choice. They had therefore planned an ambitious programme output and the funding of the return-link to London that they had asked for on the premise that their audience would ultimately include the Kent region. For once Anglia's ambition had gotten the better of them.⁵²²

However, Anglia were not prepared to simply let the matter drop. Townshend arranged to meet with Kirkpatrick and Fraser in May to further discuss their worries, only to be 'disappointed with the results'. In fact so disappointed were Anglia that they sent a memo to the Authority which outlined their grievances. In it they pointed out that ITA's original invitation for applications for the East Anglia contract described the region as being '...from Burnham-on-Crouch in the south, through Peterborough in the west etc.' and that they had consequently pursued their 'Conversion Campaign no less rigorously in the south-eastern part of our region than in the rest of it'. Because of this, Anglia argued that the terms on which they had been offered the East Anglian contract had been 'altered unilaterally by the Authority without notification' and they demanded that because of this the ITA should provide a satellite station in Lincolnshire to be controlled by Anglia.⁵²³

It is not surprising to find that no details of this development were reported in the *Eastern Daily Press*. It would after all have removed some of the gloss from the public image of a professional, efficient and ambitious company that Anglia had been so careful to create and generated further animosity with the ITA. Instead whilst the conflict with the ITA was taking place privately, publicly Anglia continued to promote itself in the local area, inviting

⁵²⁰ Sendall, *Independent Television in Britain: Volume 2*, p. 15.

⁵²¹ Ibid. p. 16.

⁵²² Letter, *Townshend to Kirkpatrick*, 1 April 1959, ITA Archive.

⁵²³ Letter, *Townshend to Kirkpatrick*, 20 May 1959; Memo, *Memorandum to the Independent Television Authority*, 20 May 1959, pp. 1-3, ITA Archive.

the famous actor Laurence Harvey, who was to appear in Anglia's first play, to visit Anglia House whilst it was still being built. Harvey's presence, he was an associate of John and James Woolf and would be nominated for a best actor Oscar in their 1959 film *Room at the Top*, was clearly intended to add some glamour to Anglia's reputation at the time. It sent the message that Anglia was not just a provincial television company reliant upon local talent, but rather one that would produce programming that would compete with the best that the rest of the country, and the world could produce.⁵²⁴

On your marks...

It was impossible for the BBC to be unaware of Anglia's intentions towards the region and the progress that they, alongside the ITA, had made towards launching the station at some point during the autumn of 1959. Clearly the BBC could not be unresponsive to the challenge that the arrival of Anglia would pose. Maintaining a situation whereby the only broadcasts about events in the region were occasional and originated from London or the Midlands would not be tenable. Its competitor would have purpose built studios and by its definition aimed primarily to serve the needs of the region. Excuses relating to the cost and technical difficulty of broadcasting from the region would no longer be adequate justifications for the BBC's approach to East Anglia. Something would need to change if the BBC were to compete in the sphere of television.

The nature of what that change would be began to emerge in May 1959 in a BBC document by Paul Findlay the Head of News and Current Affairs Administration. In it he outlined that the BBC's Director General had given approval 'to mount an East Anglian television news bulletin from London to cover the period until the Norwich studio become available some time in the year 1960/1'. More specifically the intention was that from 'some date in advance of the opening of Anglia TV', Norwich would break away from the London's *Town and Around* programme at 6.15pm and instead broadcast 'a separate East Anglian bulletin until 6.20.p.m.'⁵²⁵

Findlay pointed out that doing this was not without problems for the BBC. Broadcasting in this way from Alexandra Palace would mean that it would be impossible 'to inject film into the Midland, North and Scottish programme between the period 6.15 and 6.20.p.m'. Yet the 'importance of mounting a Norwich bulletin is, however, so great that it will probably justify accepting this disadvantage'. This sentence alone clearly demonstrates a historic shift in the importance that the BBC was placing on the East Anglian region. The region had previously been forced to fit around the needs of the nation, this plan suggested that to a small extent the nation might need to fit around the needs of East Anglia.⁵²⁶

When Findlay's plan was put in front of representatives it was refined in light of some technical developments with the BBC's television network. Rather than take *Town and Around* from London prior to then receiving a 'local' news bulletin, the altered plan was for East Anglia to take a five minute bulletin of news from the Midlands followed by a 'local' bulletin from London. Summarising the position after the meeting Findlay pointed out that this was 'not a very satisfactory compromise' since it was 'unlikely that many East Anglians

⁵²⁴ 'Laurence Harvey Visits Anglia Television', *Eastern Daily Press*, 22 April 1959, p. 5.

⁵²⁵ Document, *Paul Findlay, East Anglian Television News Bulletin from London*, 19 May 1959, BBC WAC R28/733/3, p. 1.

⁵²⁶ *Ibid.*

will be prepared to sit through five minutes of news of Birmingham and the Midlands, especially when Commercial TV are offering an exclusively East Anglian bulletin, locally produced'. He noted that the Director of News and Current Affairs, Hugh Carleton Greene, was 'very anxious' that the BBC should 'not allow Anglia TV to be on the air with an East Anglian news bulletin without some reply being made by the BBC'. Together they wondered whether it might be possible to bring forward the completion of planned studio facilities in Norwich, even if this meant the creation of a simpler studio, in order to 'relieve us of the necessity of doing the bulletin from London' and East Anglians from 'sitting through five minutes of Birmingham news or switching to Commercial TV'.⁵²⁷

Within three days of Findlay's memo it was confirmed that an immediate review into the provision of a Norwich television studio had been agreed during a meeting of the BBC's Television Controllers and that although there seemed to be 'little prospect of finding additional finance this year', in view of the Director of News and Current Affairs 'special interest' they would 'see whether it was possible to expedite the project and at a lower price'.⁵²⁸

Amazingly, given the timeframes normally involved with the BBC approving any investment for East Anglia, it took less than four weeks after the meeting of the Television Controllers for the Director General of the BBC to confirm that out of all the ideas for television in East Anglia 'he preferred the provision of a ten-minute bulletin put out from a lash-up studio in Norwich itself' as an attempt to be on air before Anglia went into operation. After years of delay and disinterest the imminent arrival of Anglia Television combined with the presence and influence of Hugh Carleton Greene had finally spurred the BBC into delivering television from the region.⁵²⁹

The BBC expected Anglia to be on air by 29 October meaning that the BBC had little time to construct a studio service from scratch. Nevertheless the BBC's Engineering Division believed that 'a studio could be provided by 1 October if an immediate start were made' and the Director-General therefore ordered work to begin. The race to be the first to provide a locally produced television news bulletin for East Anglia was on.⁵³⁰

Get Set...

Whilst the BBC could to an extent afford to remain fairly quiet about its latest plans for the region until definitive progress had been made and a start date could be accurately given, it was important for Anglia to maintain interest in its nascent service. Aubrey Buxton had already 'initiated what he called the Conversion Campaign'. As has been seen this clearly involved using the local press to promote the company to the local population, but it is important to note that Anglia also attempted to 'visit every town and village, meeting as many local people as possible'. As national events of the summer unfolded it would turn out

⁵²⁷ As his family was from East Anglia Hugh Carleton Greene had a vested interest in ensuring that the BBC was not outshone in the region by Anglia when it arrived. Memo, *Head of News and Current Affairs Administration to Controller, Television Administration East Anglian Television News Bulletin*, 1 June 1959, BBC WAC R28/733/3.

⁵²⁸ Memo, *Controller, Television Administration to Head of News and Current Affairs Administration East Anglian Television News Bulletin*, 3 June 1959, BBC WAC R28/733/3.

⁵²⁹ Minutes, *Board of Management Minutes of 28 June 1959, Minute 279 Area News on Television: Norwich Studio (222)*, 28 June 1959, BBC WAC R28/436/1.

⁵³⁰ *Ibid.*

to be very fortunate that Anglia was not entirely reliant upon the local press to help it entice an audience.⁵³¹

During the spring of 1959 a dispute had broken out involving nine printing unions and the British Federation of Master Printers and the Newspaper Society over wage increases and the desire by print workers to work a maximum of a forty hour week. Negotiations and balloting over the issue took place from April until June but the spectre of a strike that would stop the publication ‘of provincial newspapers, London weekly papers other than Sundays and periodicals’ loomed throughout the period.⁵³²

On the 11 June the general secretary of the Printing and Kindred Trades Federation announced that despite 4,000 firms reaching agreement with their workers, a strike had been called involving 100,000 workers, with the consequence that ‘most provincial newspapers’ would not appear after Saturday, June 20’. Although there is no record of any communication between the ITA and Anglia on this issue, the effect that it would have on them both was clear. An important channel of promotion that had been used by both to engage with the local audience in East Anglia had been turned off.⁵³³

The absence of any press record of the actions of Anglia Television in the area during the strike period, which carried on for 6 weeks and occurred at a crucial time for Anglia’s promotional efforts, has resulted in a significant gap in the understanding of what Anglia was doing during this period. The lack of information on this period contained within the ITA archives alongside a general lack of academic interest in this period of Anglia’s history has meant that this gap has remained unfilled until this point. However it is possible to fill in some of the gaps and highlight an event of Anglia’s past that has previously been ignored.⁵³⁴

As has already been mentioned, Anglia undertook a campaign of ‘in person’ engagement with their potential audience alongside their press based activities. This campaign ran throughout the strike affected months of summer 1959. In his autobiography Dick Joice mentions that one particularly effective weapon in the campaign was the helicopter that the company had hired and painted in the ‘Anglia colours of yellow and grey’. It toured the area and dropped down in the centres of villages and towns where halls had been hired or marquees erected in order that ‘locals could come and meet their new TV people’, be given ‘a sandwich and a sherry or coffee’ and be told ‘something about the programmes that were to come’.⁵³⁵

⁵³¹ Joice, *Full Circle*, p. 148.

⁵³² ‘Strike Move by Print Unions’, *Times*, 3 April 1959, p. 10.

<http://find.galegroup.com.ueaezproxy.uea.ac.uk:2048/ttda/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=TTD&&userGroupName=univea&tabID=T003&docPage=article&searchType=BasicSearchForm&docId=CS168516739&type=multipage&contentSet=LTO&version=1.0> [accessed 26/03/2017]

⁵³³ ‘Provincial Paper Stop on June 20’, *Times*, 12 June 1959, p. 12.

<http://find.galegroup.com.ueaezproxy.uea.ac.uk:2048/ttda/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=TTD&&userGroupName=univea&tabID=T003&docPage=article&searchType=BasicSearchForm&docId=CS203906252&type=multipage&contentSet=LTO&version=1.0> [accessed 26/03/2017]

⁵³⁴ ‘Print Dispute Settled’, *Times*, 1 August 1959, p. 6.

<http://find.galegroup.com.ueaezproxy.uea.ac.uk:2048/ttda/infomark.do?&source=gale&prodId=TTD&&userGroupName=univea&tabID=T003&docPage=article&searchType=BasicSearchForm&docId=CS100883713&type=multipage&contentSet=LTO&version=1.0> [accessed 26/03/2017]

⁵³⁵ Joice (1991), *Full Circle*, p. 149.

Whilst Joice's description suggests a campaign that combined both 'shock and awe' with the civility of an afternoon tea, these events had even more of a sprinkling of the glamour of 'show business' than he suggests. Forbes Taylor, a colleague of Joice who joined Anglia as its Head of Films, recalls that when the helicopter landed on the town sports fields and village greens around the region 'three beauties, called, "The Anglia Helibelles", tumbled out accompanied by Aubrey Buxton'. This dramatic arrival also featured the presence of an outside broadcast vehicle on top of which performers would perch and put on a show for the assembled audience. Buxton clearly knew how to put on a populist show and accompanied these spectacles with the delivery of one million leaflets to homes in the region announcing the launch date of the service.⁵³⁶

Fig. 20

Anglia Television Helicopter (G-ANFH) and the 'Anglia Helibelles'.⁵³⁷



Fig. 21

Anglia Television Helicopter (G-ANFH) and Outside Broadcast Vans.⁵³⁸



⁵³⁶ Forbes Taylor, *Toy Town Telly and Stone Age Filming*, (Cambridge: Vanguard, 2013), p. 174; Clive Jenkins, *Power Bind the Screen*, (London: Macgibbon and Kee, 1961), p. 239.

⁵³⁷ Image courtesy of Professional Pilots Rumour Network, copyright unknown.

<<http://www.pprune.org/rotorheads/419023-rotary-nostalgia-thread-61.html#post6971877>> [accessed 02/01/2017]

⁵³⁸ Ibid.

These jaunts around the East Anglian countryside and mass leafleting were however not the only activity that Anglia was undertaking during the press blackout. It was also beginning to make television content in the region.

Whilst it is well known that Anglia Television's opening night transmissions via the Mendlesham transmitter took place at the end of October it is less widely acknowledged that the company, with some considerable assistance, had contributed to the ITV network at an earlier date than this. Stimulated by the announcement of a General Election, the ITA had decided that it wished to do a 'dry-run' of the network system in advance of the election night coverage to make sure that everything worked. Although Anglia would not be on air at the time of the General Election, Dick Joice claims that the ITA told Anglia that they 'could be linked into the services of the stations already broadcasting if we were ready' allowing them to be a contributor to the 'dry-run' programme which would be a live presentation of song and dance material from around the country.⁵³⁹

Strictly speaking the contribution was a joint effort with Associated-Rediffusion and the insert from Anglia was produced by Joan Kemp-Welch, one of their producers. Predictably the musical format that was chosen to represent the region was one that emphasised the rural and agricultural characteristics of the region – a country and western hoe down at a country farm location. Joice's own farm was chosen as the location, although it was too tidy and modern for Kemp-Welch's tastes. She wanted 'scrap implements and old worn-out machinery' to make it look like a 'proper farm' but settled for a stack of baled straw. She also envisioned an active audience of one hundred farmers dressed in 'hill-billy' fashion. This request was fulfilled by the Fakenham Young Farmers group who 'entered into the spirit of the thing with great gusto, checked shirts, Stetsons, cowboy boots and all.'⁵⁴⁰

It is difficult to believe that this type of show is exactly what Anglia had in mind when it was applying for the regional contract, or that it imagined its first contribution to the ITV network work be in the form of a musical number. But when *Summersong* was eventually broadcast on the evening of 19 August the network audience was confronted with the stereotypical image of singing farmers as part of their first engagement with Anglia. During its official launch night and throughout its subsequent history Anglia would not deny its rural origins but would aim to prove to the network companies and the audience that it had far more to offer.⁵⁴¹

The end of the strike.

Anglia and the ITA's promotional activities involving the local press returned with a bang when the print strike ended. At the beginning of August arrangements were made with the constructors of the ITA mast at Mendlesham for an *Eastern Daily Press* report and a photographer to ascend to its peak. The resulting story and image emphasised the scale of the construction in a way that had not been seen before and reinforced the idea that the arrival of Anglia would be a momentous occasion. See Fig. 22.

⁵³⁹ Joice, *Full Circle*, p. 146.

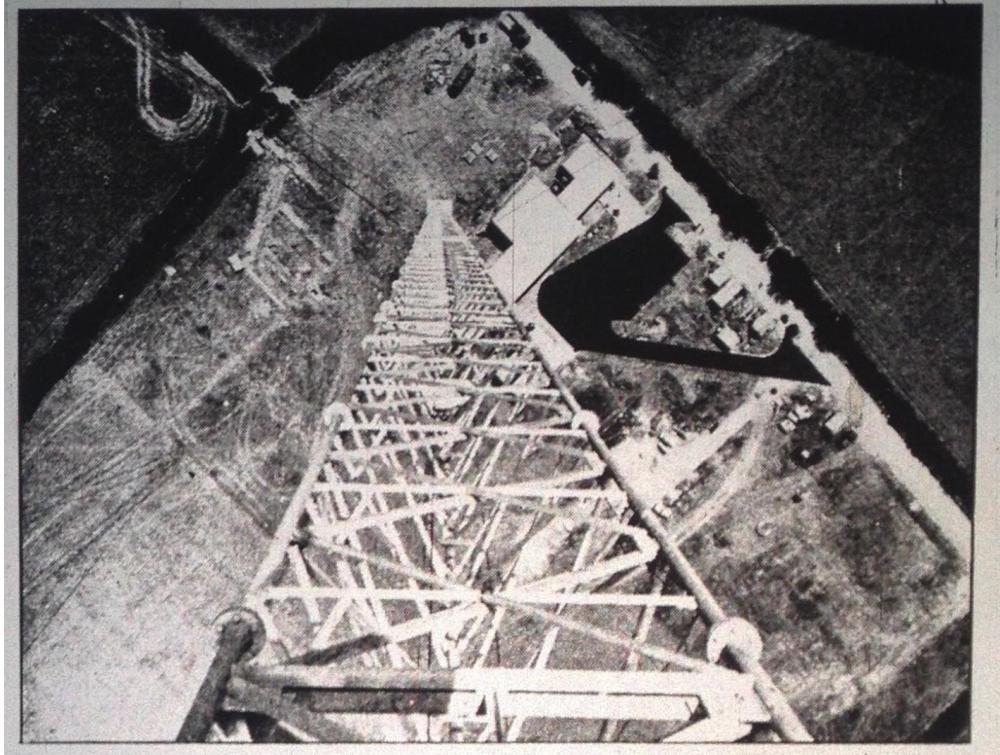
⁵⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 146-8.

⁵⁴¹ *TV Times*, *Listing for Summersong*, 19 August 1959 TVTiP, "Summersong".
<<http://bufvc.ac.uk/tvandradio/tvtip/index.php/prog/30951>> [accessed 04/03/2017]

Fig. 22

View from the Top of the Mendlesham Transmitter as featured in the Eastern Daily Press.⁵⁴²

An "E.D.P." reporter [who, with a photographer, took a 900-ft. trip up the new I.T.V. mast at Mendlesham, writes that at 200 ft. "the vertigo was folding up the base of my spine."]. Their conveyance was a "tray," 2 ft. 6 in. by 4 ft., "with a rail which did not reach waist high," suspended from a steel rope.



Ten days after the publication of this dramatic story the *Eastern Daily Press* carried a small announcement, that the launch date of Anglia had been brought forward slightly and would now take place on 27 October. The following day it announced that the Director-General of the ITA was visiting Norfolk to inspect the facilities at both the transmitting station and at Anglia's studios. Given the importance of the launch date, it is surprising to discover that it was announced in the local press with such little fanfare and also that no readers commented on it in any way over the subsequent days. It may be the case that everyone in the region already new the details, unfortunately none of the oral history interviews featured recollections of the build up to Anglia's launch so it is difficult to ascertain whether this was the case.⁵⁴³

The Director-General's visit to the area did at least result in more fulsome coverage. During his visit to the studios at Anglia House he explained to the press that regional programmes tended to be shown during the day time rather than during peak viewing hours and that the regional nature of the ITV network was a fundamental aim of the ITA from its inception. He

⁵⁴² 'Bravado sent them up I.T.V. Mast', *Eastern Daily Press*, 10 August 1959, p. 6.

⁵⁴³ 'Earlier Opening for Anglia TV', *Eastern Daily Press*, 20 August 1959, p. 10; 'Director of ITA Visiting Norfolk', *Eastern Daily Press*, 21 August 1959, p. 8.

also indicted that the work being undertaken by Anglia was an example of the idea of an ‘independent regional company’ being ‘carried out very successfully’.⁵⁴⁴

Now aware of the exact date at which Anglia was due to launch, the hitherto quiet BBC sprang into action at the end of the month to announce that from October 5th a ‘television studio for news and topical events in East Anglia and the East Midlands’ would be opened in Norwich. When quizzed by a reporter on whether the imminent opening of Anglia Television had anything to do with the timing of the BBC, the BBC’s Midland Regional Controller was recorded as answering ‘No Comment’. However, he accompanied that answer with a smile before commenting that this latest development was part of a ‘logical development which had extended over four years’. As the previously identified internal BBC documentation shows, whilst there were plans to expand the television service into the East Anglia region, the speed at which this occurred was substantially increased as a result of both the actions of Anglia Television, as well as pressure from Paul Findlay and Hugh Carleton Greene within the BBC.⁵⁴⁵

Meanwhile Anglia and the ITA continued to make positive announcements during September. The first was that Norman Hackforth, the voice of radio’s *Twenty Questions*, was to join Anglia as their musical director and the second was that 332,000 home in the region were, according to research by Television Audience Measurement Limited, ready to receive Anglia television when it began broadcasting in October. The region was clearly getting ready to embrace a new television experience.⁵⁴⁶

Go!

As Findlay and Carleton Greene at the BBC had hoped, but initially feared impossible, the BBC began broadcasting at the beginning of October, just over three weeks before Anglia’s opening night. The first news bulletin, broadcast from temporary facilities at St. Catherine’s Close in Norwich took place on the 5 October. It was read by Geoffrey Harvey, a German master at the City of Norwich School. The historic occasion was witnessed by dignitaries from both Norwich and further afield. Attendees included the Lord Mayor and Lady Mayoress of Norwich, the BBC’s head of the Midland Regional Programmes, sound and David Bryson, the BBC’s representative in the region.⁵⁴⁷

Also present was Carleton Greene, who was introduced to viewers on screen and expressed that ‘as a member of an East Anglian family he was particularly glad to be taking part in this logical development of the existing local news service on sound radio’. Although he conspicuously failed to mention that the timing of this ‘logical development’ had much to do with his personal intervention, savvy viewers must have realised that he had been involved in the process.⁵⁴⁸

⁵⁴⁴ ‘ITV’s Regional Shows Mostly in Day-Time Says Sir Robert’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 22 August 1959, p. 5.

⁵⁴⁵ ‘BBC Steps up East Anglian Coverage’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 28 August 1959, p. 9.

⁵⁴⁶ ‘Radio Voice joins Anglia Television’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 24 September 1959, p. 12; ‘332,000 East Anglia Homes Ready for ITV’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 26 September 1959, p. 16.

⁵⁴⁷ ‘BBC’s East Anglian TV News-Reader’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 5 October 1959, p. 8; ‘BBC Opens Interim TV Studio for East Anglia’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 6 October 1959, p. 9.

⁵⁴⁸ *Ibid.*

Internally the BBC did little to hide their delight at what they had achieved in the short time that had been available to them. Bryson's quarterly report to the Controller of the Midland Region from later in the year highlighted the benefit that they had achieved by 'getting in first'. He wrote that 'For three weeks we had the whole TV 6.10 p.m. audience in our area; and gained the prestige of showing East Anglians themselves on their screens at a time when the flattery value of this (apart from its real public service aspect) had most impact i.e. at the beginning before local news becomes accepted, if not commonplace.'⁵⁴⁹

As had become the norm, the positive publicity of one broadcaster was soon countered by an announcement from the other attempting to steal back momentum. This time it was Anglia's turn to respond. Two days after the BBC's first bulletin they announced the first details of the programme schedule for their opening night of broadcasting. In contrast to the BBC's ten-minute offering of local news, Anglia would be showing a half hour long opening programme presenting the studios and production facilities alongside film showing off the region to its viewers. Importantly Anglia would also be transmitting its first play on the network later in the evening. On its first night Anglia offered an embarrassment of cultural riches for both local and national audiences, arguably delivering more for the local audience in a single evening than the BBC had achieved in the previous few years.⁵⁵⁰

It is no surprise that coverage of Anglia greatly increased during the final week before its launch. Anticipating that many of their readers would now be even more interested in television, the *Eastern Daily Press* announced that commencing from the launch of Anglia's service they would be publishing the Anglia schedule alongside the BBC one. These would also be 'presented in an easier-to-read form' and a day later an advert appeared in the paper announcing that an 'Anglia edition' of the TV Times would be available in the region from 22 October. There would be no reason for viewers in the area to be ignorant of which programmes they would be able to choose from.

It was during this week that Anglia finally revealed to the public its 'Knight in Armour' station ident that would become so closely identified with the Anglia brand. It would be the first image that viewers would see on screen after the station was officially opened by the Chairman of the ITA, Sir Ivone Kirkpatrick, a symbol of noble and gallant intent as Anglia rode into the battlefield of television.⁵⁵¹

Opening Day.

The *Eastern Daily Press* coverage of Anglia's first day dwarfed that of any other event related to television or broadcasting in the region. An editorial column on the opening was to be expected, this one argued that there had been 'a demand for a broadcasting station for the Eastern Counties for twenty years before the BBC, in 1956 opened its transmitter at Tacolneston and its sound broadcasting studios in Norwich' and that although ITV would also be coming 'late to East Anglia' hopes were high as Anglia could learn from the

⁵⁴⁹ Extract from E.A.R.'s Quarterly Report to C.M.R. of 5th November 1959, BBC WAC R28/456/1.

⁵⁵⁰ 'Opening Plans for Anglia Television', *Eastern Daily Press*, 7 October 1959, p. 4.

⁵⁵¹ 'Today's Programmes', *Eastern Daily Press*, 22 October 1959, p. 10; 'TV Times Advertisement', *Eastern Daily Press*, 23 October 1959, p. 14; 'Anglia TV's Knight in Armour', *Eastern Daily Press* 24 October 1959, p. 10; *Introducing Anglia* (1959) <<http://www.eafa.org.uk/catalogue/203270>> [accessed 04/02/2017]

experiences of the other ITV companies. However, the production of a multi-page supplement was something new and exciting.⁵⁵²

The supplement featured articles on the 'regional balance' that Anglia was aiming to achieve, a message from Lord Townshend in which he praised the efforts of all those who had worked to make Anglia a reality. It also featured a history of the 'Anglia Knight', profiles of the stars that would be featuring on the first night; including Laurence Harvey, Susan Hampshire and Roger Gage and guidance on buying a television set. In addition other articles included a behind the scenes tour of Anglia's studios and office featuring the state of the art Tape Operated Programme Switching and Indicating Equipment know as 'TOPSIE', as well as a history of ITA and the Television Act, alongside numerous adverts for television retailers and suppliers to Anglia.⁵⁵³

A substantial portion of the back page of the following day's newspaper was also dedicated to discussing the first night. Much of the coverage was fixated upon the technical qualities of the reception rather than the content and style of any of the programmes. Perhaps understandable given the regions previous experiences with television and wireless. According to the main article the overall experience of viewers in Norfolk was that the picture quality of the service that they had received was good, including in towns such as Cromer, Sheringham and King's Lynn that had previously been considered to be in the 'secondary service area'.⁵⁵⁴

The newspaper asked a selection of viewers what they thought of the adverts that they had seen. It received varied reactions including one who said that they could 'put up with the constant advertising interruptions' if the sample of local programmes that had been broadcast were representative of what was to come in the future. Beyond this it is difficult to ascertain what the audience thought of what they had seen due to a lack of evidence.⁵⁵⁵

The resident film and television critic of the newspaper however definitely was impressed by what he saw. He wrote a particularly complimentary and elaborate critique of the evening. He described tuning in to the new service as like opening 'the door to the Aladdin's cave of Anglia television' and identified *The Violent Years* as 'a powerful romantic drama that set a standard it will be difficult to maintain'. Stating that alongside the fact that 'technically everything went without a hitch' it was the triumph of the evening.⁵⁵⁶

After the first week of broadcasts by Anglia there was at least some clarity about the number of viewers in the region who had watched the opening night. Television Audience Measurement (TAM) had undertaken special survey work during the opening days of the service. It indicated that 102,000 homes, 48% of the total number able to receive the service, in the region had watched the opening ceremony and *Introducing Anglia* programme. During

⁵⁵² 'Anglia TV', *Eastern Daily Press*, 27 October 1959, p. 4.

⁵⁵³ 'Eastern Daily Press Supplement, Today's Inauguration of Anglia TV Service', *Eastern Daily Press*, 27 October 1959, pp. 1-12.

⁵⁵⁴ 'East Anglia's Own Commercial TV Station Gets a Good Reception on Opening Day', *Eastern Daily Press*, 28 October 1959, p. 12.

⁵⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵⁶ 'A Night of Discovery for Six Counties', *Eastern Daily Press*, 28 October 1959, p. 12.

the entire evening 81% of the homes in the region that could watch ITV had done so at some point.⁵⁵⁷

It is difficult to talk about what the general public thought of Anglia's initial broadcast, again the oral history interviews failed to generate any significant memories of the opening evening. However there is evidence of the BBC's view of Anglia. David Bryson included in his quarterly report to the Controller of the Midland Region that in Anglia's first week there had been elements of 'amateurishness' and that 'at least one of their news department's programmes was a shambles'. In comparison he felt that the BBC's bulletins from Norfolk during their first week had been 'of a satisfactory professional standard' despite the fact that they had only 'obtained cameras for dummy runs two days before the opening'.⁵⁵⁸

Despite the flaws that Bryson identified in Anglia he cautioned against judging them to harshly or writing them off too early. He identified that they were 'cutting out the amateurishness very quickly' and were 'beginning to profit from their better facilities'. In addition they were benefiting from good, although not 'disinterested' press in the area. He assessed that they looked 'to be making a serious and determined effort in local broadcasting'. This is something that given the limited resources available to Bryson and his BBC colleagues in Norwich they would always struggle to do in regards to television.⁵⁵⁹

The Aftermath.

Yet despite the advantage of being new and innovative to East Anglians, shows from ITV that were being shown on Anglia were actually less popular in East Anglia than they were in the rest of the country. According to the TAM ratings in late November nationally the top ten most popular programmes were all broadcast by ITV. In East Anglia four BBC programmes were featured in the top ten, making the region 'the odd man out among the country's television areas'. The region still seemed to hold a certain affinity for the BBC's television service and this continued well into December.⁵⁶⁰

At the end of the year the question of whether or not it was a laggard or a leader when it came to the popularity of ITV programmes was occupying the television and radio critic of the *Eastern Daily Press*. In his final column of the year the critic argued that rather than being behind the rest of the country, East Anglia was leading a trend whereby ITV's lead over the BBC in respect of the popularity of their programmes would erode away in 1960 'until a much healthier 50-50 balance is reached and held'.⁵⁶¹

As is often the case with predictions, the opposite of the critic's prophecy then proceeded to come true. The first set of TAM ratings for 1960 showed that nine of the ten most popular television programmes in the East Anglian region now originated from ITV and by the end of the month this had increased to all ten programmes.⁵⁶²

⁵⁵⁷ 'Most East Anglian Sets Can Get ITV', *Eastern Daily Press*, 5 November 1959, p. 6.

⁵⁵⁸ Extract from E.A.R.'s Quarterly Report to C.M.R. of 5th November 1959, BBC WAC R28/456/1.

⁵⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁶⁰ 'P.C. Dixon and Concentration' in TV Lead', *Eastern Daily Press*, 21 November 1959, p. 7; 'East Anglia Alone Puts BBC Top', *Eastern Daily Press*, 11 December 1959, p. 12.

⁵⁶¹ 'Competitive TV Impact on E. Anglia', *Eastern Daily Press*, 30 December 1959.

⁵⁶² 'ITV Takes Nine of TAM's Top E. Anglian Ten', *Eastern Daily Press*, 11 January 1960, p. 5; 'BBC Out of TV Top Ten', *Eastern Daily Press*, 15 January 1960, p. 10; 'East Anglian Top Ten are all ITV', *Eastern Daily Press*, 22 January 1960, p. 7.

Interestingly Anglia's own shows seemed to be more popular with the national audience than they were with the local one. By March all four of the dramas that ITV had produced for the network had featured in the top ten list for the week in which they were broadcast. But whilst *The Trap*, Anglia's fourth drama production had been seen by over 12 million people and featured in seventh place in the national top ten chart, it failed to feature in the top ten in East Anglia. As this was part of Anglia's quota of locally produced programming, one does have to ask whether the intended audience was a local or national one and whether what Anglia was doing by producing these shows was within the spirit of what the ITA intended when it created the quota.⁵⁶³

Regardless of whether or not the local audience appreciated all the programming that Anglia was creating, it was the case that the ITV audience of the region was growing in size. TAM data showed that the amount of homes capable of receiving ITV in the area had increased from 213000 to 302000 during the period from the launch to the middle of March.⁵⁶⁴

The number of people who had access to all forms of television in Norfolk and Suffolk was also continuing to grow as the licence fee data in Table. 10 indicates. By the end of March the number of licences in the two counties totalled over 185,000 and whilst there was no spike in licence applications as a result of the arrival of Anglia Television and ITV, the region continued its trend of growing at a faster rate than any of the regions chosen for comparison and the United Kingdom more generally.

Table. 10
Television Licences in 1959-1960.⁵⁶⁵

Region	Television Licences in March 1959	Television Licences in March 1960	Percentage Increase from 1959 to 1960
Norfolk and Suffolk	145,667	185,270	27.19%
Cornwall and Devon	196,464	233,685	18.95%
Northumberland and Durham	392,464	459,979	17.20%
Lancashire and Cheshire	1,263,688	1,386,208	9.7%
London and Home Counties	2,153,348	2,347,085	9.00%
England, Scotland and Wales	9,248,834	10,326,973	11.66%

⁵⁶³ 'Over 12 Million Saw Anglia TV's 'The Trap'', *Eastern Daily Press*, 18 March 1960, p. 12.

⁵⁶⁴ 'ITV Now has Million East Anglian Viewers', *Eastern Daily Press*, 25 March 1960, p. 14.

⁵⁶⁵ Based on data from *The British Broadcasting Corporation Annual Report and Accounts for the Year 1958-59 Cmnd.834*, pp. 109-10; *The British Broadcasting Corporation Annual Report and Accounts for the Year 1959-60 Cmnd.1174*, pp. 121-2.

Summary.

After many years of waiting viewers in East Anglia finally had television of their own. Having previously been largely side-lined in respect of both wireless and television, the imminent arrival of Anglia Television was a catalyst for the BBC to take positive action towards the region. The establishment of only a small news studio meant that the BBC would not be competing on the same level as Anglia in terms of locally originated programming but it still represented a marked change in approach.

Even the newspaper strike that occurred during the summer of Anglia's promotional campaign seems somehow appropriate. The stop-start, delayed process of the region getting television was reflected right up until the last moment. And what did East Anglians do when they finally had a television service created to serve them. They did what came naturally to them, they did different. Initially becoming the only region in the United Kingdom to favour BBC over ITV programmes.

The arrival of both commercial and publicly funded television, broadcasting from within the region was a paradigm shift for East Anglia by itself, the fact that Anglia was also aiming to show off the region to the rest of the world was merely the icing on a much anticipated cake.

Conclusion: Mind the Gap.

Now, we come here, right at the start, to an extremely important principle, which is the different points of view you get when you change your level of magnification. That is, to say you can look at something with a microscope and see it a certain way; you can look at it with the naked eye and see it in a certain way; you can look at it with a telescope and you can see it in another way. Now, which level of magnification is the correct one? Well, obviously they are all correct. They're just different points of view.⁵⁶⁶

Given that for the first time a history of broadcasting in East Anglia from 1923-1960 has now been created, the first question to be answered is to what extent is this history any different to the histories of broadcasting in Britain that had already been written. In reality of course this new history fits inside the old. The events that occurred during the period still took place, but it is now possible to see that several them have a different meaning when viewed from the perspective of East Anglia. As Watts suggests there is no 'correct' point of view, just 'different' ones that can help us to understand things on different levels.

The History: Pre-1950.

It is clear that from the beginning of organised broadcasting, that is to say from the formation of the BBC as a 'company', there was an interest in wireless broadcasting within East Anglia. Potential listeners within the region had reached the same conclusion as the members of the Sykes Committee in believing that wireless broadcasting could bring the isolated towns and villages in which they lived into contact with metropolitan areas. Whether they believed in this because of the great 'social and political possibilities' of broadcasting or because they simply desired more entertainment is difficult to ascertain but in some ways is unimportant. What was important is that there was an active interest in being part of broadcasting.⁵⁶⁷

Yet interest did not guarantee access. Although the initial expansionary activities of the British Broadcasting Company did much to spread wireless across the country during 1923-24 with the establishment of 'relay stations', scholarly attention has previously been focused upon the 80% of the population that were served by the expanded service rather than the 20% that were not. The existing historical investigations have failed to consider that the absence of something can be just as important as its presence.

It is not argued that East Anglians did not listen to the BBC's wireless service at this point, multiple evidence from the *Eastern Daily Press* clearly proves that they did, or perhaps that they at least tried to. Instead the point that needs to be acknowledged is that the region was never really a part of the BBC's plans. Its inclusion in the BBC's 'non-regional', London region, alongside the city and the home counties, may have had some justification on technical and financial grounds but did nevertheless have the consequence of classifying the

⁵⁶⁶ Alan Watts, 'Sociopathic Society: The Military-Industrial Concept of Self'. <<http://pauseandreflectnews.blogspot.co.uk/2014/12/sociopathic-society-military-industrial.html>> [accessed 27/03/2017]

⁵⁶⁷ *The Broadcasting Committee: Report* CMD. 1951, August 1923, para 4, p. 6.

region as of less importance than the rest of the country. This view is reinforced by the fact that when undertaking a review of the regions in light of Eckersley's 'regional plan' the BBC failed to visit East Anglia.

It is therefore amazing to find that despite this wireless was remarkably popular in the region during the time. A higher percentage of households in Norfolk and Suffolk had wireless licences than the average for the United Kingdom and for a brief period the *Eastern Daily Press* even has a regular broadcasting critic. Whilst East Anglians might not have been happy with the service they received, as shown in both published correspondence and occasional editorials within the local press, they had embraced the concept of broadcasting, if not the reality that they experienced.

It also needs to be remembered that these events occur at the same time that the BBC's television service begins. Although it is abundantly clear that relatively few people in the region were viewers at this time, the development of the new media did have an effect on the area. The need to fund two services from one licence fee meant that listeners ended up subsidising television's development. Although this effected all regions, for East Anglian listeners the consequence was that money they hoped might eventually be spent on providing a local transmission station, finally bringing them within the national network, was instead being spent for a television service they had no immediate chance of seeing. In order to generate long term national gain, East Anglia was being asked to endure a disproportionate amount of short term pain.

This pain was not soothed despite the adoption of a new 'Regional Scheme' following the recommendations of the Ullswater Committee. Although this took great steps in expanding wireless across the nation and provided space for regional and national voices again East Anglia found itself left out in the cold.

In fact the area's position is completely unique in British broadcasting history, no other area is included in the BBC's Regional Scheme in such a haphazard way. The adoption of only part of Norfolk into the BBC's Midland region complicated the situation rather than making it better for local listeners. Further more the solution devised to deal with listener's complaints, annual visits to the region for 'East Anglia Weeks', can only be described as a sticking plaster. No other area experienced anything like this from the BBC, whilst the BBC was providing a full regional wireless service to the rest of the United Kingdom and beginning to expand television towards northern areas, East Anglia was only being provided with an opportunity to fully embrace the opportunities of broadcasting during annual visits.

For East Anglia it is an era where it has no true voice in broadcasting and one in which, either intentionally or otherwise, the BBC created a precedent for the way in which it would treat the area in the future in regards of television.

The History: Post-1950.

Histories of broadcasting in Britain tend to emphasise the Coronation as the turning point at which television became fully incorporated into British society. People either purchased a television in advance of the event or were so inspired by what they watched at one of the numerous 'tele-parties' that they subsequently rushed out to buy one of their own. The history uncovered in this project suggests that, for Norfolk at least, the situation is not that clear cut.

Contemporary accounts, as well as the memories from the oral history interviews, indicate that whilst some in the region were willing and able to join the rest of the nation in watching the ceremony, the majority of people in Norfolk did not in fact watch the Coronation, or if they did they watched a broadcast that was heavily disrupted by interference. Whilst the claim of the *Eastern Daily Press* that ‘there was no television of the Coronation procession seen in Norwich’ is probably hyperbolic there is little doubt that the experience in the region was both quantifiably and qualitatively different to that of the nation as a whole. This brings into question just how significant the Coronation is within the history of television within East Anglia. Does it act as a driver for the mass adoption of television as has been claimed?⁵⁶⁸

It is difficult to assign causality to a single event, but by looking at trends in the television licence fee data during the 1950s it is at least possible to see that the adoption of television in the region is different compared to Great Britain and Northern Ireland, see Figs. 22 and 23.

Fig. 22
TV Licences in Norfolk and Suffolk 1951-66.

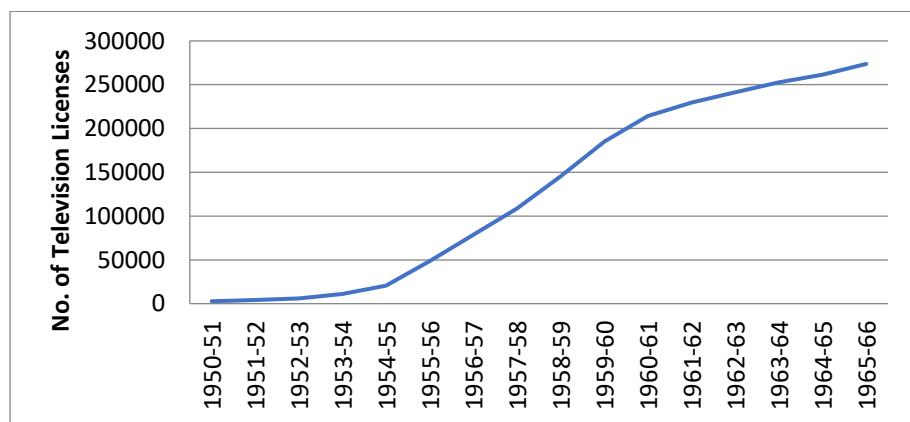
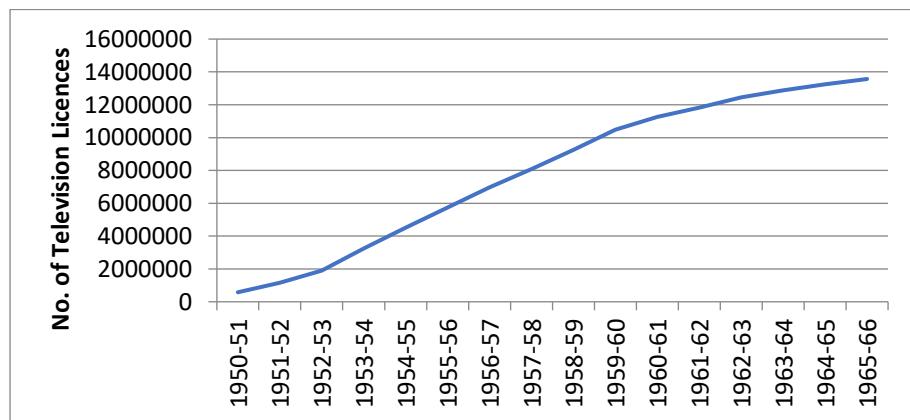


Fig. 23
TV Licences in Great Britain and Northern Ireland 1951-66.



The rapid rise in television licences following the Coronation that can be seen in the data for the whole of Great Britain and Northern Ireland (Fig. 23) is not present to the same degree in

⁵⁶⁸ ‘Queues in Norwich to See Films of Coronation’, *Eastern Daily Press*, 9 June 1953, p. 5.

the data for Norfolk and Suffolk (Fig. 22). Significant growth in these two East Anglian counties is delayed until 1954-55. This a reminder that within national data there are often hidden, and important, regional trends.

The region's different experience of the Coronation was ultimately the result of a combination of factors, but was highly influenced by two in particular. Firstly, much like had been the case with wireless, the BBC did not specifically include East Anglia within its plans for television at this point. Spreading television to the region was too complicated and too expensive at this point and the BBC made no effort to even provide a temporary solution for the region. Secondly, although there was some pressure from local MPs for the Government to provide television coverage of the Ceremony to the region, there was never a consistent, well organised grassroots campaign to lobby the BBC and Government for a better service. This in truth is one of the key characteristics of the overall history of broadcasting in East Anglia, it was hindered not only by geographic circumstance but also by MPs and a local media that rarely advanced the region's case for better treatment, particularly when compared to other BBC regions such as Scotland and Wales.

Rather than the Coronation being the single most important 'broadcasting event' for East Anglia in 1953 this thesis argues that the announcement in July that the region was to finally have its own television transmitter was more influential and that as a corollary to that the opening of the transmitter at Tacobness in February 1955 can be seen as a more important driver behind the adoption of television in the region. Existing accounts of British television history emphasise the role of a live national event bringing the nation together in driving adoption of the medium, but for East Anglia the key driver is much more pragmatic – provision of access.

The delay in the provision of access to broadcasting in the region relates not just to BBC but to ITV as well. Whilst areas of the United Kingdom awaited the arrival of a second television service areas of East Anglia were waiting for equitable access to the first. Tacobness did not begin broadcasting on full power until 1957 and ITV did not officially arrive in East Anglia until 1959.

The arrival of a competitor obviously changed the way that the BBC approached the audience but it also changed the way that it approached the region. The announcement that a rival television broadcaster would be broadcasting both 'from the region' and 'for the region', something the BBC had not managed to do, inspired the BBC to accelerate its expansion plans for the region, meaning that it opened a television studio and local news service considerably in advance of its initial plans. Again, there is something unique about the situation in East Anglia. Whilst in other parts of the region ITV companies were launching themselves into areas that had been relatively well served by the BBC previously, Anglia Television found itself providing a service to an audience that had only just been provided with opportunities to regularly hear and see its local culture and news broadcast.

This brings us to the issue of the ITA and Anglia Television. Looking closely at the history of both raises question of the extent to which the allocation of the East Anglian contract was a 'done deal' and to how far Anglia was actually a 'local' company.

It is certainly the case that the ITA were keen for *The Manchester Guardian* to have some involvement as a programme contractor and that the involvement of Laurence Scott,

following his previous failed bid, with Anglia Television meant that this application would be viewed in a positive light. However, it is also the case that Anglia's application emphasised the regional origins and focus of the company in a significant way. This appealed to the ITA's desire for the regional companies to serve their local audiences, whilst also indicating an ambition to take local culture to the rest of the country in a way that the BBC had not managed to do. From the very beginning Anglia was more than just a specialist in wildlife programming as Wallace and Potschka and Golding suggest.⁵⁶⁹

To conclude the overview of the history of broadcasting in East Anglia it is worth taking the opportunity to think of what might have been. Whilst the arrival of Anglia Television changed the way broadcasting related to the region, the analysis undertaken in this work has highlighted that things could have been even more different. If the application of Viscount Hillsborough had been accepted by the ITA then the region would have had an even more distinct place within British broadcasting. The adoption of a 'third way' of broadcasting, commercial television run under a co-operative structure is a tantalising prospect to consider and is a useful concept to consider as public service broadcasting comes under increasing pressure in the present day and the future.

The title of this thesis contains the question 'Did Anglians dream of electric screens?' This thesis shows that they had no lack of dreams involving both screens and speakers, but that even when it appeared their dreams were becoming reality, the situation was often not quite all it seemed to be.

Critical Theory and a Final View of the 'Public Sphere'.

So how does East Anglia's experience of broadcasting during this period fit into the ideas of the public sphere? The answer is complicated and it needs to be remembered that broadcasting was, and is, only part of the public sphere, not its entirety. There is however evidence to suggest that for a large proportion of the period studied East Anglia cannot be considered as genuinely being part of the public sphere that broadcasting was beginning to create.

Participation within the public sphere requires two key elements, the ability to hear the public discussion taking place and the opportunity to participate in public discussion. The first element allows passive participation, the second is conditional on the first and results in active participation. For large proportions of the period being studied it is therefore arguable that East Anglia did not have meaningful access to the public sphere created by broadcasting, or at least not access that was comparable to that of the rest of the nation.

The regional policies of the BBC resulted, as has been discussed, in the East Anglia region being left out of the national wireless network for all intents and purposes. The region's lack of a dedicated transmitter for long periods meant that access to broadcasts on matter of public and social interest was inherently reduced. Whilst theorists such as Fraser have argued that Habermas' initial conception of the public sphere was flawed on the grounds that it was overly idealised and failed to acknowledge that participation in the sphere was limited to a relatively homogenous group (exclusionary criteria included class, gender and race),

⁵⁶⁹ John Wallace, 'A sense of region?: independent television in the Midlands, 1950-2000', (PhD Thesis, University of Leicester, 2004); Christian Potschka and Peter Golding "The Structural Developments of Regional Television in Britain and Germany", *Media History*. No. 18 (2012), p.450.

This thesis would argue that any suggestion that broadcasting constituted a public sphere at this time is equally flawed. East Anglia's history clearly suggests that a combination of geography and intuitional policy created a barrier to entering the public sphere to 'listen' to the discussion.⁵⁷⁰

Just as importantly the lack of regional broadcasting facilities meant that the region was also often excluded from actively participating in the debate. The lack of studio and transmission facilities within the region meant that opportunities for local opinions to be heard were comparatively rare. Whilst the annual 'East Anglian Weeks' provided some opportunities for the region to participate in the national public sphere, in reality it was not until the late 1950s and the establishment of television in the region by both the BBC and ITV that regular access was achieved. It is of course the case that local listeners and viewers would have discussed with their families and friends the topics they heard and saw, but this is not a replacement for participation in a wider national debate.

There are two obvious moments when this exclusion can be best seen and when we might be able to consider the longer-term consequences of the lack of participation, the televising of the Coronation and the first few years of ITV.

Whilst the Coronation does not fit neatly into Habermas' categorisation of the public sphere as a place for rational debate, it does fit into McGuigan's 'cultural public sphere' in which affective forms of communication and activity play a significant role in influencing public attitudes and actions. It can also be seen as an example of the type of communicative, cultural activity which creates an 'imagined community'. The exclusion of many East Anglians from the televisual element of the Coronation, which was witnessed all around the world, meant they missed out on the opportunity to take part in a shared cultural moment, experiencing the events in a way that may have emphasised a shared regional experience more than a collective national one. Examples such as the assassination of John F. Kennedy and the moon landing demonstrate the power television can have to bind nations and people together, so it is important to remember that East Anglia missed out of the first of these historic moments.⁵⁷¹

East Anglia's lack of access to ITV between 1955-1959 also leads us to reconsider how broadcasting relates to the public sphere in relation to the region. The *Spotlight* documentaries that Thumim mentions, and suggests were influential in investigating 'social scandals', are exactly the type of programme that could be considered part of the public sphere. Yet East Anglia and other regions of the UK without ITV had no access to them. To what extent then should we claim that they are examples of broadcasting functioning as a public sphere. There is no simple answer, but it may be useful to begin to reconsider their value and role in relation to which audiences actually had access to these programmes if we argue that they have social value and serve as part of the public sphere.⁵⁷²

⁵⁷⁰ Nancy Fraser, 'Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy', *Social Text*, No. 25/26, (1990), 56-80.

⁵⁷¹ Jim McGuigan, "The Cultural Public Sphere" in *European Journal of Cultural Studies*, No.8 (2005), 427-443; Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*, (London: Verso, 2006).

⁵⁷² Janet Thumim, *Inventing Television Culture: Men, Women and the Box* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 73.

The argument here is not that broadcasting did not play a role in the public sphere during this time, for large proportions of the country the existence of the BBC's broadcasting services and then ITV opened up avenues to listen to and contribute to discussions of important topics, but during the first thirty-five years of broadcasting the relationship between the public sphere, broadcasting and East Anglia was far more strained.

Final Thoughts.

Attempting to fill the gap that obviously exists within the existing historiography of British television, and broadcasting more generally, has highlighted that the experience of East Anglia really was different to the rest of the United Kingdom, and it means that the experiences of over 1.5 million people are now reflected, to some extent, within the history of British broadcasting. However, it has done more than simply highlight the uniqueness of East Anglia's role within the history of broadcasting. It has also cast light on the fact that the BBC's tendency towards centralisation had real world implications for those located at the periphery rather than the core of Britain.

It demonstrates that without the presence of an existing strong regional identity and institutions to argue on behalf of the local population it was comparatively easy for the BBC to 'forget about' East Anglia, as shown by the absurdity of the region initially being part of the London region before part of Norfolk was split off and given to the care of the Midland region. Ultimately this situation was to nobody's satisfaction, yet nobody in East Anglia seemed keen to take action to improve the situation.

Unsurprisingly this attempt to create a history of broadcasting in East Anglia has resulted in opening up more research opportunities than it has closed. A comparative study with the south-west of England might unearth similarities in experience or discover unique regional events too, it would certainly give a richer, more nuanced version of the history of British broadcasting.

Equally an investigation into the extent to which Anglia Television fulfilled the promises it made in its application for the region's contract would seem to be a useful next step. It would provide a good starting point for a scholarly discussion on the extent to which ITV companies fulfilled their public service duties on both national and local levels and to explore more fully the ideas of localised 'public sphericles' that Gitlin has suggested as a replacement for a 'unitary public sphere'.⁵⁷³

Finally, the intriguing case of the 'co-operative' television station that never was seems to be an obvious topic for scholarly investigation. Although it may now prove to be difficult to find more information about the application, the idea that a genuinely new way of running a television service came so close to coming into being deserves to be more than a foot note in the canon of literature.

Perhaps if nothing else this thesis, and future work, will be able to finally debunk the idea that Anglia Television was just a specialist in wildlife documentaries and drama. Both Anglia Television and the region deserve better.

⁵⁷³ Todd Gitlin, 'Public Spheres or Public Sphericles?', *Media, Ritual and Identity*, ed. by Tamar Lieves and James Curran, (London: Routledge, 1998), p. 170.

Publications that arise from the thesis

‘Imagined Communities, Media Events and Ritual Celebration: Understanding the local and national experience of the 1953 Coronation.’

Abstract.

The Coronation of Queen Elizabeth II in 1953 occupies a significant position within both the general history of Britain in the twentieth century as well as in the history of British broadcasting. It was the first significant Royal event to be fully televised and was feted both at the time and subsequently as a triumphant achievement of the BBC on a technical level and a moment during which the whole nation was brought together. The shared experience of viewing the coronation of a new monarch on television supposedly reinforced an ‘imagined community’ and generated a shared sense of nationhood and ‘Britishness’ through cultural experience in a similar manner to the way that Anderson argues that the development of ‘print-as-commodity’ did throughout Europe from the 1500s onwards. Indeed, existing academic literature and non-academic commentary on the media coverage of the event has tended to emphasise a homogenous ‘national’ experience that helped to bind the nation together.

However by considering a unique body of fresh historical research focused upon the experience of the Coronation in East Anglia, consisting of oral history interviews and archival research (local press and film archives alongside the Mass Observation archive), this article suggests that the success of the media coverage in bringing the entire nation together is less all-encompassing than has previously been suggested, that experiences were more heterogenous than has previously been acknowledged, and that the experiences of the media coverage in East Anglia had the unintended effect of temporarily highlighting a divide between the region and the rest of the country. This article argues that it is necessary to reconsider whether it was the mediated coverage of the Coronation or rather the local shared celebratory rituals (i.e. street parties) that were more important in reinforcing a sense of a shared British ‘imagined community’ in both an East Anglian and national context. Given this insight change in how media and social historians view the Coronation in the future will be required.

Academic Interventions.

On a fundamental level this article aims to add an additional level of nuance to the accounts of the Coronation that have been offered by academics such as Phillip Ziegler and Henrik Örnebring by highlighting that the experiences of the Coronation of those located in the geographic periphery (particularly in East Anglia but also those in the South West) were quantifiably different from that of those in the main metropolitan areas.⁵⁷⁴ This is achieved by comparing the research already undertaken for this thesis (the oral history interviews and the material from the *Eastern Daily Press* archive) with further research involving the Mass Observation archive (particularly the contents of the TC69 collection) and relevant material

⁵⁷⁴ Phillip Ziegler, *Crown and People*, (London: Collins, 1978); Henrik Örnebring, ‘Writing the history of television audiences – The Coronation in the Mass-Observation Archive’, in *Re-viewing Television History: Critical Issues in Television Historiography*, ed. by Helen Wheatley, (London: I. B. Taurus, 2007), pp. 170-183.

from the *East Anglian Daily Times* archive, the East Anglian Film Archive and national newspaper archives (particularly *The Times* and *The Guardian*).⁵⁷⁵

Currently most academic attention has been focused on two groups: those who watched and those who *consciously* decided not to watch despite having the opportunity. This article has the potential to cast light upon another group: those, who due to geographic location, could not watch (including both those who *tried* to watch without success and those who simply did not try). In doing this the article argues that, in East Anglia at least, there is some doubt as to the extent of the validity of Ziegler's claim that 'it was above all the power of television, however, which convinced people that this was *their* Queen being crowned in *their* Cathedral, dedicating itself to *their* service' and consequently leads to a discussion into the extent to which the television coverage helped to reinforce the idea of a British 'imagined community' within the minds of those within the region.⁵⁷⁶

Whilst focused specifically on the different experience of the Coronation that East Anglia had, there is also a clear opportunity to discuss more broadly the extent to which there is empirical evidence that 'one-off' events such as this contribute to the creation/maintenance of a national 'imagined community', and the role that physical participation in local 'ritual activities' (street parties etc.) relates to the broader 'national' media coverage of such events.

Potential Journals.

Although there is a significant discussion of Anderson's theory of 'imagined communities' within the article, the detailed analysis of competing historical narratives means that publication would be most appropriate in journals more historically focused. As the subject is interdisciplinary in nature it seems possible to tailor submissions to journals that are focused either on media or social history. Given the important role given to the Coronation in British media history, journals such as the *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television* or *Media History* would be obvious choices for publication. The wider impact of the Coronation on British society and the fact that it involved local celebrations alongside the television coverage suggests that it could also be of interest to a journal such as *Social History* or *Twentieth Century Britain*.

'Co-Operating over Coax – Lessons from the Losers? A case study of Viscount Hillsborough's Application for the initial ITA East Anglia Contract.'

Abstract.

History is often dominated by the narratives of those who win, and this is particularly true in the case of academic investigation into the history of commercial television in Britain. This entirely original article employs a different tact by concentrating instead on an applicant that failed to secure one of the original Independent Television Authority (ITA) regional contracts and in doing so identifies an alternative, radical vision of the organisation of British commercial television that had it been successful may have changed the future face

⁵⁷⁵ Papers within the TC69 collection relating to the Coronation experience of individuals in Bawdeswell in Norfolk, Ely and Wisbech in Cambridgeshire and Somerset provide insight into the 'provincial' experience. There are also press cuttings from both national and local publications relating to both physical celebratory events and radio and television coverage.

⁵⁷⁶ Ziegler, *Crown and People*. p.125.

of television in both Britain and beyond, yet thus far has not been recognised in the existing canon of academic investigation.

The article presents a comprehensive summary of the history of broadcasting in the East Anglian region prior to the arrival of commercial broadcasting before undertaking an entirely new research study of the application led by Viscount Hillsborough to operate the East Anglian ITA franchise under the guise of a co-operative organisation. This case study includes comparative analysis with other applications submitted to the ITA for other regions during the same time period to establish how unique the application was at the time. It also considers whether anything similar was proposed anywhere else in the world either before or since.

In conclusion the article suggests that in an era during which the very existence of public service broadcasting (PSB) seems to have come under increasing levels of threat, supporters of the concept may find interesting ideas for potential future models of PSB in the discarded ideas of the past.

Academic Interventions.

In the broadest possible terms the article is aimed to be a clear intervention in the existing canon of histories of television in Britain and a specific challenge to the historiography in relation to the institutions that other historians have chosen to focus attention upon.⁵⁷⁷ By looking at material that has traditionally been seen of less importance the academic understanding of how different groups imagined commercial television during the 1950s will be improved and in particular the understanding of the ITA's actions and efficacy as a regulator can be more clearly assessed i.e. to what extent was the ITA impartial and did it overlook any opportunities to achieve the overall goals of the 1954 Television Act?

This article is also an opportunity to compare British television history with the histories of other nations in a fresh way. By paying attention to proposed and/or failed models for the organisation of television it is possible to assess the extent to which Britain was attempting to be an innovator or follower in respect of the establishment of commercial television broadcasting.

Finally, whilst it is often believed that one must remember the failures of the past in order to not repeat them in the future, it is also the case that ideas previously cast aside in the past as unfeasible may in fact simply have been proposed before their time was due. Revisiting past applications and proposed models of broadcasting, such as the one which is the subject of this case study, may therefore be an extremely useful exercise for those academics interested in debates on the future of public service broadcasting and for those who seek to influence public policy in this area. As increased pressure is placed upon the continued existence of the licence fee and the BBC, a model of co-operative ownership might be one future option that needs to be considered if the BBC and public service content is to survive.

⁵⁷⁷ In particular see Bernard Sendall's 'Independent Television in Britain' series; Catherine Johnson and Rob Turnock's overview of aspects of ITV in 'ITV Cultures'; Raymond Fitzwalter's chronicle of the history of Granada TV in 'The Dream that Died'; Jamie Medhurst's 'Piecing Together 'Mammon's Television'; Peter Black's 'The Mirror in the Corner' and Clive Jenkins's 'Power Behind the Screen'.

Potential Journals.

This is a unique and wholly original approach to studying the history of British television and whilst it is inherently historical in its nature it is also clearly interdisciplinary in respect of how the ideas discussed within it can be applied to other fields – particularly those involved in media policy and discussions on the future of public service broadcasting. The range of journals that may consider publishing the article is therefore commensurately wide and the recent publication of an issue of the *Journal of European Television History and Culture* dedicated to the history of private and commercial television in Europe suggests a renewal of interest in broadcasting histories. Other potential journals could include: the *Journal of Media and Communication Studies*, *Media, Culture and Society*, *Media History*, *Journal of British Cinema and Television*, *Critical Studies in Television* or the *Historical Journal of Film, Radio and Television*.

It is also the case that as well as fitting into journals biased towards media matters the detail of the case study could find a place within the canon of work concerned with the histories of the British Co-operative movement or the Labour Party/movement. Particularly as thus far this topic seems to have been completely overlooked. The *Labor History* journal would be well suited to publish a tailored version of this article as it has previously published work on Labour's historical relationship with the media and the involvement of co-operatives with leisure activities.⁵⁷⁸

“Despotism tempered by Assassination” – a comparative analysis of the applications processes for the first ITA regional contracts for commercial television and Ofcom’s L-DTPS scheme.’

Abstract.

Douglas Hurd’s 1989 description of the IBA’s process for ‘letting ITV franchises’ was characteristic of the belief that historically there had been a lack of transparency present with the regulation of British broadcasting. The policy changes which followed ushered in an era of market liberalisation under ‘light touch’ regulators (initially the ITC and the Radio Authority and latterly Ofcom) with principles to ‘operate with a bias against intervention’, to ‘seek the least intrusive regulatory mechanisms’ and to be ‘accountable and transparent in both deliberation and outcome’.⁵⁷⁹

This article discusses the extent to which this ‘light touch’ regulation has in reality been any different to the system of oversight that came before. It does so by undertaking a unique comparative study of the initial ITV franchise application process run by the Independent Television Authority (ITA) and the L-DTPS (Local Digital Television Programme Services) allocation process overseen by Ofcom during 2012-2014. The guidance notes and application documentation from the ITA archives relating to the East Anglia area are contrasted with the publicly published material from Ofcom relating to the Norwich area L-

⁵⁷⁸ See Nicole Robertson “The business of leisure: sport, labour and co-operation in post-war Britain”, *Labor History*, Vol. 55, No. 5. (2014), 638-653.

⁵⁷⁹ Ofcom, ‘Ofcom’s Regulatory Principles’, *About Ofcom*, <https://web.archive.org/web/20050403190522/https://www.ofcom.org.uk/about/sdrp> [accessed 12 August 2017]

DTPS and interviews conducted with those involved in bids, both successful and non-successful, for the licence.

This analysis is then used to consider both whether the change promised by the shift to ‘light touch’ regulation was anything other more than rhetoric and whether, in light of the fact that Mustard TV (the winning bidder in the Ofcom process) was sold to the ‘That’s TV’ Group in 2017, this approach has been any more successful in securing space for the voices of local people in the broadcast media than the previous ‘despotism’ of the ITA and the IBA.

Academic Interventions.

Perhaps surprisingly there is currently relatively little academic work published in journals investigating and assessing the success of the L-DTPS scheme since its launch. This article would therefore be less of an intervention in an existing academic debate and more an attempt to stimulate initial academic discussion and inspire further investigation on the UK’s first real attempt to create a network of local television stations.⁵⁸⁰

There is however a much wider body of work associated with the regulation of broadcasting and the media industry more generally that this article can interact with. Academics such as Seymour-Ure, Collins and Murroni and Doyle and Vick, amongst many others, have written widely on British media policy and the eventual establishment of Ofcom in 2003 to oversee broadcasting and telecommunications in Britain.⁵⁸¹ Within this canon the most apt way to contribute would seem to be by following in the footsteps of Lunt and Livingstone who in *Media Regulation* set out to ‘scrutinise Ofcom’s actions and working methods’ by examining selected case studies ‘in terms of an assessment of both the processes and their ultimate benefits, or otherwise, in relation to the public interest’.⁵⁸²

By comparing the case study of the L-DTPS licence application process for Norwich with that of the original ITA commercial television franchise for East Anglia it is possible to assess to what extent Ofcom has been able to deliver upon the requirements of the Communications Act 2003 to ‘further the interests of citizens and consumers’ i.e. whether this neo-liberal, ‘light touch’ approach to regulation has delivered a better result for British citizens than its antecedents.⁵⁸³

Potential Journals.

There are a considerable number of journals which could be appropriate venues for publication. The *European Journal of Communication*, *New Media and Society*, *Television and New Media* and the *International Journal of Cultural Policy* all have a record of

⁵⁸⁰ Some work on the topic of local television does exist but tends to not place the L-DTPS scheme at the centre. For instance see Christopher Ali’s discussion of the difficulty of defining the ‘local’ in local television in “Critical Regionalism and the Policies of Place: Revisiting Localism for the Digital Age”, *Communication Theory*, 26 (2016).

⁵⁸¹ See Colin Seymour-ure, “Media Policy in Britain: Now you see it, now you don’t”, *European Journal of Communication*, 2 (1987); Richard Collins and Cristina Murroni, *New Media, New Policies: Media and Communication Strategies for the Future* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996); Gillian Doyle and Douglas W. Vick, “The Communications Act 2003: a New regulatory framework in the UK”, *Convergence: The International Journal of Research into New Media Technologies*, 11(3), (2005).

⁵⁸² Peter Lunt and Sonia Livingstone, *Media Regulation: Governance and the Interest of Citizens and Consumers* (London: Sage, 2012), p.11.

⁵⁸³ Ibid.

publishing articles concerned with issues relating to media policy and regulation, although such articles do not often feature comparative assessment of the performance of past and present media policies. The interdisciplinary nature of *Convergence* also suggests that it too would be a suitable arena for publication as the article fuses together historical and contemporary study in an innovative way.

‘Watching the World go by? The geography of participation in the public sphere.’

Abstract.

Nancy Fraser’s most recent interventions in the academic discussion of Habermas’s public sphere have sought to challenge the Westphalian framing of public sphere and argues that such an understanding is inadequate in an era characterised by the growth of transnational organisations and niche trans/sub-national media.

This article contends that framing the public sphere in Westphalian terms is not only inadequate in critiquing the present and future of the public sphere but also in understanding the scale and limits of the public sphere in the past. Based on an original empirical case study of broadcasting in Britain during the first sixty years of the twentieth century the article demonstrates that whilst in theory the BBC can be seen as being a central actor in the formation of a British (Westphalian) public sphere, in reality the historical record shows that for a number of years the East Anglian region, containing up to two million people, was to a significant extent excluded from the public sphere created by the BBC.

Consequently the article uses this case study to suggest that when studying the concept of the public sphere, both in past and future forms, attention should be focussed upon the role that geographic location plays not only on overall exclusion from the public sphere but more importantly in respect of acknowledging the existence of differing levels of participation that exist within the public sphere i.e. ‘passive’ versus ‘active’. In addition it suggests that we should consider whether this could help us understand political disenfranchisement and the political shocks of Brexit and the election of Donald Trump which seem to have had political bases in peripheral areas.

Academic Interventions.

Since its English translation Habermas’s concept of the public sphere has been regularly challenged and reimagined. Fraser’s initial critique of the public sphere collated some of the inadequacies of Habermas’s historical account and argued convincingly that the public sphere that Habermas described was far from inclusive. Further Jim McGuigan has also argued that Habermas’s focus on ‘rational’ discussion ignored the political potential of ‘affective’ communication as a vehicle for social change. More recently Fraser has once again intervened in the scholarly discussion, this time arguing that framing the public sphere in Westphalian terms is wholly inadequate if we are to understand how the public sphere might function in a contemporary, transnational, digital world. It is in Fraser’s most recent work that the opportunity for academic intervention most readily presents itself.⁵⁸⁴

⁵⁸⁴ See in particular Nancy Fraser, ‘Transnationalizing the Public Sphere: On the Legitimacy and Efficacy of Public Opinion in a Post-Westphalian World’; Nick Couldry, ‘What and Where is the

Although Fraser concentrates on the present and future of the public sphere, the idea of challenging the Westphalian framing of the public sphere is equally applicable when looking at the past. Fraser suggests that Habermas ‘associated the public sphere with modern media that, in enabling communication across distance, could spatially knit dispersed interlocutors into a public’ and that by doing so he ‘territorialized publicity by focussing on national media’ and ‘implicitly assumed a national communications infrastructure’.⁵⁸⁵

Whilst Fraser is content to argue that Habermas’s framing is merely inadequate in understanding the contemporary public sphere my work on the history of broadcasting in East Anglia suggests that there is also scope to convincingly argue that the Westphalian frame is also not entirely suitable to describe the public sphere functions of the BBC during the opening half of the twentieth century and that the actual experience of those in the region (as documented in this thesis) suggests that it often failed to knit the ‘dispersed interlocutors’ of East Anglia into the wider British ‘public’.

Fraser has also recognised that the theory of a public sphere can be used as a way to ask whether or not all citizens are ‘full members’ of the political public, either on a Westphalian or any other level. Once again the empirical evidence unearthed in this case study of East Anglian broadcasting history can be used to extend this idea by helping to break down the idea of ‘full membership’ by demonstrating that regional geographic location meant that at various times those in East Anglia had no membership to the broadcasting public sphere, ‘passive’ membership (the ability to listen) and finally ‘active’ membership (the ability to occasionally or regularly contribute).

As well as intervening in our understanding of the ways in which the broadcasting public sphere was limited in Britain’s past there is also an opportunity to argue that some of these barriers still remain and to discuss on a more general level how geographic location and regional variation of experience may affect participation in any form of public sphere. As indicated above potentially this could be an intervention that offers some insight into the surprise results of the EU Referendum and the election of Donald Trump both of which seemed to have considerable political support in peripheral areas.

Potential Journals.

Given that Fraser’s most recent work on the public sphere has been initially published in *Theory, Culture and Society*, that seems the most appropriate journal for publication. Other options include; *International Journal of Media and Cultural Politics*, *Media, Culture and Society*, *Communication and Critical/Cultural Studies* or *Cultural Studies* as each explicitly addresses either public sphere issues or they focus upon the relationship between media/culture and politics/society more generally.

Other.

Although less developed than the ideas which inform the articles described previously, the body of oral history interview data that has been recorded for this project does potentially lend itself to be used in interesting ways. Aside from the intrinsic value of the recordings, which could be archived in the Norfolk Sound Archive, the interviews with members of staff

Transnationalized Public Sphere?’ and Kate Nash, ‘Towards Transnational Democratization’, *Transnationalizing The Public Sphere*, ed. by Kate Nash (Cambridge: Polity, 2014).

⁵⁸⁵ Ibid. p.12.

who worked at the BBC and Anglia Television in 1959 could be woven into an article on the experiences of those who worked in the earliest days of East Anglian television.

Whilst an article such as this could feature in a journal aligned to media and communication studies, particularly those with an interest in production, it could equally feature in either *The Oral History Review* or *Oral History*. A decision on the location for publication could only be made after significant time is spent re-analysing the thick information that has been recorded.

Finally, it must be noted that the sixtieth anniversary of the first broadcasts of Anglia Television (as well as the first local news bulletins from the BBC) takes place in 2019. This is clearly a significant opportunity for the University of East Anglia, the East Anglian Film Archive, the BBC and ITV Anglia to engage in a sizeable outreach project for what is likely to be one of the final major anniversaries involving some of those who were there at the time. Such a project should involve multiple schools from the university and would help bring attention to the televisual heritage of the region of which younger generations may be entirely unaware.

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