

PROSPERO

The newspaper for BBC pensioners

Operation Snowdrop

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Ten questions for ...James Naughtie

Just before Christmas, it was announced that James Naughtie was stepping down as a presenter of the *Today* programme after 21 years. *Ariel* asked him ten questions about his role, what the future holds and some of his best memories, including that unforgettable slip of the tongue while interviewing Jeremy Hunt.



James Naughtie on-air.

1. What's it like being a national treasure?

(Laughs). I don't recognise the term. I was touched by some lovely messages from listeners. You realise that, with the intimacy of a morning programme, you become a familiar voice in the listeners' ear, hopefully a friend. I don't know about national treasure but I was terribly touched by being reminded of what *Today* means to people.

2. What story touched you most over your 21 years?

I think being in the Kosovan hills in 1999, when the refugees were coming out of the dark, having walked for days through the mountains, is the kind of scene that is impossible to erase from your mind. I remember going into a mosque in a tiny village in the hills which was completely dark. When our eyes adjusted to the dark we realised that the whole space was covered in people, including families and babies, sleeping. These are the kind of images that stay with you.

I also remember doing a programme on the Easter weekend in 2003 from Iraq which was extraordinary as were the Paris shootings at the end of 2015. The reason *Today* was, and is, such an exhilarating programme to work on is that it throws up unexpected moments all the time. I was a newspaper man and working on *Today* was like writing the front page every day.

3. In what ways, if any, do you think the *Today* programme has changed over the last 21 years?

One of the slightly sad things to have happened is that people have got better – or at least they think they have – at dealing with interviews. Yet, what a lot of politicians

forget is that listeners like spontaneity and an ability to admit they got something wrong. Too many people think they cannot admit something because it will make them look weak. I think the professionalisation of politics, with the exponential growth in the number of advisers, press officers, etc has reduced spontaneity. Yet the spontaneous utterance is so precious.

4. What will you miss most about working on the *Today* programme?

I know it sounds clichéd but I will miss the camaraderie. We were reminiscing on my last day about great days on the road and the fun we had and they are terribly precious memories for me. I will miss coming in and having a three-hour programme where anything can happen.

5. And what won't you miss?

I won't miss the 02:59 alarm! There is really no way of trying to pretend that is a comfortable thing to do.

6. What is your new role and what does it entail?

I'll be a special correspondent and I'll still be working with the *Today* team quite a lot. There will be some on-the-road reporting, including some for *Today*, but also for other programmes across radio. I'll be in America for the first round of the US Presidential Elections in February and will still be presenting Election Programmes on Radio Four.

I'll also be doing a very regular book slot on *Today* and I'm looking forward to that immensely. I've been in journalism for the best part of 40 years and it's wonderful to be asked to do something like this which is fresh but, at the same time, completely chimes with my history. It should be great fun.

7. What was the funniest thing that happened during the 21 years?

Two words. Jeremy Hunt. Clearly it was an appalling moment for a professional broadcaster but it taught me a very interesting lesson. Everybody, including Jeremy Hunt, understood it for what it was and it was a tremendous privilege to get the benefit of the doubt. People just found it very funny. I went to an event where a very prim, nice old lady stood up and said 'Can I say I have never laughed so much in my entire life.' I think we all have a duty to bring some happiness into the world and if that amused people, then so be it.

8. What is your New Year's resolution?

To get fitter. I've had this strange regime for 21 years, getting up at 3am, and so I'm really hoping I will feel the benefit in terms of having more energy. I live half in Edinburgh and half in London and I think the extra hours will make a real difference.

9. How do you unwind?

I listen to music and I play the piano, although strictly in private. I listen to a lot of classical music and a lot of the rock music I grew up with, the likes of Pink Floyd and Led Zeppelin. I did sing a Carole King song on the karaoke at the *Today* Christmas party. I sang 'You've Got a Friend' which was possibly my last gift to the programme. It was quite late in the evening...

I like to read a lot and I love sport, especially rugby union and football. I'm an Aberdeen supporter but in London we live not far from the Emirates and so I have 'Goonerish' (Arsenal) tendencies these days. But actually I love watching anything with a ball.

10. In terms of the *Today* programme, what would you like your legacy to be?

I think the term 'legacy' is a bit pompous but, I hope that, if I do have a legacy, it will be about telling stories well. It's what I've always wanted to do and it's what radio provides an opportunity to do. If there is a memory of the years I spent presenting *Today*, if somebody says that 'He told a good story' then that would make me very happy.

Karen Slater

Our first public-facing Blue Room

The BBC's director general, Tony Hall, has announced a series of initiatives at BBC Birmingham as the Corporation's Midlands HQ builds on its role as the centre for skills and talent for the whole of the BBC.

Included in that list is the BBC's first public-facing Blue Room. Situated in the entrance to the building, the Blue Room will bring to life the amazing content and innovations in technology available from the BBC, as well as the latest trends in technology impacting on BBC audiences.

The key focus is on engaging the public with our content and collating all our output and content types in one place. And there will always be someone on hand to educate and inform.

The other initiatives coming to Birmingham include a Birmingham Writer in Residence and The Digital Innovation Unit.

The Blue Room in Birmingham is open 10:00 - 17:00 Tuesday to Saturday.



PROSPERO

Prospero is provided free of charge to retired Scheme members, 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. It is available online at www.bbc.co.uk/mypension

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

The next issue of *Prospero* will appear in April 2016. The copy deadline is Friday, 4 March 2016.



Watch and listen to 8,500 programmes on BBC Genome

The BBC Genome website (genome.ch.bbc.co.uk/) allows any user to go into the database and search just under 4.5 million *Radio Times* listings for BBC radio and TV programmes broadcast between 1923 and 2009.

It's a rich resource for information, but what about the programmes themselves? Many of you have written, asking to watch or listen to them.

We know that the BBC has about 30% of the programmes listed in Genome in its physical archives, which amounts to more than a million hours of output, but many users will not realise that some of them are already permanently available to view or listen to on the BBC website.

In an effort to make this material easier for you to find, we have embarked on a project to link all of the radio and TV programmes which are already available on the BBC website to their Genome listings. This is just one part of a larger initiative to match Genome listings to programmes.

When I started the work to find the programmes, we weren't sure how many published programmes, which are available outside the 30 day catch-up period for programmes available on BBC iPlayer – we would find on the BBC website. Over the years, different departments have uploaded select broadcast programmes, and they sit under different collections on bbc.co.uk – sometimes categorised and alphabetised, sometimes not. We knew about the large and well-documented

collections, and estimated there would be many more obscure, single programmes too. Our guess when we started was that we might be able to link about 3,000 videos or radio programmes – so far, we have found about 8,800 (more than 300 television and 8,500 radio). And we're still working on more.

Some of the programmes available on the website are well advertised – such as *Desert Island Discs*, which is a comprehensive and large, single collection curated by the Radio 4 online team that goes back to the 1950s. It has been much talked of on Radio 4 and sporadically added to, as new archive material has surfaced. Alistair Cooke's *Letter from America* is another large Radio 4 collection, in which archive material was provided by audience members who had recorded and kept hundreds of episodes of the programme. And BBC Four have a permanent archive collection of TV programmes available to watch on BBC iPlayer. Again, many BBC audience members will already know of the existence of these programmes.

Some material, however, remains harder to find. In many cases, this content might be on an older version of the BBC website, as is the case with some of the programmes on the BBC Archive site – we are working to update these pages and preserve some of the now out-of-date material elsewhere.

For example, we have a fascinating programme on the *Supermarine Spitfire*, which was originally broadcast on a regional channel and only made it to national TV three months after its original broadcast date. It would be hard to stumble upon, although it does sit under a curated index.

So how do we, at Genome, find these gems? Sometimes this process involves

sifting through a chronological list of programmes. We have also been helped by developers who work with Genome, who have been able to capture the URLs of permanent programmes that I may not otherwise have spotted.

Then there has been the additional challenge of matching programmes to Genome entries. As those conversant with Genome's database will know, the listings show what was scheduled to be broadcast – but this does not necessarily mean, in the event, that a specific programme went to air.

Sometimes this necessitated extra research to create an accurate picture of what went on.

In some cases, a programme listed on the website may have been only one smaller part of an entire programme listing in Genome – such as the John Betjeman film *A Bird's Eye View*, which appeared as part of Festival 77 in August 1977. In cases like these, records of the BBC's broadcast output, as well as extensive searches on Genome have yielded

answers about times, dates and titles that have allowed us to produce the most accurate possible match between programmes and Genome listings.

When you now search for playable content on Genome, you will find that about 8,500 entries contain clickable buttons – directing you to programmes on bbc.co.uk. And the work continues, we are still turning up new programmes and will continue to add these to Genome. (A hint: if you just want to browse the thousands of available TV and radio programmes, you can run an empty search and click on the 'programme available' button – this will show you all the listings linked to programmes.)

We hope you enjoy the archive as much as we have, and if you have seen a whole programme on the BBC website that you think we haven't spotted – then let us know and we will add that to Genome too.

Susannah Stevens

BBC success at Rose d'Or Awards

The BBC has been recognised with five awards at the 56th Rose d'Or Awards ceremony, held at the British Museum in London.

The awards recognise the best in TV and radio programming with eleven categories which include best Comedy, Game Show, Arts and Talk Show.

The event which was hosted by BBC presenter Paddy O'Connell also recognised British actor and presenter Stephen Fry with a lifetime achievement award for his outstanding contribution to the entertainment industry.

During his acceptance Stephen reflected: 'The real truth about broadcasting is that it's about making the best programmes and those are to do with individuals, characters and emotions.'

The BBC winners on the night included:

- *The Graham Norton show* (BBC One) - TV Entertainment Award
- *News Jack* (BBC Radio Comedy, Radio 4) - Radio Comedy Award
- *The Infinite Monkey Cage* (BBC Radio Science for BBC Radio 4) - Radio Talk Show Award
- *The 3rd Degree* (BBC Radio 4) - Radio Game Show Award
- *John Grant's Songs from a Dark Place* (BBC Radio 6 Music) - Radio Music Show Award.

Caversham Park proposals

The BBC is considering moving around 200 BBC Monitoring staff out of their offices in the Grade II-listed Caversham Park near Reading.

The BBC said the 'large site' was currently 'under occupied' and options that 'offer better value to the licence fee payer' were being considered.

BBC Monitoring axed 72 posts in 2011 following a £3m cut in funding.

An assessment of financial options is currently under way to see if staying or moving is more cost effective.

The site is also home to BBC Radio Berkshire which would look to move elsewhere in the county if the plans went ahead.

BBC Monitoring was created in 1939 on the outset of World War Two to gather and interpret international news.

It moved to Caversham Park, which is owned by the BBC, in 1942 and now translates information from radio, television, press, news agencies and the Internet from 150 countries in more than 70 languages.

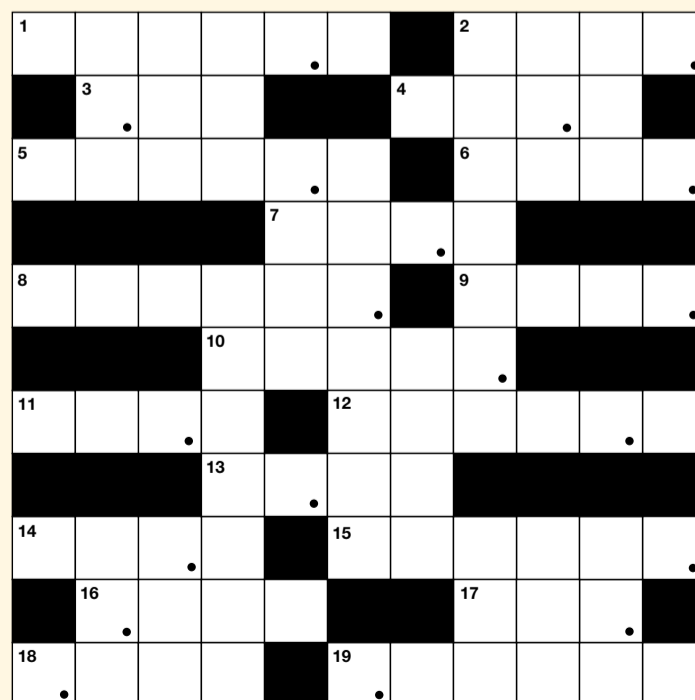
Reporting produced by the service is used as open-source intelligence by the BBC, the British government and commercial customers.

BBC Monitoring is funded by the licence fee and is part of the BBC World Service group.

A BBC spokesman said: 'Like any responsible organisation, the BBC constantly reviews its property portfolio. Caversham Park is a large site and is currently under occupied.'

'We are assessing how we might best deliver the services we provide from Caversham in a way that offers better value to the licence fee payer.'

CROSPERO 189 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 BBC series.

Please send your answers in an envelope marked 'Crospero' to The Editor, *Prospero*, BBC Pension and Benefits Centre, Broadcasting House, Cardiff CF5 2YQ, by Friday, 11 March 2016. The winner will receive a £10 voucher.

CLUES

1. Blemishes (6), 2. Unfortunate mister (4), 3. Eggs (3), 4. It's at 1, 6 & 10 (4), 5. Medicine (6), 6. Church official (4), 7. Anger (4), 8. Sussex town (6), 9. Baked item (4), 10. Go furtively (5), 11. Floor covering (4), 12. Nimble (6), 13. Buffoon (4), 14. Reasonable (4), 15. Behind (6), 16. Get bigger (4), 17. Clinger (3), 18. Portent (4), 19. Not observed (6).

Solutions to Crospero 188: Paws; Barge; Ete; Haw; Are; Roe; Ode; Ink; Impel; Nee; Lag; Hippodromes; Woe/Fal; Total; Rue; Inn; Ego; One; Tea; Mar; Tryst; Herd.

The Christmas carol line was 'We three kings of Orient are', and the winner of a £10 voucher was Maria Kiwerska.

Roger on rugby

Reading the obituary of Roger Chase brings back memories of rugby at Motspur Park (1955 to 1960). Roger played rugby with great determination and if any opponent was a bit vigorous we would say, 'Leave him to Roger, he'll sort him out.'

I was the skipper from 1959-60, and we went to Paris in 1959 and to Holland in 1960 to play against Royal Dutch Shell and stayed at their club house. Around that time, the BBC rugby team won the Harrod's sevens competition and I still have the medal and my BBC shirt.

Tom Smart

Ariel letters page

As a long serving staff member, now BBC pensioner, I enjoy reading *Prospero* and also scanning the weekly online *Ariel* (understandably only available via Gateway for staff contributions).

In the good old days, the weekly *Ariel* letters page was always a good laugh with rants about this and that. Sometimes serious and constructive staff views were also aired. It was one of the most favourite sections!

I notice nowadays though that the letters page, whilst still existing, is often a repeat of the week before or even the week before that!

I find it sad that staff no longer bother to write in, or perhaps they do – via twitter/ other blogs etc?

I was wondering if this valuable section can be livened up a bit? Could somebody in *Prospero* forward my comments to *Ariel*? Thank you.

William Grierson

Three colleagues

I opened December *Prospero* to find, to my dismay, obituaries of no fewer than three former colleagues. Will you allow me a few words about each?

Film editor Peter Barber was indeed flamboyant. His remarkable knowledge and understanding of music were put to fine use in 'A Land For All Seasons', the last of the *Bird's-EyeView* series, narrated by John Betjeman. Its producer, the late John Bird, and I as series editor, loved Peter's sympathetic matching of his chosen music to aerial landscapes and poetry. It was virtuoso sound editing, and added significantly to the success of the film.

Peter Massey, the outstanding OB producer, was lent to us in General Features (later Documentaries) on a number of occasions to direct the Dimpleby Lecture in its early years (a fine example of what used to be called 'one BBC'). His relaxed,

Cliff Hatts

Pat Ramsay provided further reminiscences about Cliff Hatts, whose obituary appeared in the December edition of *Prospero*.



In 1967 Cliff was persuaded to follow Dick Levin as Head of Scenic Design, and five years later as Head of Design Group. This was a major managerial role, involving the recruitment, training and leadership of several hundred creative – and somewhat temperamental – staff. He himself had always been able to accept that budgets were inevitable and that a studio had four walls. Some of his staff found it more difficult, and much of his time was spent adjudicating on resource problems, usually centred on the number of construction man hours needed, or allegedly needed, to match particular design concepts. His designers were not

easy-going professionalism, his senses of anticipation and rhythm, gave that usually fraught event an effortlessly polished look. No-one could have been nicer to work with.

From the beginning the designer of the Lecture (which started in the studios of TC, but then moved to unusual outside venues) was Cliff Hatts, the boss of Design Group. He allocated himself to this apparently thankless task, despite his other burdens, and stayed as hands-on designer for the 10 years I was producer. His warmth, wit and questioning intelligence made him as concerned for content as he was for elegance and style. He became a good and loyal friend, and each year invited me (the sole representative of Production) to his legendary designers' carol-singing at home in Putney – enlivened by mulled wine and Cliff's own quirkily enthusiastic piano accompaniments. Cliff's gifted artistic creativity was matched by his charm and his sparkling personality – a rare combination.

Edward Mirzoeff

Pass go

Hurrah, at last somebody pricks this bubble of nonsense. Thanks Nick Serpell for making the point that when someone dies they do not pass anything or go anywhere.

Peter Jefferson

highly unionised, but the scenery craftsmen were, and the 70s was a decade of growing union power, in the BBC as elsewhere, with major scope for disputes about pay and conditions set against a background of daily and nightly deadlines for the making of scenery and turnaround of studios.

Cliff battled valiantly and successfully to maintain standards in this difficult arena, but he never found in administration the sense of achievement which direct creative work gave him.

Sometimes he escaped – once or twice back to a production, including a sequence of Dimpleby Lectures, and several times to lecture abroad. Here the extrovert came to the fore – on one occasion in the Arabian Peninsula he made a dramatic entrance in the full garb of an Arab Sheikh; for a moment there was dead silence, and he had the ghastly feeling he had committed a disastrous faux pas – and then from the back of the hall came a cry of, 'Ah, Lawrence', followed by a gale of clapping and laughter.

Another trip took him to Japan – complete with earthquake – and his delight at this introduction to a world of new shapes,

conventions and methods was reflected in a prize-winning lecture to the Royal Television Society, entitled, inevitably, 'Hatts off to Japan'. He did not fail to make the point that despite their advanced computer-assisted planning system, NHK studio turnaround time needed a third more time than did the BBC. However, he omitted from the lecture any account of his rendering of 'It's a long way to Tipperary' in a duet with an elderly geisha whose father had been in the Japanese Army working with British troops in the First World War – an episode as improbable as it was fact sedate.

Those were the days when the BBC's reputation abroad was still at its highest. On the way home he and a colleague visited Thai TV in Bangkok. Their guide took them into a studio full of young trainees and simply said: 'These gentlemen are from the BBC; stand up and applaud them.'

Cliff was a man of warmth, humour and understanding, forgiving of any human foibles, only ruthless when it came to his own or other people's artistic integrity. He was a good friend and a hopeless enemy.

CARS reunion

Pictured here are veterans of the BBC Central African Relay Station at a reunion lunch to mark the 50th anniversary of the station, set up to beam BBC news and programmes into rebel Rhodesia. (*Prospero* published my article about CARS in October 2015.)

John Gordon now in his nineties was in charge of the announcers, Owen Bentley, Peter Hunt, Lawrence Reeve-Jones and Ian Collington. Colin Thatcher was a BBC monitor whose task was to record and transcribe the Rhodesian Broadcasting Corporation's news bulletins and to get them relayed back to London – amazingly and painstakingly by Morse code!



L-R: Owen Bentley, Colin Thatcher, Peter Hunt, Lawrence Reeve-Jones and John Gordon. Ian Collington took the photo.

Owen Bentley

The chooks are coming home to roost

This morning the December '15 edition of *Prospero* arrived and I could not help but notice with much sadness, that as Father Time wends his metronomic way, so the obituaries of one's erstwhile work colleagues keep pace, two of which (Phil Lewis and Peter Massey) reminded me of fond memories of working with them and many other producers/directors on their programmes as a Tel. Ob's cameraman for 40 years odd.

From the far side of the world in retirement (New Zealand) over the last 13 years, I have witnessed the BBC, to whom many staff dedicated the majority, if not all, their working lives, lose its way. Under constant pressure from the government to cut its costs to ensure licence fee renewal, it has been guilty of a great hypocrisy.

To ostensibly show it had made these cuts, it sold off the programme-making crown jewels viz. the resource departments that made the programmes that became the yardstick of excellence envied by TV organisations at home and abroad. However, tens of millions of pounds of licence-payers' money were then spent on building a new broadcast centre and relocating many departments to the



north of England, together with outsourcing the facilities it then lacked. The TV Centre in W12 London (state of the art when it was built and still with usable studios as far as I am aware) was sold off for a trivial amount instead of being modernised, only to be partly rented back to make their outsourced programmes!

You can't make an omelette with no eggs, let alone an excellent one, but the chickens are coming home to roost in a palatial chook-house. Phil and Peter, RIP – it was great working with you.

Chris Penny, New Zealand

Bates been gonged

Last year you were kind enough to give considerable coverage in *Prospero* to the announcement in the New Year's Honours List that I'd been awarded an MBE. I've now been 'gonged' at the Palace by Prince Charles. It was a truly extraordinary day and I have been overwhelmed with messages of congratulations, especially from former BBC colleagues.

Chris Bates



Chris (right) with son Rob.

A family affair

Jane Talbot's evocative piece down memory lane about life at Bush House circa the late 1960s (*Prospero*, December 2015), should have resonated with many former World Service colleagues.

I joined the Monitoring Service at Caversham Park in the early 1970s and a relaxed atmosphere prevailed there too: family and friends would be taken for walks around the duck pond and extensive grounds, landscaped by Capability Brown; or to enjoy a game of tennis at the Club's tennis court. As late as the end of the 1980s, the children would climb up the Lebanese Cedars or go blackberrying with their mother, unaccompanied by me, during my working shift.

Not that long ago, before the withdrawal of the retired staff passes, two former long-serving staff members who had moved to the Continent were back on holiday and thought it would be a good idea to meet up for lunch in the canteen. After negotiating the security system now installed at the outer gates, we proceeded down the 100-yard drive to the main building. The friendly commissionaires had been replaced by impersonal automatons, employed by an outside security firm, who informed us that if we had thought we could wave our BBC passes and gain entry, we had got the wrong end of the stick.

When I think that in the old days, I used to bring my black and white cat, Nuts, to work (on one memorable occasion, he was walking about on the glass roof of the corridor leading to the Monitors' cubicles as the mayor of Reading was being shown around in full regalia) and now and again, even my tortoise for a stroll in the park, the answer to Jane Talbot's question must be, 'Yes, we were lucky!' But what's gone wrong and why? I, myself, always had lunch at the Bush House canteen whenever in London and felt part of the BBC family.

Alexis Alexander



Alexis recalls when his children would go blackberrying in the Capability Brown landscape.

Fancy flying?



I was fascinated to read Tony Peckham's article in December's *Prospero* about the Ariel Flying Group. As a flyer myself it's good to hear an account of a forced landing event which had a successful outcome.

As Tony states at the end of his article the Ariel Flying Group is still going strong. Although we no longer own our own aircraft our aim is still the same, to get people flying! It is not a cheap hobby but may still be within the reach of many retired members. As we aren't tied to a particular aircraft or base our members can do their training and use facilities at an aerodrome that is convenient to them wherever they are in the country. As well as advice we can provide a certain amount of financial help with the initial stages of training and also organise social events and flyouts for experienced pilots.

To find out more see:

www.bbcclub.com/connect/flying

Keith Bennett

CONTACTS

Visiting Scheme

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

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BBC Club

The BBC Club in London has a retired membership costing £3 per month or £36 per year. Members can also add friends and family to their membership for a small additional cost. Regional clubs may have different arrangements. Please call BBC Club London office on 020 8752 6666 or email bbc.club@bbc.co.uk for details or to join.

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:

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Tel: 0208 752 6666
Email: bbc.club@bbc.co.uk

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Tail-less Top Gear cats

Chris Bates, retired senior press officer, Midlands, recalls how back in the day he was trying to get *Top Gear* into the news – not keep it off the front pages!



The unlikely sequence of *Top Gear* filming the centenarian steam train about to set off for Castletown, with all concerned, in search of a Manx cat to film!

It's inevitable when preparing to move house that you become distracted by all sorts of old photos and mementos, which you have not seen for years. A couple have surfaced here as my wife Julie and I prepare to move from our home of 20+ years in Selly Park, Birmingham (opposite the site of the late lamented Pebble Mill studios) and look for a retirement home in rural Lincolnshire.

'Back in the early 1990s, it was a programme about motoring, cars and motor sport...'

They reminded me of the challenge, when I was a senior press officer based at Pebble Mill, to get *Top Gear* – then a Birmingham production – INTO print, rather than as I suspect, those working in a similar role nowadays try their best to keep its more lurid aspects out of the public eye.

Top Gear was always hugely popular, but back in the early 1990s, it was a programme about motoring, cars and motor sport, rather

than a vehicle for vacuous and inane stunts to enhance the egos of its presenters (and the coffers of the Beeb's export sales).

There was considerable curiosity about how it was put together – everything was filmed as an outside broadcast, with only research, editing and post-production work being carried out in Birmingham.

When *Top Gear* decided to cover the Manx legs of a Round Britain Rally – on public roads, which, as with the annual TT motorcycle races, could be closed to ordinary traffic by the Manx authorities for the purpose – the island's Tourist Board suggested we might want to offer a press facility, to let journalists and their readers see how it was all done. We jumped at the chance of this welcome publicity.

The Tourist Board organised flights (the island had its own airline, in those days, which could grant complimentary travel), hotels and transport to run our guests to the location, on the windy western flanks of Snaefell Mountain. The Pebble Mill Press Office budget paid for meals and refreshments. We assembled a friendly group of national and regional journalists, freelance feature writers and the man from the Benelux countries' listings magazines (which featured BBC and ITV programmes) came along too.

The enterprising and welcoming Minister for Tourism in the Manx Government, Rt. Hon Alex Downie OBE, joined Executive Producer, Dennis Adams as host (first time

we'd had Ministerial support on a press facility!) and everything was competently organised by the island Tourist Board's press officer, the late Doug Baird (a motor sports enthusiast, and a professional photographer and writer in his own right).

In those days, rushes of the rally action were shown to fans in a Douglas hotel, before being edited into broadcast-size chunks, with the presenters talking people through what was happening and what they thought of the performances of individual drivers. What a brilliant way to build a relationship with the audience.

The facility had its own idiosyncratic moments – when all concerned said they wanted to see a (tail-less) Manx cat, Press Officer Baird said he knew a family which kept some, near the old island capital of Castletown (some miles from the rally circuit).

Undaunted by the disruption to road travel caused by the rally, we set off for Douglas railway station to catch an ancient steam train to the south and on arrival at Castletown, walked (unannounced) in file to the home of the cats' owners.

Sure enough, there were one or two in residence, which did what cats do, stood aloof, while deigning to pose for their admirers' cameras.

Much of the interest in working as press officer at Pebble Mill in those days, was the variety of roles it offered – there was defensive, reactive work to deal with sometimes hostile questioning about programmes and presenters based in the region; there was much promotional activity to place good positive stories about the output for network, regional and local broadcasting; and the relationships created had to be strong enough to enable us to cope with both roles.

(We always felt our London colleagues had much more prescribed roles, dealing with one aspect but not the other; their support and encouragement was always essential.)

You couldn't, as is frequently said, do it now – the media has changed, broadcasting especially has changed, social media is everywhere and I fear, programme-makers and presenters are more wary of journalists. But it was great fun while it lasted.



Top Gear crew, Isle of Man Tourist Board staff, Pebble Mill press officers and journalists in the press facility on the windswept slopes of Snaefell Mountain, waiting for the rally competitors.

Back row: Nigel Pauley (Daily Star, now Mirror TV Supplements); unknown; the late Willie Pateet (Benelux listings magazines); Isle of Man Tourist Board press officer, the late Doug Baird.

Middle row: BBC Executive Producer for *Top Gear*, Dennis Adams; freelance Jane Garner

(now runs Dead Good Undies webshop); Neil Bonner (Star Plus Features – still hard at work); unknown.

Front row: Chris Bates; freelance Gillian Thornton (still hard at work); BBC Midland press officer Ann Chancellor Davies (retired); unknown; the then Manx Government Tourism Minister, Rt. Hon. Alex Downie OBE (now retired) – and does anyone know the names of the two cameramen on the right?

Higher quality and versatility: VHF/FM introduction

Over the years, the BBC's Engineering Division has pioneered many technical developments which have enhanced both the scope and enjoyment of radio and television broadcasting. The following article gives a brief outline of the role played by the BBC and its engineers in the introduction of VHF/FM services in the 1950s, and the initial reluctance of the industry to embrace these new ideas.

Starting in the 1920s, the number and power of transmitters in Europe radiating speech and music programmes in the long (30kHz – 300kHz) and medium (300kHz – 3MHz) wavebands proliferated. However, though the number of channels in these Bands is limited, there was little international co-operation or frequency planning which resulted in mutual interference, particularly at night when long-distance propagation in these bands is enhanced; so much so, that manufacturers began to produce receivers with restricted audio bandwidths, which whilst improving reception of speech, severely degraded that of music.

Conference

Similar problems were being experienced in the eastern States of the USA and an International Radio and Telecommunication Conference was held in Atlantic City in 1947, which allocated the frequency band 87.5 – 100 MHz, later extended to 108 MHz, for domestic broadcasting in the UK.

The choice of this higher frequency band raised the feasibility of using frequency modulation (FM) as an alternative to amplitude modulation (AM) of the transmitted carrier frequencies, the choice of polarisation, horizontal or vertical and the use of pre-emphasis to reduce background noise in receivers.

However, manufacturers showed little interest, and indeed one well-known British company decided there was no future for FM broadcasting and subsequently never made FM transmitters for public service broadcasting. Nevertheless, the BBC's Engineering Division embarked on a series of tests to determine the relative merits of the two types of modulation.

'However, manufacturers showed little interest, and indeed one well-known British company decided there was no future for FM broadcasting'

Inherently, horizontally polarised receiving antennas (those with horizontal elements) favour reception on certain bearings as opposed to others. Hence pointing the antenna towards the desired transmitting

station reduced the risk of co-channel interference and interference from unsuppressed electrical and motor vehicle ignition systems.

A 500ft (152m) mast was erected at Wrotham in Kent with a horizontally polarised antenna fed by two 20kW transmitters, operating on slightly different frequencies, one amplitude modulated (later converted to frequency modulation) and the other frequency modulated. The outcome was unequivocal: by utilising the transmitter sites and masts already commissioned or planned for the UK 405 line television service, it would be feasible to provide national coverage with three programmes (four at some sites near national boundaries) at an estimated capital cost of £3.5m with annual running costs of £800k at late 1940s/early 1950s prices, both costs rising by about two and a half times if amplitude modulation was used; the latter drawing more power from the public electricity supply, reception being more susceptible to interference and consequently requiring additional transmitting sites. A minor downside was that receivers for FM transmissions were estimated to rise in cost by 5% - 15% due to their increased complexity, relative to AM receivers.

Government approval

With government approval of the BBC's proposals in May 1950, implementation of the network of transmitters went ahead.



Wrotham FM Transmitting Station.

However, with British manufacturers still showing little interest or having the appropriate expertise, BBC Engineering Research and Transmitter Capital Projects

'The service was, and still is considered to be a huge success'

Departments, working closely together, specified the antenna systems required, acquired the appropriate hardware and supervised its installation and commissioning on sites throughout the UK.

The services from the Wrotham FM Transmitting Station started on 2 May 1955 to provide a service to London and south east England, with service from other sites following.

The service was, and still is considered to be a huge success for the purpose for which it was designed: high quality speech and music reproduction using fixed receivers fed from fixed receiving antennas, often chimney-mounted.

However, the invention of the transistor, being much smaller than the old glass envelope valves and requiring less power, changed the situation.

Portable and car radios then became a realistic proposition, although clearly inherently unsuited to horizontally polarised transmissions, the associated directional receiving antennas and also the fact horizontally polarised transmissions decrease in strength as ground level is approached much more rapidly than vertically polarised transmissions for similar transmitter powers.

Fortunately, by the time car ignition systems and electrical equipment was being fitted with effective interference suppressors and co-channel interference was much less of a problem than had been anticipated.

Hence, by doubling the power of transmitters and modifying antennas, it was possible to radiate a vertically polarised signal of equal strength to the horizontally polarised one, and thus satisfy the needs of both fixed and mobile receivers.

A further development was the introduction of stereo broadcasting which was extended to most of the UK by 1972. This requires stronger signals for satisfactory reception and it was necessary to commission a small number of additional low power transmitting stations to achieve national coverage.

GC Platts



Your Book in a Weekend

Whether you are writing fiction or non-fiction, a novel, a memoir, a biography or a research-based book, this practical two-day workshop will help you plot your book, create memorable characters, and explore the elements of dramatic and multi-layered writing. The workshop is suitable for writers at all stages of a book project.

Course date: 19-20 March 2016, 1pm-6pm

Location: New Broadcasting House W1

Cost: £130 members (£150 non-member)

For further details and to book, visit www.bbcclub.com/connect/creative-writing-course

Lottery

BBC Club Extra would like to heartily congratulate retired member Laurence S, winner of our £10,000 December lottery jackpot. Our December draw had cash prizes for seven lucky retired members, from a total allocation of 14. Will the next draw repeat this trend? To be in with a chance of winning, join via the website (bbc.club@bbc.co.uk), select Club Extra, Lottery and click 'join the Lottery' or call Michelle on 020 8752 6666. Minimum entry is £5 per month.

Western House Club

It is always a pleasure to welcome our retired members to our Western House Club, adjacent to New Broadcasting House W1. Here members can get lunch at the special rate of £5 for one course or £6.50 for two courses every weekday between 12noon and 2.30pm and also pick up a free copy of the *Radio Times*.

Newsletter and events

Our event calendar this year kicked off in January with a very interesting talk by Cherry Milne OBE on SSAFA, the military charity, following a delicious lunch at the refurbished Western House Club. Later in the month our members visited Draper's Hall, a beautiful and historic building featured in BBC's *The Great British Menu*.

February includes a theatre visit to see the comedy 'Hangmen' at the Wyndham's theatre and two sold-out tours of the Royal Opera House in Covent Garden. In March there are still a few tickets left for the Royal Ballet's production of 'Giselle' at Covent Garden and also a tour of the Docklands Museum with lunch. Please see the newsletter for details: www.bbcclub.com/connect/prospero/newsletters

Plans are under way for a trip on the Bluebell railway and also a visit to the Guards Museum among many other things later in the year. Club members with an email address can get a copy of the newsletter via email. For a postal copy you must be a member of the Prospero Society. Calling all Cruciverbalists! Have you created or would you like to devise a crossword? Send your crossword, either Cryptic or Quick, to us for possible inclusion in future retired members' newsletters. All those published will receive a prize! Address as below.

BBC Club Broadcast Centre
BC2 B3, 201 Wood Lane, London
W12 7TP 020 8752 6666
BBC.CLUB@BBC.CO.UK

HELLO! IS THERE ANYONE OUT THERE NOT FLOGGING A BOOK?

Ian Richardson, ex-BBC World Service radio and television, writes of the problems promoting a book among the thousands published each week.

It would be easy to conclude that every retired BBC journalist has at least one book in current circulation. And even if they have not already written one, they are surely thinking about doing so.

It is not true, of course; it just seems that way sometimes. I run the Bushlog Yahoo group for ex-World Service News and Current Affairs hacks and there can't be many weeks in which I have not posted a plug for a new work by one of my former colleagues. I am happy to do so in the hope that they sell a few copies to appreciative colleagues.

I, too, have published books, the most recent being *The Mortal Maze* (plug, plug!), but I learnt pretty fast that one of the quickest ways to encourage your friends to find a different drinking or lunch companion is to mention your latest stunning contribution to the world of literature at every pause in the conversation.

The problem is there are tens of thousands of books published around the globe each week and it is a statement of the bleeding obvious to declare that they very rarely sell themselves. There is no point spending a year or two of hard research and writing if a book isn't read by anyone, hence the need to seize as many opportunities as is reasonable for publicity.

Some fellow authors have told me they are too embarrassed to promote their work. My advice to them is 'get over it'. Unless you are fortunate enough to be a 'name' writer with a large publicity budget, you are going to have to do all, or most, of the promotion yourself. Striking the right balance is difficult. Enthusiasm for your writing has to be muted to avoid becoming an author bore. Any publicity gained has to be seen for what it is: free advertising. And for God's sake, don't start believing your own publicity.

That said, I am now about to offer a little more about my book, so feel free at this point to switch your attention elsewhere...

In addition to the problems already outlined, I may have made life more difficult for myself by setting the story in the BBC. Many books have done that, and some, written by former colleagues, have left a sour taste in my mouth.

I regard it as disloyal and ungrateful when I see some



authors using their books as literary missiles to trash the corporation – particularly so when they consciously use anti-BBC media outlets to spread their hostile thoughts in return for some generous serialisation rights.

I am tremendously proud to have worked for BBC World Service for more than 25 years. I grew up in the Australian bush, working for my family on their small-circulation weekly newspapers. I would often listen to the BBC – usually relayed by the ABC – and was an enthusiastic fan of

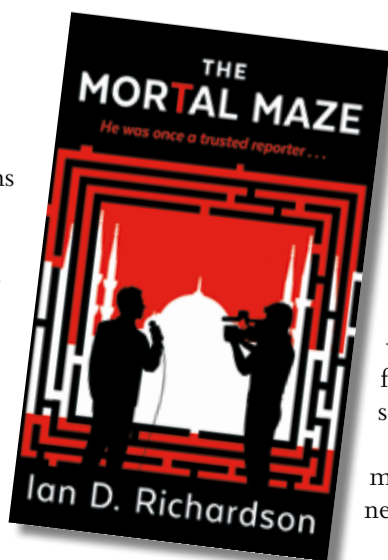
'I regard it as disloyal and ungrateful when I see some authors using their books as literary missiles to trash the Corporation...'

Radio Newsreel, never for one moment imagining that I might one day edit it. For all its faults and occasional stupidities, the BBC remains the best broadcasting organisation in the world – even if some of its current executives fail to understand that, or do not live up to the Corporation's hard-earned reputation.

When I first began writing *The Mortal Maze*, I planned to set it in a fictional broadcasting organisation, but the more the story evolved, the more convinced I became that this would be pointless, as my decades with the BBC would be known and readers would assume that I was really writing about the BBC.

While I was unable to resist amusing myself with a few insider jokes and criticisms, I have been pleased that so far none of the early feedback has suggested that it is an anti-BBC story, which was certainly never my intention. But you can judge for yourself by going to www.themortalmaze.com where you will read the feedback and be able to sample the first few chapters.

There! I've told you about my book. I promise I will never mention it again.



Travels with CMCR9...

The heritage TV-OB mobile unit North 3/CMCR9 was out and about on public display as usual at several veteran vehicle rallies and steam fairs during 2015. The first outing for North 3 was the Cheshire Commercial Vehicle Run at the end of April, starting at the Lymm Truckstop on the M6. This 100-mile run is always a good starter for the season, showing up any defects and blowing out all the winter cobwebs!

The first full display appearance was at Kelsall Steam Fair at the end of June. It had been hoped to have Unit 23 at Kelsall as well as North 3, but that didn't happen due to ongoing rear bodywork issues. Kelsall in June was followed by Astle Park, Chelford in August, and then by the Wilmslow Show and Malpas Yesteryear Rally.

Former BBC engineering manager, Robin Stonestreet, has been a great help with Unit 23, on which he had considerable work experience. There has been excellent progress in replacing missing equipment on Unit 23, which will eventually be restored as LO23 in traditional colours. Owner, Steve Harris, has been doing a lot of work at the sound end of Unit 23. He has removed all the racking associated with the digital sound desk and is preparing to re-install the Calrec analogue sound desk removed from sister-ship Unit 24. Steve has spent much time identifying dozens of cut-off cables under the floor, which had been redundant since the digital conversion in 1999.

The big story for 2015 was the introduction into service of Eric Hignett's splendid home-built generator, which had its first proper outing at the Malpas Yesteryear Rally.

Eric is a quantity surveyor by profession and a very capable engineer who is a huge asset to Steve's small team of enthusiasts.

The genny, which is based on a Ford Transit diesel power unit and mounted on a trailer, has proved itself to be very stable and the sound it makes is very well muted by a metal 'blimp' lined with insulation material. It is fully instrumented as regards temperatures, pressures and output and ran faultlessly, powering North 3 at Malpas for many hours. The cooling system uses two large electric fans and muting is assisted by two inboard silencer units. The new genny meant we had no limitation on what gear we could switch on and the gear worked much better.

North 3 was not requested for the 2015 Manchester Science Fair, but Steve was invited to put on a display at the University of Salford 'Switched-on Exhibition' at the end of October, featuring a superb selection of his mostly-working TVs from 1938 right through to the present day. He also contributed a working VHS machine and 1995 TV showing contemporary material for a '1995 living room' set. The year 1995... it just seems like yesterday!

Jerry Clegg



The complete silenced genny is the silver box next to North 3 at Malpas Yesteryear Rally.

Operation Snowdrop, 1955

As the year 2015 came to an end, we read and heard that it was likely to have been one of the warmest on record. Brian Hawkins looks back over 60 years to a year which started out as one of the coldest, and to his involvement in 'Operation Snowdrop' whilst he was serving in the Royal Navy on his National Service engagement.

In early January 1955 I was returning from Christmas leave to my ship, HMS Glory, a light fleet carrier, which had distinguished herself in the then recent Korean campaign. Berthed in the Royal Naval Dockyard Portsmouth, in the shadow of Nelson's flagship Victory, Glory was preparing to join the reserve fleet after returning just before Christmas from a trip to Singapore, no longer as an operational carrier with a complement of aircraft, but from a trooping assignment.

However, adverse weather conditions dictated a change of plan – Glory was to be deployed on a humanitarian mission and join 'Operation Snowdrop'. The weather conditions in Scotland had been severe. The country north of the Caledonian Canal was



'Royal Navy Whirlwind helicopters were dropping essential supplies to villages isolated by 10-foot snowdrifts'

virtually cut off from the rest of Scotland. Relief operations by the Royal Air Force had already started from Kinloss, and from Wick Airport two Royal Navy Whirlwind helicopters were dropping essential supplies to villages isolated by 10-foot snowdrifts. Meanwhile we in Glory sailed from Portsmouth for Port Glasgow, where we embarked supplies of food, animal fodder, aviation spirit and medical supplies. From Glasgow we steamed north, our destination Loch Eriboll, Scotland's most northerly sea loch. Here we set up a base from which Royal Navy helicopters could more easily drop supplies to the most northerly villages and crofts.

The voyage north was quite spectacular, sailing within sight of the Scottish mainland and the nearby islands. The snow-covered landscapes to each side of us dazzling in the bright sunshine under a clear blue sky. We were enjoying the sort of environment that cruising holidaymakers pay thousands to be part of.

Loch Eriboll, as well as being the most northerly, is certainly the biggest sea loch, being a deep finger of inland sea almost 10 miles in length. Anchored in its mouth was to be Glory's home for the next few days.

The depth of the snow on the land each side of us created a strange acoustic effect, an uncanny silence only to be disturbed by the low frequency throb of Whirlwind helicopters approaching our flight deck.

One particular day, the Whirlwinds dropped over 3000lbs of supplies, including cattle food and kerosene, to 34 villages. Glory remained on station for over a week. The operation went off without a mishap, apart from one Naval Officer dislocating his shoulder jettisoning a bale of hay from one of the Whirlwinds!

Then suddenly, overnight I seem to recall, a dramatic thaw set in and the next morning revealed on both sides the surrounding expanse of soft green and brown countryside. There is a certain eeriness about the atmosphere of the Loch, which was well known to the Royal Navy in both World Wars as a secure anchorage for the largest of vessels. On a melancholy note, in May 1941 the battleship HMS Hood had moored there, which gave her crew a chance to go ashore. There wasn't much ashore to entertain them, but at least they were able to enjoy being on dry land. Just days later in the Battle of Denmark Strait, Hood was sunk by enemy

action with the loss of 1,413 hands. There were three survivors. Four years later, 33 German U-boats assembled in the Loch and finally surrendered, marking the end of the Battle of the Atlantic.

Once the thaw had set in and other supply lines had been established, Scotland slowly returned to normality, although flooding became the next concern. We in Glory left the tranquillity of the Loch and steamed eastwards along the north coast of the country, rounding Duncansby Head, and then south to the Firth of Forth. As we changed course to enter the estuary I remember the concerns about the height of the mast of Glory, the state of the tide and clearance under that impressive cantilevered rail bridge. The very topmost section of our ship's mast was designed to fold down in such circumstances. Although I was not directly involved with this manoeuvre I gather that great frustration was involved in endeavouring to carry it out as the result of many layers of paint having been applied to the mast over the years. With much relief

we passed under the bridge and eventually we berthed in the Royal Naval Dockyard at Rosyth.

Over the next weeks the ship was gradually decommissioned until it was time for me and my National Service colleagues to be drafted south to the Royal Naval Barracks, Chatham.

It was a sad day in February 1955 when we left the ship. My last glimpse of Glory as we drove away, framed by the archway of the dockyard gate, was of her topmast pointing proudly to the sky, a reminder of that spectacular bridge we had passed under on our recent voyage.

Glory had a distinguished record. She'd been an operational carrier for 11 years, had witnessed on-board the signing of the surrender of the Japanese Army, had been engaged in the repatriation of prisoners that had been held in the Far East and had made the largest single contribution of any Commonwealth Aircraft Carrier during the Korean War.

Operation Snowdrop was almost Glory's swan song. In 1956 she had a brief commission, after which she remained on the Reserve Fleet, a sad sight rusting away on a mooring on the Firth of Forth, until she was broken up at Inverkeithing in August 1961.

Life before Auntie

Do you have an interesting story to tell from your life before you joined the BBC? We'd love to hear from you, especially if you have photographs from that time. Write to us at Prospero, BBC Pension and Benefits Centre, Broadcasting House, Cardiff CF5 2YQ, or send an email to prospero@bbc.co.uk



HMS Glory on a commission in 1946 in warmer climates as a fully operation aircraft carrier.

David Haydn Jones

David told me that he started to work at the BBC in the late 1950s and that his first job was as a lab technician. He later became a camera technician and engineer.



David designed the mounts and fittings of cameras to various vehicles. Jackie Stewart and Stirling Moss used David's cameras and mounts for their Formula One cars.

Those were the days when cameras weighed a ton. David used to say that if anything moved he had mounted a camera on it.

Working at Ealing Studios he was in charge of specialist camera mounts for outside filming.

Nothing seemed to escape his attention as a camera technician and engineer. There were gliders and hot air balloons. One balloon had Shirley Bassey as a passenger. Dame Shirley was very reluctant to be sent out into space in the hot air balloon. But David told her not to worry, that the crew would only be shooting from a height of 10 feet. However, the moorings failed and the lady was launched into space. Luckily the crew got her back to ground quite speedily. At which point David said that he disappeared over the hill.

On location in St Moritz for a *Blue Peter* location clip, the BBC had provided a warm clothing allowance for the crew. David spent some of his allowance on a rather smart pair of ankle-length fur boots. These he bought from Lillywhites. The boots were not man for the job in St Moritz. The snow was deep and the ankle boots were short. Therefore he had wet feet for the duration of the shoot. He also dropped all of his gear which fell to the bottom of a slope, much to his boss John Oaten's anger, as he had been instructed to climb to the peak of the slope to mount cameras onto the backs of bobsleigh riders.

Aside from his work for the BBC, David was a keen model engineer. I was happy and pleased when a model that he had made called the 'evening star' had been dedicated to me. But David during his lifetime made many models, winning many awards for his work in this field.

Less than two years ago, after ten years of courtship, David and I got married. Very unfortunately, David was suffering from a lung disease for which there was very little prospect of recovery and much to my and everyone's sorrow he passed away on 17 August 2015.

Elise Jones

Maurice Latimer

Maurice Latimer joined the BBC as a youth in Transmitters in Barrow in February 1943, where he worked on an H-group transmitter – this was on a brick-making site and looked like a pile of bricks with the aerial slung between the kiln chimneys.

After a few years here and on OBs, he moved to the BBC receiving station at Tatsfield (1946). As Club secretary there for many years, his flair for organising social activities ensured that they were always a success. This was particularly apparent with retirement and farewell functions when the

site closed in 1974. After moving with the station to Caversham, Maurice expressed his natural ability for dealing with people in the form of counselling work.

Throughout his receiving station career, Maurice assembled an encyclopaedic knowledge of the medium wavelength which he could still recall years later.

He retired in 1986 after serving 43 years with the BBC, a career he loved, and moved to the New Forest where he enjoyed a happy life with his dear wife Doris, who predeceased him.

Lynda Bland (daughter)

Radio 4 documentary maker



Tom Read, who has died aged 77 after a long illness, was a leading maker of Radio 4 documentaries in the 1970s and early 1980s.

He came from a highly cultured family. His father was the art critic, Sir Herbert Read, his brother is the novelist, Piers Paul Read. Tom, however, had a great interest in people and decided to try journalism, joining the *Daily Mirror's* new graduate trainee scheme.

After four years in Fleet Street, he joined the BBC in 1967, working initially on *Radio Newsreel* and a series on British politics. Tom loved the world of politics: the personalities, the policy arguments, the personality clashes, the intrigues and the gossip. It was, however, his work on the current affairs programme *Analysis* where he came into his own. Notable were two programmes on the fall of the Shah, a report from South Africa, 'The Springtime of Mr Botha' and a series, *People of the Pacific Century*. His programme on industrial change, *Post Recession Britain* won him a Sony Award for best documentary in 1985.

Tom moved to the World Service in 1984 becoming Assistant Head, then Head of Central Talks and Features. With his wide experience as a programme maker and editor, he was ideally suited for the job. He acted as Editor of the World Service for a year in 1989-90. His final position in the BBC was General Manager of Monitoring, where he oversaw a major reorganisation. To quote former WS chief, John Tusa, 'he drove a revolution with a friendly face.' That was the key to Tom as a boss. He was calm, civilised, good-humoured and above all, decent. His staff loved working for him.

Tom's retirement was blighted by a rare, cruel illness which he bore with great heroism and dignity. Although he had lost the power of speech and his sight was

seriously impaired, he had put a circle around Election Day, May 7, on his calendar. Typical Tom.

He leaves a wife, the painter Celia Read and three sons, two of whom have followed him into the BBC.

Mary Raine

Ted Keeper

Edward (Ted) Keeper was born in London, within the sound of Bow Bells, before his family moved to Hove. After leaving school, Ted started to study medicine but abandoned this to join BBC Engineering, Transmitter Department.

An early posting to Londonderry, Northern Ireland was to change his life because he met and married local girl, Maureen. Ted and Maureen moved to the Thrumster team base near Wick, where Ted frequently had to battle against extreme weather, using all his ingenuity and skills to provide the locals with a BBC service.

Ted and Maureen briefly went back to Lisnagarvey, where he was devastated to lose BBC colleagues in the Troubles when their green BBC Landrover was mistaken for an Army vehicle.

Ted returned to Thrumster; and then postings to Pontop Pike (Newcastle) and Rosemarkie (Scotland) followed, before his final move in 1980 to the newly opened transmitter team base at Selkirk, working under Bob Davies to maintain transmitters all across the Scottish Borders.

Ted and Maureen settled in nearby Galashiels, where Ted enthusiastically busied himself with the Freemasons, the local church, DIY and caravanning around the UK and Europe. Sadly, for the last couple of years of his life, Ted was house-bound due to failing health and he died on 28 November.

Ted's quick wit, irreverent humour and genial good nature will be missed by all those who knew him but none more so than Maureen, Fiona, Neil and the rest of his family.

John Barker

Senior TV production designer

Born in Gillingham, Kent, John Hurst graduated from Canterbury College of Art, joining Rediffusion as a scenic designer in 1959. Fortunately, he was head-hunted by Dick Levin for the new BBC Design Department in the run-up to the launch of BBC2.

John was one of that generation who understood the Cold War and the sea. Having become a Chief Petty Officer Cadet by the age of 14, he signed up for National Service in the Navy. Documentary dramas such as *Shackleton*, about the 1915 Arctic expedition, *The Troubleshooters* set in the North Sea, and *PQ17*, the story of the disastrous Arctic convoy of 1942, resulted. About *PQ17*, the *Evening Standard* said, 'The sets by John Hurst could not have been bettered.' Even his episodes of *Bergerac* were filmed on Jersey, where the Channel meets Atlantic storms.

John designed two successful *Doctor Who* serials in the 1970s but his clearer, simplified vision was expressed in sets for *BBC News* and the original *Breakfast Time* with its famous, much-copied, red sofa. His *Miss World* sets

were another highlight. A fascination with crime drama led to his designing *Vendetta*, *The Expert*, and *Shoestring*, and later *The Bill* for Thames TV.

Travels in the USA, Australia and the Far East broadened his horizons, which he literally applied to his art. He was never without a camera, documenting and inspiring new paintings. When he retired, he and his wife, Sue, moved to Pendeen in Cornwall, where they restored a traditional house and he bought a small boat, enjoying the Cornish coast: 'Its vastness of unbroken sea and sky, seen from my window and its ever-changing moods will keep me painting for as long as I can.' He developed his own distinct style of landscape, washed with textures and layers of colour, exhibited in an RA Summer Exhibition. In 1987, he won the John Laing Landscape Competition.

His friends will miss his wonderful individualised landscapes sent out as Christmas cards each year. His paintings can still be seen on his website: John Hurst Artist Cornwall.

Oliver Bayldon

One-man secretariat

Tony Trebble joined the BBC as a professional librarian and spent the first half of his BBC service in film and radio.

His reliability and discretion led to him being entrusted with the confidential recording for posterity of the career experiences of eminent BBC hierarchs.

Apart from a sabbatical spent in the library service of Sussex University, the rest of his working life was in Television Personnel. There he eventually settled into a role which suited him ideally – for he was transparently trustworthy – as a one-man secretariat to successive controllers. To it he brought orderly mindedness, an accurate ear and an admirably precise use of language.

He had an indomitable capacity to see beyond the more egregious manifestations of bureaucracy, to find humour where little was evident to others and to proffer sound advice even to the undeserving. These were qualities which particularly ensured his endurance in the murky waters between management and unions.

A relatively successful, orthodox career then, but what distinguished Tony's was the ingenuous affability and constancy he brought to all his dealings. In this respect his professional life mirrored his private life. He was by nature a non-conformist for though his truly extensive literary, cinematic and musical tastes were relatively conventional, the appearance, manner and consumption of this habitué of charity shops and shady bistros certainly were not. Nor was the incessant tuneless whistling which invariably confirmed his presence.

Unhappily, in retirement Tony did not live long enough to enjoy the fruits of the modern eye treatment which had enhanced his eyesight amazingly. After lengthy obscure ailments he declined further medical attention of a kind he held to have impaired his mind – a consideration of overwhelming importance to him – and died within days last April.

He had no close relatives but left a host of admiring and loving friends for whom he truly personified that seldom-deserved characterisation 'a life force'.

Glynn Price

A full version of this tribute can be found on www.ex-bbc.net

Make-up artist to the Queen



My sister, **Eileen Mair** died aged 82 in March 2015 following a stroke. She retired as Head of Make-Up for BBC Television in 1989. In its opening days, she was Head of Make-Up for Granada Television.

A 1978 appraisal of her work stated, 'One sometimes sees make-ups on the screen that make one think, 'that's clever, I wonder how it was done', but never does it seem part of the character, part of the play. Eileen does not produce work of this kind. Every make-up that she creates or designs for others to carry out, has an artist's touch.'

The report's author continued, 'Although she is a great supporter of lost causes, and may often be heard propounding the inadequacies of this or that institution, she is actually an extremely tolerant person, putting up with all sorts of inconveniences and rough conditions herself, taking pride in being able to cope; and she is one of the few people in the Department who does not change her principles to be in with the crowd.'

Programmes of which she was particularly proud were *Search for the Nile*, *Days of Hope* and *The Love School*. Her work on *Madam Curie* was described thus: 'Eileen set herself an even higher standard which she seems to find no trouble in maintaining.'

Other programmes included *Renoir*, *Matilda's England* and *Churchill and the Generals*. Her appraisal describes her work on Jonathan Miller's Shakespeare productions: 'Eileen has worked a great deal for Jonathan and finds no difficulty in understanding his ideas and in interpreting them superbly.'

After retirement, Eileen made up the Queen for some of her Christmas messages. In September 1997, following the death of the Princess of Wales, she was called upon to make up the Queen for her broadcast to the nation – one of the most difficult and significant of her reign. Eileen was in her element, responding to a crisis and summoning every ounce of her social and technical skills. Even our mother would have boasted about that one!

Jane Mair

RJ Mears

With sadness, I have just heard of the recent death of **Bob Mears**, the first Research Manager (later Research Executive) of that iconic BBC Department which opened its new base in Kingswood Warren in 1948/50.

Before the war, Bob was with BBC Television; he returned in 1946, where his unique ability to identify the rare talent needed to meet the technological demands of the Corporation was soon recognised.

He moved from Ally Pally to become the Engineering Recruitment Officer. Then he was transferred to BBC Research, where the demands were even more stringent. Charged initially to organise the administrative processes, and to 'professionalise' the output, Bob laid some enduring foundations.

Engineers and scientists seldom regard paperwork as important, and he spent three decades in a place that was a hive of technological research, constantly helping to find the right people for the many complex tasks, and ensure that they in turn found time to manage their resources so that he could convince a succession of lively HRDs and the management in London that all was well – the phrase 'herding cats' springs to mind. Certainly we were a very challenging lot.

During those tumultuous years, the country was provided with broadcasting services that were among the world's finest, and technical recommendations from Kingswood formed the bases of international standards that became part of the framework that still manages to contain the communications revolution.

It was good that Bob managed to enjoy some years of retirement with his wife Mary, his family, many friends, his tennis, his games of Bridge.

Back in the broadcasting scene that he had left, new developments arrived to shake the system. But those few of us who had been with him at Kingswood realised that without attention in the quiet back room to administrative detail in the early years, the whole pile would long since have collapsed.

For some time I have missed his memos, reminding me that my budget was overrunning, but now I realise with a real sense of loss that I shall miss his 100th birthday party, due in 2016.

R Sandell

Duty engineer

Alan Foster joined the BBC in 1941. He was very much a BBC man, retiring in 1983 as duty engineer shift 1. Alan's education was interrupted by the start of the Second World War. He had a lifelong interest in planes, joined the RAF, and become a navigator flying in Lancaster bombers. On one occasion flying over Europe, Alan's plane was shot down.

Drawing on his knowledge of electronics, he joined the BBC in 1941, starting in radio at Alexandra Palace. A little later, he moved to Lime Grove and then to Television Centre. Working for the Corporation was one of the constants and joys of his life. He was awarded the Queen's Silver Jubilee Medal in 1977.

Another constant and joy was his wife, Annette. They met ice skating and married in 1951. In due course, two sons arrived - Robin and Nigel.

Alan maintained his interest in planes and spent many happy hours modelling, undertaking much research so the plane he



was making was correct in every detail. Other interests included films, horse riding, photography, cats, music and reading. Alan was a good photographer, requisitioning the kitchen as a darkroom to make prints. Cats were a feature of family life. The first, Gayways Ra, was a chocolate point Siamese, followed by two Siamese cats called Timothy and Tamerisk. Alan and Annette loved music and both played the organ.

Shortly before his retirement, Alan and Annette moved to Haslemere. In retirement, he repaired radios for the blind. Alan and Annette celebrated their golden wedding anniversary in 2001. Sadly, Annette died the following year. Alan died on 25 September 2015, aged 92. As a husband, father, grandfather and mentor he is much missed.

Robin Foster

Popular OB engineer



Geoff Thomas passed away recently after a long illness. He had been a very capable and popular vision and maintenance engineer in the London television outside broadcast service, based both at the Palace of Arts in Wembley Park and at the OB base at Kendal Avenue in Acton.

Geoff was born in Aldershot and spent most of his early childhood at Klagenfurt in Austria, where his father was serving as a sergeant major in the Royal Signals; but he was educated as a boarder at St George's College, Weybridge. He spent most of his National Service in the Royal Air Force in Singapore before joining the BBC in 1959.

During his time in outside broadcasts, he was involved in the change from 405-line television to 625 as a vision engineer. He was then involved in the very early days of mobile video tape as an assistant where he learnt to edit two-inch tape by cutting the tape under a microscope and then sticking the ends together synchronously; quite precarious but Geoff made it work and was regarded as an accomplished tape editor.

Geoff worked on many OBs from Z Cars in black and white to the Queen's Christmas Broadcasts during the change to colour television. He also learnt to operate the camera rack whilst travelling backwards in the start camera car at horse racing without feeling ill.

He developed the three-camera remote control used at the Royal wedding at Westminster Abbey and also used at the investiture of Prince Charles in Caernarfon Castle. He worked on a miniature camera, fitted to eagles, that was able to show live pictures and help study the bird's behaviour.

Through his interest in military vehicles, he got his wish to drive a Chieftain tank at Bovington during shooting for *Wheelbase*, a motoring programme.

He loved to travel and it was on one of his cruises on the QE2 he met his wife, Margot, from Brazil, with whom he retired happily to Brigg in north Lincolnshire where they settled.

Geoff will be fondly remembered by his many friends and colleagues.

Geoff Rathbone

Stalwart of BBC Radios 4 and 5

Martin Cox, who died in October, was one of the key people who argued for and then created Radio Five Live. But his legacy to the BBC was much more than that.



He joined BBC Radio from Head of Political Polling at NOP. His wide political knowledge was put to great use, producing programmes like *Week in Westminster* and *Election Specials*.

He was a brilliant editor with an acute nose for a story and a superb manager. As deputy editor of *Today*, he encouraged and supported numerous young talent at the beginning of their careers, Libby Purves being just one example.

He became the editor of *PM* in 1981 just before the Falklands War. He was shrewd and effective, able to make quick decisions but never at the expense of getting it right. And he was fearless, whatever the political pressure, putting the anti-war MP Sir Anthony Meyer on the programme throughout the war, ensuring the whole spectrum of opinion was aired.

In 1986 as Editor of *World at One*, he persuaded Jim Naughtie to become a full-time radio presenter. Jim says he never made a suggestion about a script that did not make it better. He nurtured Jim's career, as he nurtured so many throughout his own career. He championed women journalists long before the BBC recognised it was failing in that area.

Tony Hall described him as an 'Editorial Rock'. He was. *Scud FM* would not have happened without him. From *Scud FM* came *Radio Five Live*. Martin commissioned the nationwide polling that showed there was an appetite for a news and sports network.

After his retirement, he became Chairman of the BBC Pensioners' Association amongst many other activities. Martin hated the politics of the BBC but adored the institution. He epitomised its values: honesty, integrity, fairness.

Martin was married to Margaret Budy, the former editor of *PM* and *The World Tonight*. They were a devoted couple and wonderful friends to so many.

Dame Jenny Abramsky

Read about Martin by Caro Millington in the *Other Lives* section online at www.theguardian.com/media/2015/nov/19/martin-cox

Laugh-out-loud adventures of a child in wartime Birmingham

In December 2014 Lutena Yates posthumously published *Epitaph to 'Nickle Eck' – Childhood Mischief in Wartime Birmingham* by Eric Yates, her late husband.

Lutena explains: 'It's a piece of social history, being very well reviewed, but it is Eric's gift for writing and wit which makes it stand out; the stories conjure up wonderful images of dangerous and humorous situations which make readers laugh-out-loud, although there are poignant moments, too.'

Tell us a little about your husband's background and BBC career.

Eric worked for the BBC at Pebble Mill and Caversham in an administration capacity between 1983 and 1993. He was the administrative services manager during the 1986 Commonwealth Games in Edinburgh and also spent a year with BBC Radio Midlands, where he did a weekly vox pop programme of local interest.

How did he come to write this memoir of his wartime childhood in Birmingham?

After we moved to Devon in 2001, we missed the theatre activities we had been involved with in Oxfordshire, and Eric missed the camaraderie of working alongside male colleagues. He never talked about his decision to write, but early in 2004 he began getting up at 6am, writing a chapter and bringing it to me with my morning tea. I knew it was something special, and it was a joy to type out each chapter as Eric wrote it.

Do you have a favourite bit in the book?

Not really, no, but there are numerous descriptions and witticisms that I repeatedly dip into, as they conjure up sharp mental images and never fail to amuse me – even though I know them off by heart! For this reason, maybe 'Grandad's Hodge' is my favourite chapter.

Had your husband written any other books before this one?

Sadly no, but he co-wrote several musicals performed annually in Solihull many years ago, including lyrics for the musical numbers. These were very popular with audiences who anticipated the wit and humour. Eric began writing adult memoirs about his National Service, equally readable, but he had only just started these when he became ill. I have also discovered some serious verse Eric wrote, which is very profound. His humour was his way of masking his sadness.

Why did you decide to publish the book after your husband's death?

It was my goal to achieve a lasting tribute to a very talented man, well known and greatly admired for his acting talent and mimicry.

Coincidentally, two weeks after Eric began writing, I consulted a Medium who asked if I



wrote. I hesitated and she went on 'I see a book – and I have a feeling this book could be very successful; you must do it.' She repeated herself emphatically and I was overjoyed, as it bore out my own conviction.

Unfortunately the stories were insufficient for a complete book, Eric finding it too painful to record the family situation, so he left it unfinished. After his death in 2012 I asked his brother John if he would fill in the family background, which he bravely did,

enabling me to complete the manuscript but, tragically, John died of a hospital infection the same month as publication so he never read it.

Who do you think the book will appeal to?

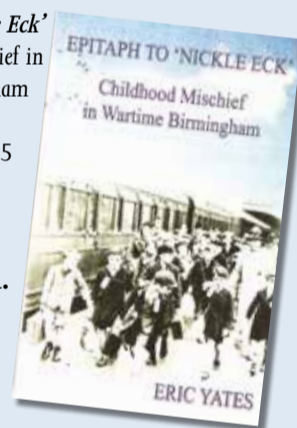
Readers of all ages and genders, as is proved by readers' reviews on the Amazon UK website and comments I receive. Last August my local library stocked it, and to my delight the book is constantly out.

Have you enjoyed the process of getting the book published?

I enjoyed the lengthy process of preparing it for self-publication, following which a friend advised me that Kindle was the way to go.

Not feeling confident I could do it all myself I used an intermediary Amazon publisher to assist me, which was a mistake, undoing much meticulous preparation which was very stressful. Becoming more experienced with technology, I find Amazon provides authors with free help and advice whenever requested! I had the book amended and reprinted last May, following which all my energies have gone into the marketing.

'Epitaph to Nickle Eck' - Childhood Mischief in Wartime Birmingham by Eric Yates (ISBN 978 1505 435 429) is available from Amazon (www.amazon.co.uk) in both paperback (£5.50) and Kindle (£2.67) editions.



CAPTION competition

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£10



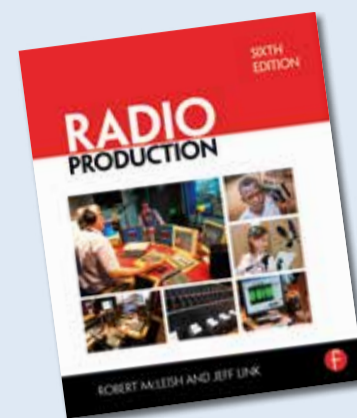
The winner of December's caption competition and £10 voucher was Tom Stacey, with 'Why can't you keep your car keys in your pocket, like any normal fella?'. Terry Elms came up with 'You'll also have to suspend belief if you think this carpet's going to fly', and Michael Collins' suggestion was: 'I've told you, bow immediately I come into the room.'

Can you think of witty caption to accompany this photograph, which shows Clive Dunn as Lieutenant Corporal Jones, in *Dad's Army*. (If you haven't heard already, a new *Dad's Army* movie is due out in cinemas in February.)

Post your entry to *Prospero* by Friday 6 March 2016. Or, you can email your entry to prospero@bbc.co.uk, with 'caption competition 1' in the subject line. Please include your BBC pension number. Good luck!



Radio Production



The sixth edition of the book that first saw the light of day in 1978 has been published. What used to be about tape and razor blades is now alive with digital techniques, the Internet and the use of social media as a news source.

The new edition has a lot more on journalism and ethics, radio interviewing, OBs, drama, music, scheduling, commissioning, Ofcom, and audience research.

Robert McLeish and Jeff Link will be well known to a generation or more of radio broadcasters and the book has many contributions from other BBC sources, including Radio 3, local radio stations, DJs, and engineering.

With a huge glossary, a list of useful websites, and photos of DAB radios, satellite radio cars, 'suitcase' studios, digital recorders, and computer editing, the book has its own companion website containing examples, exercises, and resources. It is published by Taylor and Francis for Focal Press: www.focalpress.com/cw/mcleish

Noticeboard for former BBC staff

The **ex-bbc.net** website provides bulletin boards for former BBC staff and freelancers, so that they can be in touch with each other and post news that's relevant to them. Simply type **ex-bbc.net** into your browser to go to the site.

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