

PROSPERO

The newspaper for BBC pensioners – with highlights from Ariel online



Wolf Hall breaks BBC Two box office records

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Looking ahead to 2016: changes to the State pension system

On 6 April 2016, the State pension system is changing. You might already be getting your State pension, or you might still be a few years away from State pension age. Either way, it's a good idea to know more about what is coming and how the changes might affect you.



If you were born before 6 April 1953 (women) or before 6 April 1951 (men)

You will continue to get your State pension based on the current State pension system, even if you defer your State pension until after 6 April 2016.

You can learn more about the current scheme here: www.gov.uk/mystatepension.

You also have the opportunity to 'top up' your retirement income by between £1 and £25 a week through the State pension Top Up scheme. You have an 18-month window to make a lump sum payment (between October 2015 and April 2017) and the scheme will give you guaranteed extra income for life.

Register your interest now by emailing paid.caxtonhouse@dwp.gsi.gov.uk to receive more information when the scheme opens. Or visit www.gov.uk/statepensionstopup to find out more.

If you were born on or after 6 April 1953 (women) or on or after 6 April 1951 (men)

You are part of the new State pension scheme. The amount of State pension you

get still depends on your National Insurance record. You build up your National Insurance record by making National Insurance contributions (these are usually deducted from your salary) or getting National Insurance credits by claiming certain benefits, such as Child Benefit.

Years in which you've already worked (and paid National Insurance) and years in which you got National Insurance credits, before April 2016, will still count in the new State pension scheme, as will the years in which you work (and pay National Insurance) or get National Insurance credits in the future (up to a limit).

You will normally need a minimum of 10 qualifying years on your record to get any State pension. But you don't have to have 10 years in a row – they can be years here and there. Generally the more years you have, the more State pension you will get (up to a limit).

The full amount of the new State pension will be at least £148.40 a week (this is an illustrative figure for 2014-2015). Not everyone will get the full amount – it will depend on your National Insurance record. You could get less than the full amount depending on the number of qualifying years you have on your record and the types of contributions you have made. You could also get more than the full amount if you have built up a certain amount of additional State pension in the current scheme.

The qualifying years you have from before 6 April 2016 will be used to calculate your 'starting amount' in the new State pension scheme. This is the least amount you will get provided you have at least 10 qualifying years when you reach State pension age. You will be able to increase this amount if you get qualifying years after April 2016 up to the full amount of the new State pension, or up until you reach State pension age.

Contracting out

If you were in a salary-related pension scheme at work (for example, 'final salary' or 'career average'), or you were in any type of pension scheme at work before April 2012, you are likely to have been 'contracted out' of the additional State pension scheme (part of the current State pension scheme). Some stakeholder and personal pension schemes were also 'contracted out'.

If you've been 'contracted out' at any time before 6 April 2016, your 'starting amount' in the new State pension scheme will include a reduction because:

- you'll have paid National Insurance contributions at a lower rate; or
- some of the National Insurance contributions you paid were used to contribute to your stakeholder or personal pension instead of the additional State pension

A reduction for being 'contracted out' also exists in the current State pension scheme.

Any questions

If you have any further questions visit www.gov.uk or call your local Pension Centre. You can find your local Pension Centre's number at www.gov.uk/find-pension-centre.

Go online to find out more

There are lots of videos about pensions at the Department for Work and Pension's new YouTube channel, PensionTube. Visit www.youtube.com/pensiontube



Can you spare five minutes?



From time to time the Trustees of the BBC Pension Scheme ask you for feedback on the Scheme-related services provided.

If you would like to tell us how we're doing and help us to improve our processes then take five minutes to complete the survey on our website bbc.co.uk/my pension.

If you would prefer a paper copy please call us on 029 203 22811. All survey questions are optional and your answers are confidential.

The survey will remain open until 30 June. We will publish the results in the October edition of *Prospero*.

Leslie Huss-Smickler has been elected as Pensioner Trustee

Leslie Huss-Smickler has been elected as the Pensioner Trustee for the period 6 February 2015 to 31 December 2019.



PROSPERO

Prospero is provided free of charge to retired BBC employees, or to their spouses and dependants. *Prospero* provides a source of news on former colleagues, developments at the BBC and pension issues, plus classified adverts.

To advertise in *Prospero*, please see page 12. To view *Ariel* online, please visit www.bbc.co.uk/ariel.

Please send your editorial contributions, or comments/feedback, to: *Prospero*, BBC Pension and Benefits Centre, Broadcasting House, Cardiff CF5 2YQ. Email: prospero@bbc.co.uk

Please make sure that any digital pictures you send are scanned at 300 dpi.

The next issue of *Prospero* will appear in June 2015. The copy deadline is Friday, 8 May 2015.



Do you need a helping hand?

Applications are invited for grants from the Grace Wyndham Goldie (BBC) Trust Fund, which exists to help those engaged in broadcasting or an associated activity, now or in the past, as well as their children and dependants.

The Trustees, in their discretion, will consider giving assistance towards educational costs in small ways, such as travelling expenses, school outfits, books and additions to educational awards.

Other grants can be made in respect of a specific short-term unexpected need, which is beyond the means of the beneficiary and not covered by aid from other sources.

The resource of the Fund is limited. So that help can be given where it is most needed, applicants must be prepared to give, in confidence, full information about the circumstances supporting their applications.

It is important to recognise that the Fund has been established to act as a safety net and not to fund expensive lifestyle choices. If you therefore have expenses such as holidays,

gym membership, sky digital, high mobile telephone charges or non-essential car costs then you will be expected to be able to pay for these yourself.

Those wishing to apply this year should write for an application form to:

BBC Pension and Benefits Centre
Broadcasting House
Cardiff CF5 2YQ or visit the website where you can download an application form: www.bbc.co.uk/charityappeals/about/grants/grace-wyndham-goldie.

Application forms should be returned no later than 31 July.

Applicants are considered annually in September and in no circumstances can continuing help over a number of years be promised.



NAO: toughest years ahead for DQF

The BBC has so far exceeded its Delivering Quality First targets but it faces 'significantly greater challenges' in the latter years of the savings programme, according to a National Audit Office report.

The public spending watchdog found that the BBC has made overall savings of £374m so far, exceeding its target of £367m by 2013/14. Most of this was achieved by renegotiating existing contracts, limiting salary increases and reducing the number of more expensive senior staff.

The report concluded that this was good value for money and so far has had only a limited impact on audience perceptions.

But the NAO also concluded that future savings 'involve more significant and potentially riskier changes to organisational structures and ways of working'.

The 48-page report argued that if the BBC is not able to make the majority of its savings through 'improved productivity', it will risk having to reduce its scope.

The BBC's target is to make annual savings of £700m by 2017.

Amyas Morse, head of the National Audit Office, said: 'The BBC has taken a systematic approach to how it can achieve future savings, but it needs to keep the implementation of its plans under review. This will lessen the risk of the BBC's having to make further reductions to scope by, for example, cutting the number of new programmes it commissions or acquires.'

BBC history under the spotlight

In February 2015, the BBC's official historian, Jean Seaton, published *Pinkoes and Traitors: the BBC and the Nation 1970-1987*.

This study of a critical and turbulent period in the history of the BBC takes its title from one of the 'Dear Bill' letters in *Private Eye*, ostensibly written by Margaret Thatcher's husband, Denis, and fulminating against the BBC as 'that nest of Pinkoes and Traitors'. The phrase captures one of the many strands of anti-BBC feeling at a time when the corporation was under attack as a public service from across the political spectrum.

Jean Seaton's compelling account takes up the BBC story in 1974, at a time of national decline and disorder under the Labour governments of Harold Wilson and James Callaghan. It culminates in 1987, during Thatcher's energetic and iconoclastic Conservative premiership, with the forced resignation of Alasdair Milne as director-general, a convulsive episode that encapsulated the complex and often strained relationship between the BBC and the state.

During the intervening years, Britain experienced mass unemployment, trade union strikes, war in Northern Ireland and the Falklands, and a fundamental threat to the very existence of its public service broadcaster.

At the same time, the BBC produced memorable and groundbreaking programmes, from *Live Aid* and the wedding of Charles and Diana, to iconic comedy (*Fawlty Towers*, *Blackadder*, *Dad's Army*), drama (*The Singing Detective* and *Tinker Tailor Soldier Spy*) and factual programming (*Life on Earth*).

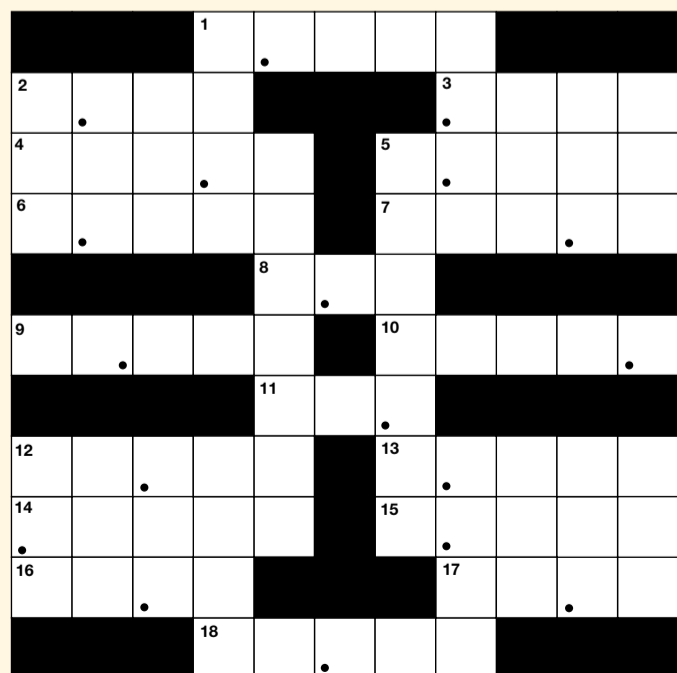
Jean Seaton's examination of these years pulls no punches. Drawing on previously unseen state and BBC papers, as well as a wide range of in-depth interviews, she deftly dissects the stormy controversies and the magnificent triumphs of an institution that both reflects Britain and has helped to define it. Along with new insights into the BBC's inner workings and frank acknowledgement of more recent and shocking revelations of longstanding sexual abuse, she presents a detailed and absorbing analysis of an institution at the heart of Britain and of the nation's sense of itself.

'This fine history makes Jean Seaton the country's top navigator through the BBC practices, its emotional geography and its outputs.'

Peter Hennessy, Atlee Professor of Contemporary History, Queen Mary College, University of London

CROSPERO 184

devised and compiled by Jim Palm



Complete the square by using the clues; these apply only to words running across. Then take these words in numerical order and extract the letters indicated by a dot. If your answers are correct, these letters will spell out the name of a TV programme.

Please send your answers in an envelope marked 'Crospero' to The Editor, Prospero, BBC Pension and Benefits Centre, Broadcasting House, Cardiff CF5 2YQ, by 8 May 2015. The winner will receive a £10 voucher.

CLUES

- In that place (5);
- Contest (4);
- Green area (4);
- Fruits (5);
- Underground worker (5);
- Plaster base (5);
- Somerset village (5);
- American lizard (3);
- Vegetable (5);
- Make a speech (5);
- Moisture (3);
- Adhesive (5);
- Hidden London river (5);
- Mammal (5);
- Water escape (5);
- Dairymaids (4);
- Black (4);
- Have faith in (5).

Solutions to Crospero 183: Pest; Sober; Eye; Tow; Roe; Woe; One; Nor; Straw; Mete; Agree; Corruption; Edna; Apex; Vales; Red; Elo; Ire; Tag; Men; Die; Sense; Toes.

The Children's Hour series were *Toytown* and *Nature Parliament*. The winner of Crospero 183 was Mrs E Beynon of Haverfordwest.

A wartime story



I was working in the monitoring service at Caversham Park, Reading, living at the Shiplake Hostel, working six days on two days off.

It happened in 1942 that Tony Abbey, who was on the same day off as me, decided to visit London for the day to look at bomb damage. We caught the train from Reading and arrived late morning. We walked to Trafalgar Square and went to St Paul's Cathedral. Only part was open because of bomb damage. From the whispering gallery it was closed. There was no workmen working at the time.

Tony decided to explore and somehow we managed to get into the inner skin of the dome. Workmen had installed double planking so it was possible to walk around the dome and after walking a few yards we came to where the bomb had entered the dome. It was possible to look through down onto the ground floor, somehow or other. With Tony always leading we got into the chamber under the cross and we took turns to climb into the cross which has metal rungs inside.

The only person who could confirm my story is Tony Abbey. I hope he is still around.

The only reason I am telling this story is because of the TV programme that was on last week.

Doug Dunderdale

Churchill in Opposition

I very much enjoyed reading 'Remembering Winston Churchill' by Grahame Whatling in the February edition of *Prospero*. We both worked in London Radio OBs, and I too have a vivid memory of covering a late evening broadcast from Chartwell by Winston Churchill when he was Leader of the Opposition.

At the time I was paired with Nogs Newman. The gear was rigged in a room which housed many of Churchill's paintings, so we had plenty to interest us. The microphones were rigged in his study – it was a Grade 1 outside broadcast, and that meant two microphones, two sets of gear and two lines back to BH. After the broadcast, Churchill came to thank us and presented both of us with two cigars, one to smoke and one to keep. I did smoke the smaller one and kept the larger one. I still have it, but it is showing signs of its age.

We had to carry all the gear through the front door to the van. Churchill had retired for the night but decided the draught was too much, so he bellowed 'Shut that b----- door.' He'd had enough of us!

John Wallis



Lime Grove

Like Nick Jennings, whom I remember, I spent much of my career working in Film Maintenance (later Film Engineering Services). If you wanted to be a versatile engineer, it was an ideal place to work. You had to know about audio tape recorders, both portable and static, sepomag bays, projectors and their power supplies.

The biggest problems by far were in dubbing theatres, where you had to have a film projector and several sepomag bays all running in absolute synchronism, forwards and backwards at up to 4x speed. Each and every manufacturer had a different solution, and some more than one. The Keller was one of the better systems, using toothed rubber belts and electromagnetic clutches. It consisted of eight transports, of which two were polygonal prism telecines, and the rest sepomags. Each transport could be arranged to run either 16mm or 35mm film. The whole machine, running at 4x speed with 35mm modules installed, was a frightening sight!

The whole thing, including the control desk, was housed in what had been the dubbing theatre itself, a corner being partitioned off to serve for voiceovers. The desk itself was a nightmare. It was designed by P&ID, later SCPD, by an engineer with no understanding of the principles of sound engineering. From a zero-level input to output, the signal went through 180dB of amplification, with the corresponding lousy signal-to-noise consequences. This was because there were, at the time, many old-fashioned engineers in that department, who held the view that their job was to assemble kits of in-house equipment, rather than to apply their skills to solving the problems posed by their customers. Working under one of them, I nearly got shot for designing a PA mixer to meet my customer's needs. I still remember a former colleague who designed a portable mixer for Film Department. It used in-house equipment and, with 24V worth of Ni-Cd batteries, was a two-man lift.

Lime Grove, in those days, was the main base for the Current Affairs film crews, and for the assembly of their material. The Smiths Yard workshop handled the engineering and maintenance. When the dubbing theatre was rebuilt, the workshop moved to what had been the projection room. There was a narrow passage from there to the control room, which contained the echo plate. Care was needed.

The big advantage of the Smiths Yard location was that it was next to the Club!

Frank Wood

John Tusa to speak at BBCPA AGM

Sir John Tusa will be the guest speaker at the April AGM of the BBC Pensioners' Association. This is to be held at Friends Meeting House, Euston Road, London on 16 April 2015 at 2pm. (Opposite Euston main-line and tube stations.)

As a former Managing Director of World Service and of The Barbican Arts Centre, John Tusa's wealth of public experience began as a main presenter of 24 Hours and of Newsnight. His latest book, *Pain in the Arts*, champions his view that Britain consistently undervalues the arts; a standpoint that is interwoven with the ongoing debates about the next licence fee or levy and the BBC Royal Charter.

As an independent association of former BBC staff, BBCPA AGMs always provide an opportunity for members to voice opinions about the BBC Pension Scheme and how the Association can best help to ensure that our members' views are known to the Scheme Trustees and within the wider BBC.

Last year, the corporation began to set about keeping in touch with former staff through its Alumni project, complementing our capturing of the past through BBCPA's 'Memory Bank' initiative. As with the email exchanges of other groups, such efforts all help to add a personal dimension to the historic BBC programme archive.

All members are invited to the AGM, together with friends and other ex-staff who would like to know more about the Association. We don't limit numbers, unless we pass the point where there is standing room only, so please join us on the day. Friends House has a restaurant open to visitors and there will also be an opportunity to meet friends for a cup of tea afterwards.

If getting to the AGM is not convenient, our Regional Meetings may suit you better. This year we plan to hold these in Belfast, Birmingham and Leeds; in October as usual. Expect more information in due course, also on the website at: www.bbcpa.org.uk

Hugh Sheppard
Chairman BBCPA

Information & Archive Contributor Access

I am a former producer in the BBC TV Music and Arts Department.

It was very pleasing to discover recently that it is possible to get copies of old programmes from the BBC, because quite a number that I made pre-dated the advent of VHS and the possibility of making copies during transmission or editing playback, or recording off air. Also I had a few of my VHS copies stolen during a house move in the 80s.

I identified eight programmes that I really wanted to get copies of. Three were on videotape and the quality of copy I received was excellent. The other five were on film and the quality ranged from reasonable to poor to atrocious. In one case, besides the picture quality being very poor, the soundtrack had a hum and buzz throughout, making it virtually unwatchable. In this case I already had a VHS copy but the first few minutes suffered from some sort of interference on the video image and I hoped to get a better copy. In fact my faulty VHS copy is vastly better, in spite of having been left undisturbed for some 30 years before I made a digital copy.

A very helpful man in the I & A Contributor Access section got a response for me to my first complaint about poor quality film reproduction, from Odyssey, which I now understand is a commercial subsidiary

.....it turned out that I was only getting a film insert and not the completed programme.....

of the BBC, explaining that copies of films are straight telecine transfers without any of the sort of correction that would take place on a live transmission. It also explained that correction was possible but would cost more.

Although I have not yet been able to check all of the DVDs completely, I have already identified a number of problems. And this raises some questions. While I understand that this can't be a priority for the BBC, it seems to me that if the service is offered it should be explained, before taking payment, that it is not a quality service. (Those of us who used to work for the BBC like to think of it as a quality organisation! In fact, time was when there used to be complaints that engineers were demanding too high quality.) After all, a single copy costs many times that of a commercially produced copy (one of my own cost less than £10).

Second, were, or are, film and VT libraries separate and operating separate policies re junking/retention? In one case where I believed I was ordering a complete programme it turned out that I was only getting a film insert and not the completed programme which would have been on videotape. It would seem an odd decision to keep the film and not the VT, when the VT would have kept both. It's a small irony that I have preserved the audio tape of the studio part of the programme but the BBC hasn't! In fact I have audio tapes of part or all of four programmes altogether, video versions of two of which could not be found.

Third, one programme preserved on film, with less bad picture and sound quality, is out of sync after a midway point. I assume either the sepomag track had been damaged, or, more likely, there was a reel change and the second reel was not synced correctly.

Fourth, I would like to know whether the film transfer that was of really bad quality was itself badly undertaken or whether it transferred accurately the quality of the film. If the latter it would raise a question about how well the film archive is stored, which ought to matter to everyone.

I have recently been learning to use Final Cut Pro X, and the above prompted me to learn, with the help of online video tutorials, how to apply colour correction to the videos I have received. As a result, I can now, in a matter of minutes, make a significant improvement to the picture quality – not perhaps up to the standard of a BBC transmission, but a vast improvement on what I received. If I, as an 80-year-old novice, can do this I would have thought that a professional could do something as good in the time it takes to take film and track reels out of the cans and sync them up on telecine. I don't see how it can be a matter of time cost as we pay the same for a half hour as for an hour. Is it a matter of equipment not available?

The colour problems on the DVDs are not shot specific but pretty well consistent throughout the whole DVD, so correction of one appropriate frame can be applied to the whole video.

I realise the BBC can't devote too much thought to old pensioned off employees, and I'm very grateful for the opportunity at all to retrieve these old programmes, but it was intensely disappointing, for someone who tried to deliver quality, to see such a poor outcome. We don't have much in the way of rights in this, but it is still the case that these productions are the result of our work, and that ought to matter.

David Buckton

Mob rule

May I start a campaign in *Prospero* for MOB Rule.

MOB as in 'Music Off Button'. Music disease now infests most programmes – especially if someone is talking, when producers seem to think that it is essential to have an underbubble of irrelevant music. As a VT Editor I often mixed music into programmes but always took it out either if the cfx were important or if someone started to speak. Obvious really, that if you put a talking head into a programme you want to hear what they have to say.

We need a button such as the red button to be made available to enable this music to be turned off. Technically this is not very difficult. The ultimate stupidity was a natural history programme recently where the presenter said 'listen to the amazing call of this bird'. I would have loved to but the full symphony orchestra gloop drowned it out completely.

Ian Rutter

And sound levels...

Many others have made these points, so I know I'm wasting my time complaining about sound levels because the BBC is always right!

Today, listening to *Desert Island Discs*, it was impossible to hear the commentary, unless one is being deafened by the music. I'm simply fed up with turning the volume up and down. I have complained about this before!

Another thing the public has complained about is the background music in dramas and trailers. Once, to my amusement, I complained I was unable to hear the music properly because there were voices over. Whoever read it missed the point, and said I wasn't supposed to hear the music, so why play it?

If you would like another complaint? I hate two presenters, as I spend all my time looking at them, looking at each other!

I have spent about 50 years trying to do something about some of these points with zero result. But I know I'm right, as I used to work for the 'Beeb' for 35 years or so.

I'm nearly 80 now, so you will be happy to know that this will simply be the last ever of my complaints.

John Dixon

Perceptions

I found the letters from Alan Muirhead and Matt Spicer interesting for the memories they triggered. History, particularly remembered history, is all about perceptions. Alan produced an impressive list of people who were around at that time, and they were also memorable to me, though often for very different reasons. Maybe it was just me but at the time, I didn't find the little wax doll particularly effective. The weekly programme Matt mentioned was a general programme of Scottish events rather than a news programme, though it was consumed eventually by News Department in an empire building exercise. Its title related to the current year, in other words *Scotland 67* became *Scotland 68* when the calendar changed. In terms of staffing, I took over as GPP from Matt for a couple of years then Alan took over from me. He was followed by Donald Munro. So if Alan entered the Falkirk tunnel from one end to take over from Matt who was entering the tunnel at the other end, the tunnel must be longer than I remember.

Ken Stewart

It's the Pitts

Paul Jackson's letter about early TV newsreaders mentions Valerie Pitts (later Lady Solti) and the various programmes she worked on, but omits to say that she was the occasional presenter of *South Today*, whose regular presenter, when I was there in Southampton in the early sixties, was Anthony Muncaster.

Paul mentions her marriage to James Sargeant. I recall Valerie telling a story about this. She and her husband went to a grand awards ceremony in a posh London hotel. The major-domo on the door recognised her as they approached, and without asking her name announced loudly 'Mr and Mrs Pitts!'. Valerie approached him and whispered, 'No, that's wrong, it's Sargeant'. The major-domo then roared out 'As you were! Sergeant and Mrs Pitts!'

Peter Hill

Sheila Tracey



Sheila Tracey (whose obituary appeared in *Prospero* December 2014) is with George Chisholm. I am the shadowy boom operator. In the shot are Stan Dorfman who was the designer at the time and Simon the floor assistant is leaning against the left hand flat.

It may well be Ian Gibb on the camera.

Happy days, we did the *Minstrels* one week and the *Billy Cotton Band Show* the next week plus *Crackerjack* and other theatre shows thrown in.

Mike Cotton

Does any other person have this trouble?



I sent an email to the Radio Times service helpline on 21 February 2015 stating that I had not received the then edition of Radio Times.

I received a reply (22 February) stating that they expected a delay

in receiving the *Radio Times* overseas, but it should arrive before the programmes start on a Saturday. I drew it to their attention that it seemed that *Radio Times* was no longer sent via the Royal Mail as was indicated on the then label!

It followed that it was sent via the Dutch Post Office, which may have explained the delay! I stated that I had visited the Belgian Post Office distribution service here in Roeselare, but they had nothing on premises.

I was given information that my subscription was in order (25 February). I duly thanked them for this information (27 February). I sent another email (27 February) stating that I still have not received my copy. However, I received the *Radio Times* for Week 21/27 February on 2 March 2015, and the next issue (28 February/6 March 2015) on 6 March 2015 – rendering both issues redundant!

I was given information that they could confirm that they are currently investigating the delivery delays and would contact me in due course and also investigate their despatch method.

I bring this matter to your attention as other subscribers may have the same experience. I should be grateful if you could help me and others in this matter in order to ascertain the latest position.

Arthur Lincoln

CONTACTS

Visiting Scheme

Is available to BBC pensioners over 70, those recently bereaved, and anyone in poor health. The scheme is a method of keeping in touch and operates throughout the UK. Visitors are BBC pensioners themselves. If you want to be visited, receive a phone call or meet up somewhere mutually convenient call 029 2032 2811. The contact is the same if you would like to become a visitor.

Queries

For benefit and pension payroll queries, call the Service Line on 029 2032 2811 or email mypension@bbc.co.uk

Prospero

To add or delete a name from the distribution list, ring the Service Line on 029 2032 2811. *Prospero* is provided free of charge to retired BBC employees. On request, we will also send it to spouses or dependants who want to keep in touch with the BBC. *Prospero* is also available on audio disc for those with sight impairment. To register, please ring the Service Line. Alternatively, it is also available online at www.bbc.co.uk/mypension, under 'Documents'.

BBC Club

The BBC Club in London has a retired category membership costing £30 a year or £39 a year for family membership. Pre-1997 life members are not affected. Regional clubs may have different arrangements. Please call BBC Club London administration office on 020 8752 6666 or email bbc.club@bbc.co.uk

Benevolent Fund

This is funded by voluntary contributions from the BBC and its purpose is to protect the welfare of staff, pensioners and their families. Grants are made at the discretion of the Trustees. They may provide assistance in cases of unforeseen financial hardship, for which help from other sources is not available. Telephone: 029 2032 2811.

Prospero Society

Prospero Society is the only section of the BBC Club run by and for retired BBC staff and their spouses. Its aim is to enable BBC pensioners to meet on a social basis for theatre visits, luncheons, coach outings etc.

The Prospero Society is supported by BBC Club funds so as to make events affordable. If you would like an application form please contact:

Gayner Leach, BBC Club, BC2 B3 Broadcast Centre, 201 Wood Lane, London W12 7TP
Tel: 0208 752 6666

Email: bbc.club@bbc.co.uk

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BBC PA

For details of how to join the Pensioners' Association, see the panel on the left.

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.....

BBC Pension No. Date of Birth.....

Address.....

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Postcode..... Telephone.....

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Please send to: BBCPA Box 230, Alton Hampshire, GU34 9AR

Ealing Studios remembered

Oliver Bayldon, former art director and designer, shares his reminiscences...

In 1902, the original White Lodge building on Ealing Green was purchased for film production, and Ealing Studios were founded. Since that date this site has been in continual use for production. As demand increased, new studios were added in 1931 and straightaway began to produce a regular output of popular films hastened by the introduction of sound.

By the 1940s this included such popular classics as *Scott of the Antarctic* and *The Cruel Sea* as well as the famous Ealing Comedies. Today this is what most people mean when they talk about classic Ealing films. However by the 1950s the producers had been affected by the growing impact of Pinewood and Elstree and were facing liquidation.

In 1955, Ealing Studios were purchased by the BBC. From that date they became the heart of BBC filming, editing and dubbing for 40 years.

At first the stages were mainly used to shoot film inserts for electronic productions, including such regulars as *Z Cars*, *Troubleshooters*, *Doctor Who*, Dickens serials etc, as well as such wholly filmed dramas such as *The Singing Detective*. By the 1960s, to service these ever-increasing demands, it had recruited and trained many fine cameramen and crews with the famed Tubby Englander as over-riding influence. Many such trainees later became independent lighting cameramen, moving into big feature films and taking their editors with them.

Ealing Studios were an essential part of BBC Television, having none of the set-and-strike turnover of electronic studios that operated like a production line. Here, sets could be built, lit, and shot out of sequence



Ealing Film Studios.

to be edited in-house later. These stages were also essential for many set-ups involving complex visual FX. Furthermore, enclosed studios offered security and reliability.

Ironically, as cameras and film stock improved and monochrome evolved into colour, more and more filming moved out onto location so that exteriors could be shot on site and not reproduced in TV Centre.

One of the joys of Ealing was its tank, which was used, together with Denham Studios, for several scenes in the great 1953 movie *The Cruel Sea*. Later during its BBC times, TFS (Television Film Studios) was run as a separate entity within BBC Television. Tony Cornell was its regular designer/consultant helping to keep the show running. I used the Ealing tanks several

times over the years for anything from flooded mines to drifting boats in thick fog as in *Poldark*, not to mention its used when drained for lower depths of basements and cellars to multi-storey sets.

Meanwhile, as television's influence grew, cinemas became less profitable. Today [in 2014] there is not one single cinema remaining in Ealing, despite the borough's recent rapid growth and an increasing demand. One by one, each cinema was shut down, converted, or simply demolished. When the last house of make believe was demolished in 2008, its 1930s neo-classical façade was saved, propped up in a scaffolding frame like an abandoned set.

But Ealing Studios still exists and continues to thrive, being used for major TV



Ealing Studio 2.

serials like *Downton Abbey* and as a successful Film School for aspiring directors and crew. This irony is not lost as we hear that a major planning application has just been approved by Ealing Council, to turn the whole Forum/ABC Cinema site into a massive housing/shopping scheme with minimal cinema presence!

Extracted from an article which first appeared in THE VETERAN, the magazine of the British Cinema and Television Veterans.

The next issue of *Prospero* will include Oliver's stories of location recces and filming around the world. Does anyone else have memories of shooting on location that they would like to share? Send us your memories using the contact details on page 2.

Connie celebrates a century

An amazing BBC pensioner celebrated her 100th birthday on 29 November last year.

Born in Leeds, Connie Suffell was a musician who played with the BBC Northern Symphony Orchestra in the 60s and 70s. She started on the piano at age six but when she was nine she was given a half-sized fiddle – she NEVER called it a violin.

From Thirsk, aged nine, she travelled alone, by train, to Harrogate for lessons, practising in an empty carriage on the way home.

By the age of 12 she was leading (!) a small group of older musicians in Blackpool and playing in churches, cafes, cinemas, theatres and competitions nationwide. She still has certificates with extraordinary marks – 99 out of 100!

She started a full-time musical career after finishing school. Photos of her wearing a pink taffeta skirt, with a Marcel hairwave, won many small jobs, in Hull, Leeds, the Isle of Man and festivals in Blackpool and Lytham.

At one of these engagements she met her future husband, Reg Humm. They married in 1936 – she was playing on the bandstand at

1pm, they were married at 2pm and she was back on the bandstand by 7pm!

He worked in Africa for Sudanese Railways. Connie joined him in Khartoum in 1937, where their daughter Diane was born, in 1940. She sailed to England, back to Africa, then home again several times during the war and has vivid memories of the Nile.

She started playing professionally again in 1953 – now with saxophone and Spanish guitar as well as fiddle – in summer season with stars like Alma Cogan and David Whitfield.

Then came the Liverpool Philharmonic and then in 1960, the BBC Northern Symphony Orchestra, playing in the Proms under Reggie Stead and every kind of programme.

Her husband died in 1967 and the BBC offered her more work beyond retirement in 1974, but she wanted change and sold her beloved fiddle. Connie's an extraordinary woman, lives in her own flat, dresses like a 25-year-old, still cooks all her own meals, is fiercely independent and could talk for England!

James Latham



Connie, bottom left.



Connie at 100.

Ed Stewart's 'No 1 Pick'



Peter Simpson's BBC career spanned 35 years in the Gramophone/Music Library, where he worked in virtually every post and gained an enviable reputation for customer service amongst his many 'clients'.

Peter was born in Vauxhall in 1940 and moved into his grandmother's house in Battersea aged six. His grandmother, and then mother, were both caretakers of the local URC church, where Peter subsequently became an Elder.

Music was his great love. His musically-associated career began at Novellos, delivering sheet music to great conductors and musicians. Two years later, in 1962, he started at the BBC as a messenger in the Gram Library, graduating to the Music Library for Radio 2. Here he was to gain a reputation for being a well-informed and thorough researcher, finding music for several long-running programmes including *Desert Island Discs*. As his reputation grew, he was often asked for by name by the many programme producers, who had developed an affection and respect for Peter's work.

When Peter retired in 1997, Ed Stewart wrote a tribute in *Ariel*: '...Peter Simpson was the one we turned to for an instant record withdrawal... We got the records but he got into trouble for skipping bureaucracy.' Poor Peter!

Outside the BBC, his many interests included steam railways, trams, local history, concerts, theatre groups including Wimbledon Theatre, The Music Museum, and the Harry Roy Appreciation Society.

Peter met his wife-to-be Beryl late in life, and they were married in 2011. Sadly, Peter had been previously diagnosed with cancer, and he died in October last year.

Peter was a quiet, modest man but his impact will never be forgotten: he will be very much missed.

Beryl Simpson & John Sykes

Stan Tele-cine

Stanley (Stan) Jones, who worked in the BBC for 34 years, has died aged 84.

Stan was one of eight children born to a slate quarryman and



his wife in Caernarvonshire. He excelled at school and went on to study Maths and Physics at the University College of North Wales, Bangor, before spending two very enjoyable years in the RAF, where he became a pilot officer and navigator.

It was by chance that he then joined the BBC, leading to a lifelong career in television. Soon after he started in 1954, Stan joined an experimental unit in London where he became the first person in the UK to use a radio camera. With his airforce background, he was chosen to go up in a Gannett to film the aeroplane landing on the Ark Royal.

During these early days in the BBC he worked on shows such as *Saturday Night Out*, broadcasting from the summit of Snowdon on one occasion. He filmed Churchill's funeral from a helicopter and Princess Margaret's wedding from Buckingham Palace. He also worked on the first series of *Doctor Who*. He became known as 'Stan Tele-cine'.

He became an engineering manager, working almost entirely on outside broadcasts, which enabled him to travel and meet all sorts of people at events held in stadiums, theatres, concert halls, chapels and churches. He was proud to be the first Welsh speaker on the technical side of the BBC in Cardiff.

He saw enormous changes during his time in broadcasting; perhaps one of the most significant was the advent of the colour television. Stan was experimental in using colours to illuminate audiences during the early Max Boyce shows. On a number of occasions he was nominated for a BAFTA for lighting direction, winning one in 1994.

It was no easy decision for him to leave the BBC, but after almost 35 years, he decided to become a freelance lighting director in 1988 and discovered new challenges and pleasures. He worked until he was 70.

He is survived and greatly missed by Gwyneth, his wife of 57 years, who he met on a BBC treasure hunt, his four children, Rhian, Bethan, Dilwyn and Iwan, 13 grandchildren and one great-grandchild.
Rhian James

World Service documentary maker



Derek Blizard, for many years a journalist and documentary maker in World Service, has died aged 84.

After National Service and Oxford (where he got a degree in Russian and French), Derek joined the BBC early in his adult life. In *Central Talks* and *Features*, Derek wrote scripts on a wide range of subjects, cultural, social and political, for use by the BBC's

foreign language services. He also made documentaries on topics ranging from Edward Elgar, the Wall Street Crash, Lloyds of London and North Sea Oil. He had a special interest in East-West affairs and produced features on both the CIA and the KGB. His commitment, energy and knowledge were a great asset to World Service.

Derek had a consuming interest in the two World Wars. In 1981, he took his then 81-year-old father back to the area of Northern France where he had fought in the trenches during the Great War. Later, to commemorate the 50th anniversary of the D-Day landings, he was asked by WHSmith to write a book on the subject.

Apart from his BBC work, Derek's great love was cycling. He cycled all over Europe and Britain. It was on a trip to Finland by bike that he met his future wife, Raija, at a midsummer's dance in Helsinki. Three years before his retirement he rode from John O'Groats to Lands End.

Shortly after leaving the BBC, Derek and his family moved to Evesham, then later to Broadwell, near Moreton-in-Marsh. Although he gave up cycling, he was a keen walker, doing anything up to 10 to 15 miles when well into his 70s. Sadly, his last few years were blighted by illness.

Derek was from a Welsh family and was always proud of his Welsh heritage. It was appropriate that at his funeral, his coffin was draped in the Welsh flag. He is survived by Raija and their two children, Karin and Owen.

Mary Raine

Robin Adams

I first worked in studios with **Robin Adams** when he joined TV News at AP in the early 1960s. He was great to work with and approached everything he undertook with drive and enthusiasm. I remember once having to persuade him not to take perfectly serviceable equipment apart just for the fun of it! However, his enthusiasm extended well beyond the workplace and several of us had cause to be grateful for his help with DIY, or fixing cars.

His technical abilities were soon recognised and he was seconded to P.I.D. to assist in equipping the new studios at TC Spur, ready for TV News to move in 1969. It must have been during this time that he cultivated excellent contacts with other departments, including Designs Department and Technical Investigations Department, all of which were very valuable to TV News in the ensuing years.

Later, as the result of yet another BBC re-organisation, he became Manager Base Operations (TV News), a post he held for several years. He then left the BBC to pursue a very successful career in the wider broadcasting industry with companies such as 'Basys' and later Drake Electronics, eventually being based in Denver for several years.

With gradually failing health he finally settled in the Philippines where he lived in quiet retirement until dying on Sunday, 8 February, shortly before his 70th birthday. His funeral was held in the Philippines, which was his wish.

Another good friend and colleague gone.
Ken Oxley

First woman to manage a local station, then on to Woman's Hour



One of the first people I met on joining BBC North Region in the 1950s was **Sandra (Sandy) Chalmers** who has died at the age of 74 after a short illness.

As teenagers, she and her elder sister Judith were regular performers with *Children's Hour*, which was to be the launchpad for their highly successful careers. Sandy had the broadest of smiles, a ready northern wit and typically she introduced me to almost everyone in the canteen.

Sandy stuck to radio – first as senior announcer in the north and then, in 1970, with the new BBC Radio Manchester and her own daily phone-in. A passionate enthusiast for 'community' radio, there followed a groundbreaking appointment to Stoke-on-Trent as the first woman in Britain to manage a local station. The station's audiences were among the highest in the country – a fact not unnoticed by radio executives in London who appointed Sandy as Editor, *Woman's Hour*. She immediately refreshed the output with a down-to-earth touch, including hitherto 'taboo' health issues.

And she created *It's Your World*, an international phone-in series which combined World Service and Radio 4 audiences as they questioned people like Margaret Thatcher and King Hussein. All new territory for Radio 4.

Thinking 'outside the box' was always a Chalmers strength, and when BBC network radio in the late 80s was facing tough competition it was Sandy, now in charge of publicity, who launched her next big initiative, *Radio Goes to Town*. This touring radio festival went to 40 cities in the UK, taking shows from all the networks to audiences who had never previously seen them. She also persuaded the DG to surrender the basement of BH and create the first ever BBC visitor centre; it was opened by the Queen in 1997.

On leaving the BBC Sandy worked tirelessly for the older generation; first as Director of Communications with Help the Aged and then as a peripatetic trainer – generously handing over her skills to those who need help to use and understand the media.

Sandy is survived by son Richard, daughter Becky and five adored grandchildren – Emma, Freya, Kate, Daniel and Olly.
Michael Barton

HNPC who used tact and tenacity to ensure the regional voice was heard

John Ecclestone MBE, former Head of Manchester Network Production Centre, has died at the age of 83 after a long illness which he bore with great courage.

John started his BBC career as a studio manager in Birmingham in 1955. He later moved to Television Centre where he spent five years as head of forward planning, working closely with the formidable Bryan 'Ginger' Cowgill, controller of BBC1. In 1977 he was appointed Head of Manchester Network Production Centre.

John was HNPC at a time when the playing field on which network TV and Radio commissions were won and lost was firmly tilted southwards. It required an extraordinary mix of tact and tenacity to ensure the regional voice was heard above the clamour of competition from departments who shared the rarefied air with London-based commissioners. In such circumstances, John's professional and personal character and experience fitted the bill perfectly. In the best sense of the phrase, he was a non-playing captain who backed to the hilt his team of television programme heads such as Roger Laughton and Nick Hunter.



Radio, under David Hatch and later Michael Green, produced over 1,000 hours of high quality programmes a year. *File on 4* was launched during John's time as HNPC and is still going strong today from Salford. John also lent his support to the augmentation of the BBC Northern Symphony Orchestra in 1982 and its change of name to the BBC Philharmonic, transforming what had been seen by many as a provincial orchestra into an orchestra of world class standing.

On retirement from the BBC, John threw himself into a new activity which linked back to his early work in radio: working with the National Trust to oversee its audio archive and undertake new recordings. He was awarded the MBE for services to Heritage in 2011.

John was a lifelong supporter of Manchester City football club. That he lived long enough to see them win the Premier League – a prospect bordering on fantasy to those of his colleagues who supported Manchester United – gave him enormous satisfaction.

John leaves a wife, Daphne, three children (Peter, Ian and Jane), and ten grandchildren.

Roger Dowling

Pianist who brought a new modern sound to BBC Radio



I was saddened to hear of the death of pianist **Peter Martin** on 31 January 2015 at the age of 93.

I suppose his BBC staff status was rather tenuous, for he was with us only for slightly less than five years – but in that time he made a musical impact that I have no doubt many will recall with pleasure.

Peter was appointed the resident conductor, pianist and arranger for the BBC West of England Players in September 1960 and remained with them until the orchestra was disbanded in May 1965. His appointment proved hugely popular both with the players and its audience, it being said that he brought a new modern sound to BBC Radio and calculated that it brought them more airtime than any other regional orchestra.

In addition to those broadcasts he was regularly invited to conduct and perform with the BBC Midland Light Orchestra and London's BBC Radio Orchestra, including occasions at the Royal Festival Hall for Radio Two's annual Festival of Light Music.

Peter was born in Wandsworth, south-west London, in January 1922 and, showing a remarkably early interest in music, it was recognised and nurtured. He went on to study at the Royal Academy of Music under Harold Craxton, who referred to him as 'The Boy with the Racing Car Hands' due to the speed he could cover the keyboard.

After his sojourn with the BBC he went on to conduct and perform in many West End London shows including *Charley Girl*, *Anne of Green Gables* and *Jesus Christ Superstar*. There was also film work, including John Boorman's *Where the Heart Is* and TV work with Griff Rhys Jones, Martin Clunes and Les Dawson.

Peter married in 1942 and his wife, Mary passed away in 2004. To their five children and their many grand and great-grandchildren, we express our deepest sympathy.

Brian Willey

Richard Pope

I knew Richard for much of my time at the BBC through my visits to the Gramophone Library at BBC Television Centre. From *Play School* through to my time as producer of

Grange Hill, he was both an educator and inspiration in providing music that the audience appreciated and which suited the style and mood of the programmes.

His advice influenced my programmes even when music was specially composed. To say that he influenced television output is not, in my view, an understatement.

It was very sad to see the end of the Libraries at the BBC as they were a way of keeping the audience in touch with what was current in music but, to me, were also an education in what, musically, was both new and old, classical and popular. The knowledge that resided in all those Libraries, and more especially in the people who worked in them, provided a richness that ended in greater audience satisfaction; a quality that lay beyond what was ultimately an accounting view. It was also part of what we were trying to do for the audiences in that great tradition of programme making that we all thought at the time as being part of the foundation of public service broadcasting. I would often get letters asking about certain pieces that Richard would have suggested and thanks to him it added much to audience satisfaction.

Now, in a different world, you can see or rather hear the results of not having the creation of a mood for a programme that makes a difference. True, there are excellent TV composers but in a world where money and accountants rule, television music is not regarded in the same way, neither is that knowledge that can help make all the difference to a programme.

Richard was an unassuming person who definitely made a contribution like many of his generation to the golden age of BBC Television quietly and without glorification.

Richard Pope died of pneumonia at the beginning of March 2015 age 63.

Albert Barber

Talented costume designer and embroiderer

Jane Scrase-Dickins, as she then was, came to BBC Television as one of the costume designers taken on in the fifties from Sadlers Wells.

She worked on ballet production and drama. She remembered especially one of the first drama series, *Children of the New Forest*, produced by Naomi Capon, with a cast of extras who had to be dressed as both Roundheads and Cavaliers!

'This meant,' Jane remembered, 'we dressed them basically as Roundheads, then in Cavalier scenes put on a wig, plus a Cavalier hat and cloak.'

The dresser was Joe, a real character. At one point, she heard Joe say: 'If Miss Dickins says you're going to be a Roundhead [shoving the helmet on the extra's head], you're going to be a bloody Roundhead.' But what he forgot to do was remove the Cavalier wig!

Jane stayed with BBC Television for eight years. Then in 1982 she married Geoffrey Lemon, a Salisbury solicitor, and home was in a nearby village, Steeple Langford.

Joining the Women's Institute, Jane began giving talks and leading workshops. This led her to joining the Embroiders' Guild, where

she served on the Executive Committee for many years.

In 1977 she met the then Dean of Salisbury Cathedral, Dr Sydney Evans, who was looking for designers for the Cathedral.

The Sarum Group was formed a year later, and commissions kept coming, not only for all frontals, copes, vestments and kneelers for Salisbury Cathedral, but for cathedrals and churches throughout the United Kingdom and USA.

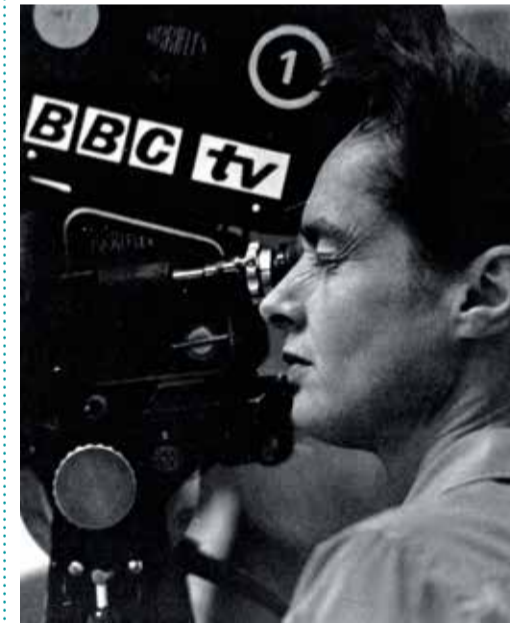
President of the West Country Embroiders for many years, she was also president of the Salisbury branch of the Embroiders' Shield, a member of the Kiscoombe Group and Machine Embroidery Group which still meets at Sarum College.

In 2011 she produced a series of panels for Amnesty International on the theme of Prisoners of Conscience to celebrate the 50th Anniversary of Amnesty. These were displayed in Salisbury Cathedral.

She was awarded an MBE and met Queen Elizabeth II.

Norma Gilbert

The secretary who started at the top of the BBC and worked her way down



Nancy Thomas, who worked for over 30 years for the BBC and Open University, died in January, aged 96.

Nancy's varied career started when she left a secretarial course at 18 and immediately got a job as the secretary and PA to Kenneth Clark (then the Director of the National Gallery, later Lord Clark of Civilisation fame). From him she acquired her tremendous knowledge and understanding of art and culture, which she continued to add to throughout her life.

Nancy had a remarkably active war. She served with the Foreign Office in Paris just before occupation, and then in Egypt and Italy where she worked for some time supporting Yugoslav partisans.

Nancy joined the BBC in 1947, as assistant secretary to the director-general Sir William Haley; starting, as she used to say, 'at the top of the BBC and working her way down'. She moved onto programme scheduling and then, in 1955, she began producing programmes such as *Zoo Quest*, *Animal Vegetable Mineral* and *Panorama*, and she helped initiate

The Sky at Night. 1959 found Nancy in at the beginning of *Monitor*, working alongside Huw Weldon and directing programmes on Henry Moore, Jean Renoir and Andy Warhol, among many others.

Monitor ended in 1965 and Nancy followed her passion for promoting learning by making programmes firstly in the Further Education Department and then, from 1973, as the Senior Producer for the Arts Faculty of the Open University. To her delight, she received an honorary degree when she left.

On 'retiring', Nancy maintained a very active lifestyle, helping to run an educational film production company and a local language education centre, travelling and playing tennis into her mid-80s. Confined to her central London flat in the last few years, she still shared with her devoted colleagues, carers and family the wry wit, encouragement for learning and steely advice that were the hallmarks of her life.

We are organising a celebration of Nancy's life later in the year. Please contact nancythomas1918@gmail.com if you are interested in knowing more about the event.

Her family

GOS head and last of the Reithians?

Bob Gregson died in January 2015 aged 93. He was a dominating and admired figure when the External Services were based in Bush House.

After wartime service in the Royal Armoured Corps, reaching the rank of Acting Major by 1945, Bob returned to Liverpool University, gaining a first in Classics. He joined the BBC in Manchester as a Talks Producer, where he met his wife Joyce, and was one of the earliest producers of *Gardeners' Question Time*.

Then he moved to London, to the Talks and Features Department of the Overseas Service, which originated output for the English General Overseas Service (GOS). Rapid promotion followed and he became Head of GOS in 1958 (rechristened World Service in 1968). He was to remain its head for 15 years and transform it from a service aimed at those overseas who thought of London and the UK as 'home', to a service for anyone the world over who could understand English.



In those far-off days, the network boasted drama, music – from *Pop Club* to the Proms, comedy and sport, as well as round the clock world news and current affairs coverage. Bob was a demanding editor, insisting that the audience of many millions benefit from the highest standards. Not all the heads of output departments particularly enjoyed planning meetings where they had to pitch offerings to Bob and his team ('Define for us the Unique Selling Point for this series...').

World Service, which thrived as audiences grew, survived an overall but maladroit reorganisation at Bush House and was enhanced when the African and European English broadcasts came under its aegis. In 1973 Bob became Controller Overseas Services. His World Service farewell party was marked by the presentation of a gift from his staff of an engraved silver salver bearing the legend *Si Monumentum Requiritur, Circumaudi*. With Alexander Lieven as European Controller and Gerry Mansell as Managing Director, External Services had a strong team. Various FCO attempts to close or reduce services were successfully resisted.

Working for and with Bob was always stimulating, if at times exhausting. A colleague remarked that maybe he was 'the last of the Reithians'. He snorted dismissively but perhaps he was really rather pleased.

Chris Bell & Maureen Bebb

Selfless lady of Staff Records

Claire Todd's many friends and former colleagues were very saddened to hear of her death on 9 December 2014 at the age of 71.

Claire was born into a BBC family, her parents Kenneth and Eleanor having met in the BBC. Her father went on to become a much-respected Head of External Programme Operations. Claire followed the family tradition when she joined the BBC in 1973 to work in Staff Records at Bush House, where she stayed for most of her career. She became indispensable to personnel officers, her attention to detail ensuring that vital dates and information concerning staff careers were not missed.

She was later much in demand in project management roles before retiring finally in 2001. Her organisational and administrative skills were equally valued after she retired and took on various causes, working tirelessly in assisting her local MP, council and community in Haywards Heath.

Outside work, Claire revealed a very broad cultural hinterland with a particular love of music and the arts. She sang regularly in the BBC Club Choir and concerts were often followed by a supper hosted by her Uncle Norman in his beloved Carlton Club!

She had a very wide circle of friends from all walks of life and had the ability to make each one of us feel special. Claire was kind, generous and gracious and always carried an air of rather 'old-fashioned' gentility, often belied by her great sense of fun, infectious laughter and a very up-to-date, sharply observant wit!

She was also a deep thinker who wrote

some very profound poetry. She was devoted to her family and after her father's death, cared lovingly for her mother and brother, both of whom predeceased her.

Claire was an exceptional person, a 'one-off' from a gentler world where other people were always put first. One of the many tributes read at her funeral summed her up perfectly: 'The greatest 'lady' I have ever known who spent her whole life looking after, loving and supporting others. Her generosity in spirit, love and gifts were a lesson to us all.'

And so they were: she will be greatly missed.

Dorothy May



Costume designer best known for 'Emmapeelers'

Alun Hughes, former television costume designer, passed away after a very long illness in a Wrexham nursing home on 12 January 2015, aged 74.

He was best known for his work on *The Avengers* series for ITV, especially for the daring costumes worn by Diana Rigg as her character Emma Peel (the outfits became known as Emmapeelers).

Alun also designed stage costumes for Annie Lennox of *The Eurythmics*.

He joined the BBC Costume Department in the mid-1970s, where he worked on many programmes, from episodes of *Doctor Who* to the comedy series *Tucker's Luck* and notably with director Jonathan Miller on a number of Shakespeare productions, including *Antony and Cleopatra*, *The Tempest* and *Twelfth Night*. Alun also designed the costumes for an in-house production of Mozart's *Così fan tutte*.

A talented and well-liked and respected designer, he had a wonderful sense of humour and was known to be fun to work with. An assistant said that Alun once gave her good advice – 'Big smiles and friendly words to all and when you need help everyone is your friend.'

John Peacock



BBC Club is on the move!

The BBC Club Hub has moved location! Our NEW address is BBC Club Hub, BC2, B3, Broadcast Centre, 201 Wood Lane, London W12 7TP. Our telephone number remains 020 8752 6666 and the email address is still bbc.club@bbc.co.uk

Prospero Society AGM

The BBC Club Prospero Society is holding its annual AGM at 11am on Tuesday 21 April. If you are a member, or are interested in joining the Prospero Society, please come and join us. Why not stay afterwards and take advantage of Lunch for a Fiver at Western House which is available every Tuesday for retired Club members?

Offers

Our website has a host of offers available for our members including theatre ticket deals, gifts, cooking ideas, articles on health and therapies and a lot more. Much of the content is members-only; in order to register you will need a NEW-style BBC Club card which has an eight-digit number on the back starting with 100. To obtain a new card, call the Club on 0208 752 6666 or email bbc.club@bbc.co.uk

Events

What an amazing list of events we have in 2015! We have a Thames River Cruise with lunch planned for June, and a visit to the tranquillity of Little Venice. For Prospero Society members we are also planning a holiday – more details will be discussed at the Prospero Society AGM.

Prospero Society membership is growing as the advantages of an extended range of activities and subsidised prices are realised. To join only costs £10 per year and the Society is a great way to meet up with friends old and new! For details or to join, contact the Club.

Newsletter

The quarterly retired members' newsletter is now available to read or download on our website. Visit: www.bbclub.com/connect/prosperso/newsletters

Lottery

Always popular with our retired members, the BBC Club runs its own lottery with 15 monthly prizes in amounts of £50, £100 and £1,000 plus a quarterly jackpot of £10,000!

Call the Club on 020 8752 6666. Minimum entry is £5 per month.

Got a question or comment?

Email us at bbc.club@bbc.co.uk or call 020 8752 6666.

Wolf Hall a winner

Wolf Hall, starring Mark Rylance and Damian Lewis, has been named BBC Two's highest-rated drama series since 2002.

The adaptation of Hilary Mantel's novels about the Tudors had a consolidated average audience of 4.4 million viewers and 15.8% share across the six episodes, the highest since the current measurement system began 13 years ago.

It's BBC Two's highest-rated drama since the adaptation of Sarah Waters' *Tipping The Velvet* in 2002, which also had 4.4m viewers.

The channel's other big dramas are: season one of *The Fall* starring Gillian Anderson and Jamie Dornan with 4.3m viewers in 2013; season one of *Line of Duty* with 4.1m in 2012; and historical drama *Rome* starring Kevin McKidd and Ray Stevenson, which drew in an average of 4m viewers in 2005.

Banished also started strongly for BBC Two. The Jimmy McGovern drama series telling the story of the first British convicts transported to Australia kicked off with 3.4m viewers. That makes it one of BBC Two's top drama launches since 2002.

Wolf Hall had a marginally stronger start – 3.9m viewers watched Rylance's depiction of ambitious Thomas Cromwell in the curtain raiser. The drama charts his rise from blacksmith to close adviser to King Henry VIII, played by Lewis.

Wolf Hall director Peter Kominsky says: 'I grew up in a three-channel era when you really could say that a significant proportion of the population was simultaneously watching the latest TV drama. It's therefore such a thrill to learn today that *Wolf Hall* has broken BBC Two's own 'box office record'.

'Many millions of people made the choice to watch a difficult, challenging, highly political drama that only the BBC could make. I think that bodes well for the future.'

Kim Shillinglaw, controller of BBC Two, added: 'Enabling programme makers to produce their very best, most authored work is exactly what I want BBC Two to do and I'm delighted that the *Wolf Hall* team achieved it so magnificently.'



BBC creates programme-making division



BBC Studios will remain part of the public service BBC, but will operate separately from the channel teams and commissioners in BBC Television.

Staff working on anything from *Strictly* to *EastEnders* will join the new group, which will have its own leader who will report to the director-general and sit on the executive team.

BBC Studios will not include Children's and Sport, which will remain in BBC North, while Current Affairs programme making will sit within BBC News.

The plans – first mooted by the director-general last July – are expected to take between six and 12 months to come to fruition, with director of TV Danny Cohen to continue to oversee production until then.

Beyond this, the BBC hopes to make BBC Studios a wholly-owned BBC subsidiary. But it would need government and BBC Trust approval to remove production quotas and move towards a commercial model, with BBC programme makers able to compete for BBC and other commissions alongside the indies.

'I want BBC production to play a great part in this new golden age of broadcasting,' said Tony Hall. 'This is important. We want to get it right. We will get it right. And we'll take our time to ensure we do just that.'

He reiterated the importance of production to the BBC.

'We have been; we are; we always will be a great programme maker. We will never simply be a publisher broadcaster – that would be to deny our essence.'

The BBC is creating a new programme-making division as it takes its first steps towards transforming in-house production.

Stronger voice

Responding to the culture, media and sport select committee report on the future of the BBC, the director-general said he was 'heartened' by the report's support for a ten-year charter, which he believed was crucial to the BBC's independence. And he said the universal broadcasting levy espoused by the committee shared the goals of the BBC's own proposal for a licence fee updated to take account of online viewing.

He admitted that the internet age was a challenge for the BBC, but Hall believed the case for the organisation's future was 'stronger now than it was 12 years ago' when he left the BBC last time round.

Its mission was to make 'great British programmes' and be 'a trusted guide for everyone' at a time when 'American media giants colonise the world' and where it's 'easy to find information but harder to know whether to trust it'.

We recommend...

And with more and more content going behind pay-walls, the BBC would continue to 'make sure everyone has a front row seat for the best programmes'.

The DG saw a continuing role for channels offering the right mix of content, but said the BBC would step up its personalisation plans.

2015 would see it deliver individual BBC apps to audiences, introduce personal recommendations on iPlayer and begin tailored notifications of when a new series or match will begin.

'I don't think anyone in the market has cracked recommendations,' he said. 'The potential is huge... this is the start of a real transformation.'

But it would be done in the BBC way, with no commercial gain to be gotten, only an enhanced experience for the audience.

He also hailed the role of the BBC and its reputation around the world, saying it was a 'huge part' of why the UK was a 'cultural superpower'.

'But if we want a BBC that's even better in the future, we will need to take far-sighted decisions now so we don't inadvertently let the BBC wither,' he argued.



Chris Evans is thought to be among the BBC's highest paid stars.

BBC slices £33m off talent bill

The BBC is spending £33m a year less on talent than it did five or six years ago, with the cost of the highest earners taking a £20m tumble.

A new BBC Trust review reveals that the BBC paid £188m to 48,000 actors, presenters, musicians and extras in 2013-14 compared to £221m in 2008-09 – a 15% reduction that the reviewers called a 'significant achievement'.

Of this sum, £49.9m was paid to 'top talent' (those paid more than £100k), where £70.7m had gone five years before, amounting to a 29% reduction.

This includes a £13m drop in spending on the biggest names; £4.2m went to those individuals collecting between £1m and £5m from the BBC – down from £17.2m.

This review, conducted by Oliver & Ohlbaum, put the successful reduction down to a number of factors: some stars had left, others took pay cuts, talent was asked to do more for their money and the BBC was striking a better deal – all without any impact on the quality of output.

The BBC also made fewer hours of output in-house, particularly in genres which typically have higher talent costs, such as entertainment.

'We found that the BBC is now better at leveraging its buyer power and uses its strong bargaining position as a place where talent wants to work,' added O&O, judging that the corporation had responded well to the demands made by the trust five years ago to cut the cost of top talent.

Better deals

The analysts also detected a 'change of culture and procedures' when it came to dealing with talent, with 'vast improvement' noted in the way talent pay was handled.

'Scrutiny of talent deals is now the norm and there is an acceptance that the disciplined, structured and consistent approach has led to better informed negotiations, a better understanding of the BBC's bargaining position, and better value for licence fee payers,' the review stated.

It did see room for improvement, however, calling for more detailed documentation of audience research relating to talent and industry benchmarking to make it easier for those authorising deals to reach decisions.

The report also called for more complete monitoring of all types of on-air diversity – something, it said, the BBC is already working to address.

When it came to nurturing the stars of the future, the report said the BBC took a 'largely informal approach' that relied on giving them opportunities to learn their craft on the BBC's 'nursery slopes'.

This kind of opportunity could start even earlier if BBC Three moved online, it argued, adding that the corporation might need to monitor the effect the closure of the TV channel might have on developing talent in longer-form roles.

BBCPA booklet



The BBC Pensioners' Association has recently published 'Leaving the BBC', the third of its booklets about life working for the corporation. Copies are sent free to Association members and all those joining.

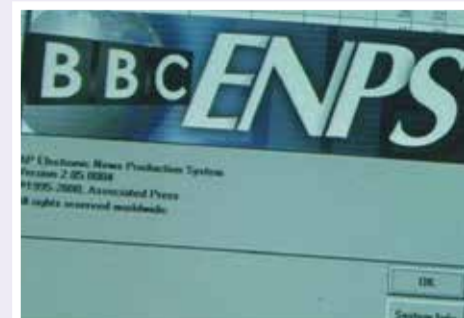
Previous booklets were 'Joining the BBC' and 'Triumphs and Disasters'. Nicholas Whines, the Association Membership Secretary, who edited the booklets comments: 'Pinkoes and Traitors takes us on a rollercoaster ride through the 70s and 80s (see page 3).

'It's a thrilling read and should provide a great stimulus for Prospero readers to write up their accounts of working for the BBC during this period. More than ever I am convinced of the need for a grassroots account of BBC history. The Pensioner Association Memory Bank remains open for contributions wherever you worked or whatever you did. We look forward to hearing from you.'

BBCPA, PO BOX 230, Alton, Hampshire GU34 9AR

An end to ENPS

ENPS, the news management system used by BBC journalists to put and keep BBC news on air, is to be phased out.



The system – which carries newsfeeds and alerts to the desktop, sends scripts to the prompter, 'speaks' to the BBC's audio and video systems and schedules the playout of programmes and reports – has been in use at the BBC since the 1990s. It will be replaced by Annova's OpenMedia.

The German company's off-the-shelf system, which is already the choice of a number of leading European broadcasters, is expected to save the BBC more than £4m a year when it is fully rolled out.

Design and testing of the system will take place over the next 18 months, with its roll-out scheduled to begin in early 2017.

OpenMedia is designed for the modern newsroom, working on laptops, tablets and mobiles as well as in the studio, and promises easy sharing and searching of content across all platforms.

Future proof

It is also able to integrate with existing IT and production systems and offers the flexibility to evolve to meet future requirements.

'When the contract for ENPS was signed in 1996, few people in the BBC had email, the internet was relatively new and social media didn't exist,' said James Harding, director of news and current affairs.

'ENPS has served us well, but that contract is coming to an end and we need to ensure that we can put in place a system to support the way we work now and in the future.'

ENPS is currently used by thousands of staff at more than 100 BBC sites in the UK and overseas to produce television, radio and interactive news and sport content in English and around 30 other languages.

ENPS has been at the heart of BBC newsrooms for nearly 20 years.

Its provider, Associated Press, was in the running for the new contract. It was one of four shortlisted bidders that took part in the 18-month-long competitive procurement process.

That saw each bidder's proposition assessed against the BBC's 4,000-plus requirements and a range of other factors. There were also technical tests on the proposed products, references from other customers and usability tests in the demanding BBC environment.

Current users of ENPS will be trained to use the new system, with most of the instruction to take place at the user's base.

In order to safeguard output, there will be close consultation with teams and thorough testing before OpenMedia is phased in.

World Service cuts back on medium wave broadcasts

Some parts of the Mediterranean will no longer be able to listen to English output on the World Service through their radios.

English language broadcasts via medium wave will cease in Israel, much of Lebanon, Cyprus and southern Turkey on 25 April.

The decision is partly financial and partly a result of declining audiences listening via radio.

Fran Unsworth, the director of the World Service, says: 'Our English language service will still be available via satellite and on the internet – which is increasingly how our audiences tune in.'

'However, we cannot identify a financially viable method by which to continue the medium-wave radio service. It is for this reason that we have decided to end these transmissions.'

The BBC has cut medium-wave transmissions to large regions in the past. When the World Service took a huge hit

to its budget in 2011 as part of the government's spending review, it ceased direct broadcasts to Russia and central Europe.

In 2012, medium-wave transmissions to the Middle East were also greatly reduced. English transmissions to Israel, Lebanon and Jordan were slashed from around 18 hours daily to four.

...the World Service faces a choice between decline and growth

'Decline and growth'

Meanwhile, a report into the Future of News, commissioned by the BBC, found that the World Service 'faces a choice between decline and growth'.

The report stated: 'If the UK wants the BBC to remain valued and respected, an ambassador of Britain's values and an agent of soft power in the world, then the BBC is going to have to commit to growing the World Service and the government will also have to recognise this'.

It added that this might mean 'reversing the trend of closing language services' and possibly opening new ones where there is need, such as in North Korea.

Five World Service language operations were closed in 2011. The BBC took over the cost of the World Service from the Foreign Office in April 2014.



Memories of a BBC May/September romance

Sarah Shaw joined the BBC in 1970 aged 18, working as a secretary in the Langham Hotel site. Like most young women, she dreamed of finding a boyfriend – but found herself entangled in ‘the reality and complexity of an extraordinary first love affair’ at the BBC. The daily diary she kept at that time has been published as *1971: the secret diary of a BBC secretary*.

How did you feel when you first got the job at the BBC?

I was a child of the 50s and 60s, brought up on BBC programmes, so I was absolutely thrilled to be part of the organisation.

What made you decide to publish your diary?

Last year, clearing out our loft, I found the diary, which had been put away decades before. As I began to read it I was astonished to see it contained so much detail, including chunks of conversations at work and home, and that running through it was this extraordinary love story which I had felt obliged to keep quiet about for so long. So I asked the advice of a friend who was there at the time and who now teaches English Literature. She suggested I should do something with it. I didn't want to lose its authenticity by turning it into fiction, so I edited the text to give a bit of context and published it. I'm delighted to have been able to tell our story now, and that so many people have enjoyed reading it.

You were 19, Frank was 62 and married. Knowing what we do today about the sexist culture in the BBC during the 70s, do you view those times any differently now?

Not in terms of Frank and myself, because he was a considerate man who treated women with respect. There were distinctions in that sexual culture. Later on, when I worked in other departments of the BBC I came across some men who made sexist jokes; of more concern was the occasional groper whom you were advised to make sure you weren't left alone with. Both are different from the sexual predation of children. I'm sorry that the BBC is getting so much bad publicity about this, and that the lines between these behaviours are blurred. It happened in most workplaces and probably persists in some to this day. However, I am glad that it is much less acceptable nowadays.

Aside from this romance, what are your most vivid memories of working for the BBC in the early 70s?

Top three:

- The endless amount of typing we had to do, usually with multiple carbon copies.
- The freshly made omelettes in the Yalding House canteen.
- The horrible unabsorbent toilet paper.



What were the best things about working for the BBC in the 1970s?

I think I was incredibly lucky to work at the BBC when I did and, apart from the pay (!), I enjoyed it all. Two general things stand out:

- The BBC Club Studio Amateur Dramatic Group, where I made many friends, had the chance to experiment with writing and recording amateur radio programmes and to benefit from the criticism of writers like Fay Weldon, Adrian Mitchell and Christopher Hampton.
- Working on schools radio programmes, and later on TV plays, with John Parry and Louis Marks, two well-organised and creative producers, both of whom gave me much encouragement and with whom I shared many valuable conversations about their work and ideas.

The Langham Hotel is reported to be one of the most haunted buildings in London. Did you ever see or hear anything to suggest it was haunted?

No, but if there is a vacancy there for a ghost after my demise I might apply.

Have you written any other books or do you have any planned?

I'm working on a humorous book about libraries, I'll see how that goes.

1971: the secret diary of a BBC secretary is available to buy on Amazon or lulu.com (both as a hard copy and e-book). ISBN-13: 978-1326180409. RRP £14.95 (discounted to £7.48 on lulu.com).

Sarah also has a blog at <http://1971secretsecretarybbc.blogspot.co.uk>

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Please enclose a cheque made payable to: **BBC Central Directorate**.

Rate: £6 for 20 words. In a covering letter please include your pension number.

CAPTION competition

WIN
£10



We had a great response to the last caption competition – many thanks to everyone who sent in an entry. The winner of a £10 voucher is Albert Barber, with 'My tarts always look like Fanny's but these look like Johnny's'. Nick Scott came up with 'Sod the food! Just make sure I'm in focus.'

Post your witty caption to *Prospero* by Friday 8 May 2015 (see page 2 for address) or email prospero@bbc.co.uk, with 'caption competition 2' in the subject line. Good luck!



Picture shows Terry Nutkins with Gemini the seal, assisted by engineer in recording of Gemini.