



at the archives
Wayne Doubleday



Mrs R Weir and her five children spent over a week living in Kyeamba Smith Hall when their home in George Street, North Wagga, was flooded in July 1956. The radio in the foreground may have been one of their few possessions saved.

Radio Wagga

What you should know

- The CSU Regional Archives are open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. Located in the Blakemore Building at the South Campus of the university, access can be gained via College Avenue or Hely Avenue.
- Members of the public are welcome to visit the search room, where professional archival staff can assist with inquiries. For those people unable to visit the archives in person, staff can provide a research service for straightforward inquiries for a fee of \$55 per hour, including copying and postage.
- For further information, phone 6925 3666, email archive@csu.edu.au or visit the website at www.csu.edu.au/research/archives for a full listing of holdings and more detailed information.

Back in the 1920s, wireless telegraphy had been an established technology for a few years, but had only just begun to be utilised for the entertainment purposes that we are familiar with today. In Australia, the first official radio station was 2SB, which began broadcasting at 8pm on November 13, 1923, the first program being a musical concert.

At first, the system worked a little differently to the way it does now. When you bought a radio, you were really paying a subscription to a specific radio station; this meant your radio would receive one station only (similar to the way mobile phones can be locked to one network). However, many people were able to bypass this restriction and build their own radio sets which could roam over the whole band width.

Radio arrives
RADIO didn't exactly begin with a bang in Wagga. There were likely a few enthusiasts in the early 1920s who could build their own, and maybe a couple of families who purchased a ready-made set and would listen to the stations broadcasting from the capital cities. One local chemist, Henry Gissing, began advertising wireless supplies in 1926 in *The Daily Advertiser*.

One of these advertisements names him "The Wireless Man" and suggests his business is "A Real Wireless Service Station", playing on the fact that he employed wireless engineers to fix, as well as build, radio sets for the people of Wagga. *The Daily Advertiser* began adding a broadcasting guide to their pages in October 1926. The stations featured in this guide in the early years included, 2FC in Sydney, 4QG in Brisbane, and 3LO in Melbourne.



Eric and Nan Roberts established 2WG in 1932.

Radio's appeal grew and a few years later, in 1932, Eric and Nan Roberts established Wagga's own radio station, 2WG.

Disaster averted

THE opening ceremony and first broadcast of 2WG was scheduled for the June 29, 1932.

The day before, there were fears that everything would have to be put on hold, as the ground mast, which was being erected at the time, became unstable and crashed to the ground, breaking in two places.

The local paper reported that work immediately began on a solution and a shorter mast was put in its place.

While this meant the opening could go ahead as planned, the station's range was not initially

as great as first intended.

Part and parcel

THE next day 2WG was officially opened by Senator Charles Hardy.

In his speech, Senator Hardy said he "felt sure that 2WG would have a prosperous career and that it would render excellent service to the community. The station would be devoted to the development of the industries of Wagga and those of the district"

The paper reported that £3000 had been invested in 2WG to get it going - a huge sum, given this was 1932 and the whole country was struggling through the Depression at the time. The hard times were the focus of the speech made by Mr John Graham, representing the Member for Wagga, Mr Kilpatrick, at the opening.

There were many different performances that evening, including piano solos by Mrs Franklyn Thomas, a cornet solo by William Barry, a violin solo by Miss Audrey Schultz, and songs by Freda Roebuck, Mary Pearson of Griffith, K Angel, G Taylor, Mollie Lockwood, Messrs G and S Castles, and the Wagga Melody Masters.

There were also character sketches by Messrs JH Mitchell of Henry and R Warren, recitations by Misses Kath McGrath, E and M O Regan, Phoebe Andrews and Jean Dunn.

Eric Roberts also spoke at the opening, saying the station was "constructed primarily for the development of essential public services ... It was intended to feature local artists and talent, to foster local interests, and to make 2WG part and parcel of the social life of Wagga."

For more information about 2WG and its contribution to the Wagga community, please visit the Wagga local history wiki at <http://waggalocalhistory.weebom.com/>.

■ Compiled by Jillian Kohlhagen
The Daily Advertiser - 21/07/1926, 06/10/1926, 29/06/1932, 30/06/1932, 07/07/1956; *History of Radio in Australia* - <http://www.hi.com.au/bookstore/Library/pdf/CARad10.pdf>.