

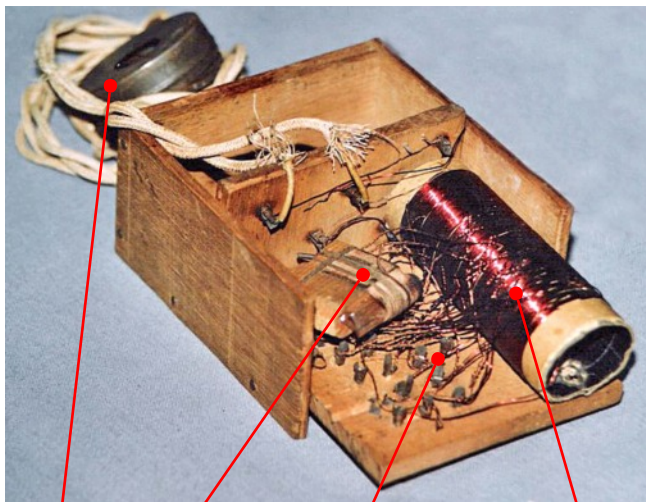


PoW radio # 3 'Gelina' of Stalag IV-B/Z Zeithain

Incorporating other secret receivers
constructed by Italian PoWs

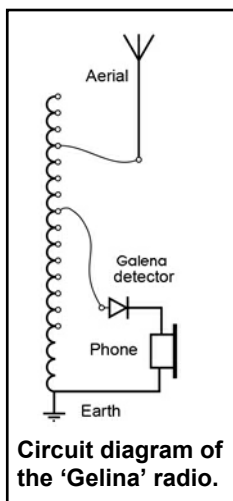
Country of origin: Italy

(Revision v1.01)



Head-phone
Galena detector
Contact terminals to taps for tuning
Tuning coil with taps

Construction details of the Zeithain 'Gelina' radio: A large number of taps on a coil and two movable plugs provided rudimentary tuning and adaptation of the aerial. The wooden, cardboard, and string object to the left of the tuning coil was the galena detector. The ear-phone was constructed using an empty polish tin



Location of Stalag (Stammlager) IV-B/Z
Zeithain near Riesa.

REMARKS

This chapter principally highlights the technical aspects of secret radio receivers constructed by Italian prisoners of war in various internment camps.

'Gelina' of Stalag IV-B/Z Zeithain near Riesa was the name of a secret receiver constructed in the Italian section of the Zeithain PoW hospital, located between Leipzig and Dresden. 'Gelina' received its name from the type of detector used in this simple crystal receiver, which appeared to be a great morale booster until the liberation of Stalag IV in April 1945. The construction of a radio receiver was stimulated by Father Luca Airoidi, Chaplain in Zeithain, who acquired a Galena crystal*). After consulting Lt. Emilio Romeo, a patient of the PoW hospital known to be a radio technician, a receiver was built in secret. Listening took place in the afternoon in the PoW hospital chapel by Lt. De Bernardinis, with Fr. Luca Airoidi on the lookout. The original Zeithain 'Gelina' is on permanent display in the Museum of Internment in Padova, Northern Italy.

*) Gelina is Italian for Galena.



Lt. Emilio Romeo testing his crystal receiver
in the hospital of Stalag IV-B/Z.

Secret radios built by Italian PoWs in other Internment camps.



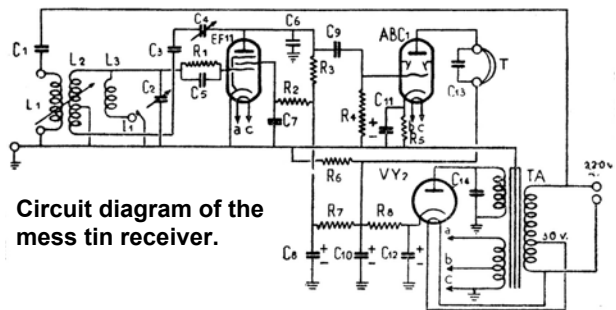
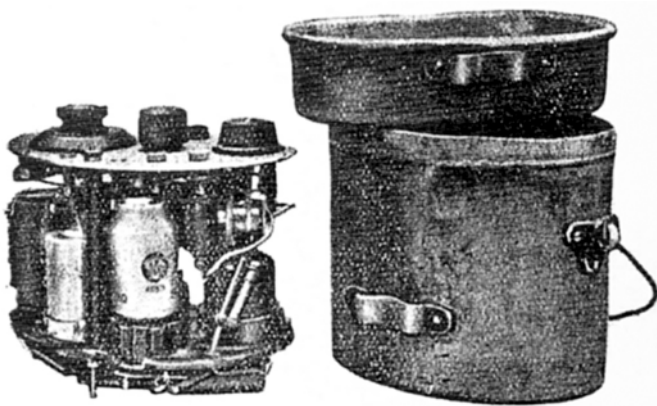
'Mimma' of Stalag XI-B Fallingbistel

After transfer to Stalag XI-B at Fallingbistel of almost the whole Caterina group in the early months of February 1945, a two valve receiver was constructed, named 'Mimma', which covered shortwave and allowed much better reception. At that time a real head-phone, variable capacitor and an accumulator

was acquired. Unfortunately 'Mimma' was not saved and only very little technical information had been recorded. In spite of the many searches by the guards and Gestapo, 'Caterina' and 'Mimma' were never discovered.

This appears the only remaining illustration of the secret two valve 'Mimma' radio constructed at Stalag XI-B Fallingbistel.

'Gavetta' (Mess tin) of Stalag VI-B Versen.



Circuit diagram of the mess tin receiver.

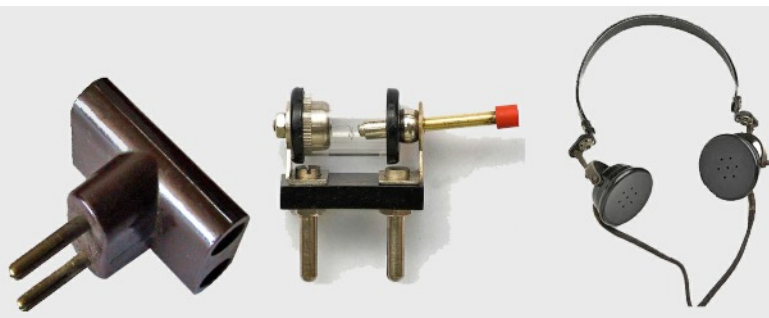
Details and a circuit diagram of the DKE-38 'donor' broadcast receiver are incorporated in Chapter 206 'Pail radio'.

A two-valve radio was built by Giulio Burgundy in Stalag VI-B, Versen. It was previously described in *Radio Bollettino Microson*, issue 5, 1947. The radio comprised a regenerative detector stage (EF11) and an AF amplifier (ABC1), covering medium and long wave. Shaped to fit inside a standard Italian mess tin (Gavetta) it consisted of an aluminium front plate and

a wooden section on which were mounted the valves and other components. Both were held in position by three threaded studs which extended about 35mm to the bottom to prevent the capacitors and resistors from coming into contact with the metal of the bottom. One of these studs can be seen in the picture above at the left hand side of the ABC1 valve. The radio was

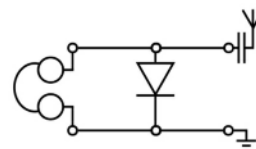
powered by 220V AC mains; HT rectifier was a VY2 valve taken from a common German DKE 38 (Deutschen Kleinempfänger). Other parts, inductances and the variable capacitor C2 also came from this device. The AC mains power transformer was a rewind audio output transformer. One of the mains leads acted as aerial.

Secret radio in the American PoW camp PWE 337 in Coltano, Italy.



A triple mains plug, an old style pre-war crystal detector and a high impedance pair of headphones were the essential parts of this secret PoW radio.

An extremely simple crystal receiver was constructed by an unknown Italian PoW in the American PWE 337 camp in Coltano near Pisa. Its construction was based on a triple plug mains socket, a plug-in crystal detector, high impedance headphones and a condenser of 2000pf. Though not very selective and sensitive, it was recorded to be able to pick-up strong nearby broadcast radio stations.

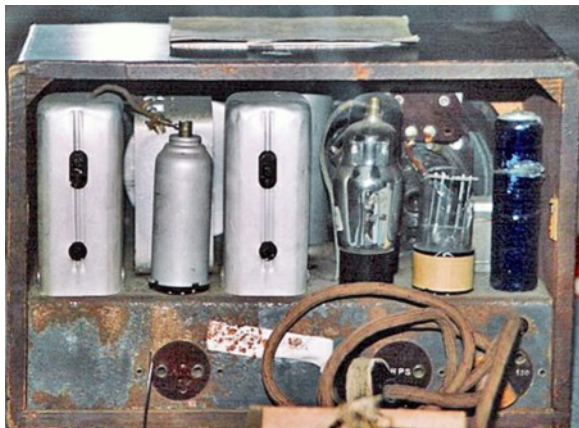


'Caterina' of Stalag Kestochan.

In December 1943, Colonel Melodia, held captive in the German PoW Stalag Kestochan, acquired a small French radio receiver which was put up for sale in the Stalag Kestochan by an interned officer who, after joining the Republic of Salò, was about to return to Italy. The radio named 'Caterina', was handed over to Colonel

Borghetti and Major Arceri of the Air Force and Lieut. Ronti and Melano as interpreters who listened every night when all were asleep to the Allied news e.g. from the BBC in London. The receiver was concealed in a box of coal, with two rods for moving the controls.

In spite of camp transfers and four meticulous searches by the SS, it was never found. The original receiver, of which the model number is still unknown, is currently on display in the Museum of Internment in Padova aside the original 'Caterina' from Sandbostel, and Zeithain 'Gelina'.



Museum of Internment.

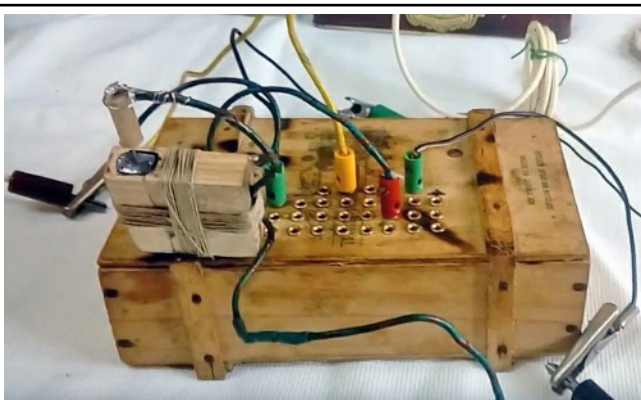
Opened in 1955 and renovated in 2014, the museum houses documentation, photos and objects describing the life of Italian deportees in concentration camps, including the original 'Caterina', 'Gelina' and 'Caterina' of Stalag Kestochan which are on permanent display. The museum, located in Padova, N. Italy, is an inseparable part of the 'Tempio nazionale dell'internato ignoto'. Since 2007, the museum has been run by the *Association of the Former Internees* (A.N.E.I.). Highly recommended is a visit to the museum and/or the website <http://www.museodellinternamento.it/>

The 'Radio-Caterina' website and the video compilation by Maurizio Grillini IZ4BBD should not be missed. See the References for the URLs.

A detailed view of the construction of a replica and demonstration of a working Sandbostel 'Caterina' (2 variations), and a replica of the 'Gelina' of

Zeithain can be watched in YouTube videos by 'angelee7'.

It should be noted that more secret radios in the camps mentioned in this chapter were operational, commercial broadcast receivers cunningly hidden, but most were eventually discovered by the Gestapo.



Working replica of the Zeithain 'Gelina' built by 'Angelee7'. Refer to the References section for the URL of the YouTube video featuring this receiver.

References:

Photographs of the 'Gelina' and 'Caterina' of Stalag Kestochan, taken by the Museum of Internment, were published with kind permission from the President of A.N.E.I.-Padova, Brig. Gen. (R) Maurizio Lenzi.

The Internet website 'radio-caterina' was the primary source of information when putting this chapter together. Gathered in this site are documents relating to secret radio receivers used by Italian prisoners of war.

- Radio-Caterina website <http://www.radio-caterina.org/> (Italian language)

- *The Caterina YouTube video by Maurizio Grillini:*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C4v78NxOMkg>

- *Interesting video on a working replica by 'angelee7'*
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=k47beph0IAw> (Gelina)

In February 2024, Milan Spindler from 'Gedenkstätte (Memorial Site) Ehrenhain-Zeithain' identified an error in a caption on page 1. A visit to the memorial's informative website is highly recommended for additional historical information and videos. Unfortunately, this website was overlooked during the compilation of this chapter in 2020.

<https://www.stsg.de/cms/zeithain/startseite>