

to confess to looking forward to insomniac old age when I plan to train myself to doze off to 'Sailing by' and the late night 'Shipping Forecast'.

Marjory A Greig

As I write this, I am on the Radio 2 website, listening to Benny and the Jets from Elton John's O2 Arena concert on the BBC listen again feature. It sounds like a great concert. I know that it doesn't have the street cred of Snow Patrol but it is great music and you can hear all the words. Where were you when you first heard 'Philadelphia Freedom'?

Of course, the other BBC stations have their uses but only for specific purposes. Like a toilet brush perhaps. Does anyone listen to Radio 1 these days? When you eventually tire of atonal music on Radio 3 and endless political speculation on Radio 4, it is good to get back to Radio 2. Like a well-worn pair of slippers, there is no question, it is the place to be, today, tomorrow, and always.

There is something quite special and connecting with the past, about starting the day with someone who I remember from my schooldays. I know that Terry's other listener would agree with me that his wit and observations on life grow more true with each passing year. Like most GPs, I don't hear much of Ken Bruce in the forenoon but Jeremy Vine over lunchtime never fails to produce interesting debates before handing over to the unique talents of Steve Wright and the madcap Chris Evans at drivetime.

Who could forget giants of the past such as John Dunn and Jimmy Young? Brian Matthews is back after a long illness. Jonathan Ross on a Saturday. Bob Harris on a Thursday. These are household names. It is not too strong to say that they contribute to my understanding of what it means to be British. Gentle, civilised, but with a hint of self-deprecating humour.

Radio 2 is not all pink and fluffy. It also has the power to stir strong emotions. It engages with the affairs of the day. Some of the evening magazine programmes have gripped my imagination causing me to listen to the end. Stories about Karen Carpenter, Pavarotti, and just last week, one about the career of the Sex Pistols were as good as anything on Radio 4.

I'm a well-balanced individual though with chips on both shoulders and not a zealot. Let us celebrate the achievements of Radio 2, Europe's most popular radio station. By all means try the rest, including the ones with adverts. Then come home to the best.

Max Inwood

Someone recently observed that we never see ugly or unattractive newsreaders on the television. Radio, of course is different. I don't have a clue what Charlotte Green looks like, but her voice is a marvel, something to make one feel safe and secure, like being tucked up in bed with a hot water bottle. The kaleidoscope of voices is one of the attractions of Radio 4, each one with its own instantly recognisable identity (in passing, can anyone tell me what the memory process is in this — how a few words spoken down a phone are enough to tell us who is speaking?). I can remember distinctly voices from at least 40 years ago: the morning rumblings of Jack de Manio doing 'Today' (all on his own in those distant days); the wonderful journalist William Hardcastle on 'The World at One' — a medical school friend said that he was one of the few people who sounded fat; or the patrician tones of Derek Cooper on 'The Food Programme'. Perhaps this is all a middle class conceit, that visual appearance is a shallow quality, while voice is altogether more serious. Without doubt voice can be very persuasive. The duo Flotsam and Jetsam sang on radio (long before the birth of Radio 4):

*Little Betty Bouncer
Loves an announcer
Down at the BBC.
She doesn't know his name
But how she rejoices
When she hears that voice of voices.*

Perhaps I am just being seduced by an endless supply of talk enunciated in what my wife describes as 'English Fruity'.

If it were only mellifluous voices uttering impeccable received pronunciation English we would soon be bored. The glory of Radio 4 is the breadth of content: news and current affairs, documentaries, fiendish quizzes, comedy, soaps, drama, arts, religion, history, and philosophy. Remarkably, a number of

the programmes have been on air for longer than 40 years. They feel like Victorian battleships sailing on majestically, impervious to transient changes of taste. Think of 'Desert Island Discs' (1942), 'Any Questions' (1948), 'Brain of Britain' (1953), 'The Reith Lectures' (1948), 'Women's Hour' (1946) and 'Gardeners' Question Time' (1947, and claiming to have answered 30 000 questions). 'Gardeners' Question Time' is very English anomaly. Like 'The Living World', this is surely a programme designed for television. How does it manage to continue its existence on radio? It's a reminder of another pre-Radio 4 oddity, 'Educating Archie', which ran for some years with an extraordinarily talented range of tutors for Archie. But Archie was a ventriloquist's dummy. On radio.

And when you get fed up with Radio 4 you can always complain to 'Feedback'. Nobody from the BBC ever apologises, or admits to any error, but like Radio 4 itself, it's quintessentially English: a well-mannered, civilised, exchange of views. In impeccable received pronunciation English.

*What is the matter with Radio Four?
I'm not an old fart and I'm not an
old bore
Or a grumpy old bugger like
Evelyn Waugh,
But it doesn't half stick in my craw!*

From 'Now we are Sixty', by Christopher Matthew (after AA Milne).

David Jewell