

# PROSPERO

The failed Russian  
revolution of 1993

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**B B C**  
PENSION  
SCHEME



# Member Liaison Meeting 2024



In November 2022, the Scheme held its first Member Liaison Meeting. Members told us that being able to attend online helped them feel connected, and the presentations were clear, informative and reassuring.

We will be holding this event again on 15 November 2024. We would like to invite all members to attend an online meeting to hear from the Chair of the Board, Chief Executive Officer and Director of Pension Investments who will provide this year's updates.

The meeting will be held online and streamed on our website. You will have a chance to put questions to members of the Pension Executive. You can submit any questions you may have in advance by emailing [mypensionfeedback@bbc.co.uk](mailto:mypensionfeedback@bbc.co.uk).

To book a space to receive the link nearer the date, please scan the QR code to open the online registration page.

We will also publish a recording of the November meeting shortly after it takes place. You'll be able to listen at [bbc.co.uk/mypension](https://bbc.co.uk/mypension)



## Protect your dependants – benefits payable on death

It is important you understand what lump sum and pension benefits may be payable from the BBC Pension Scheme when you die, and that you tell us who you would like to receive them.

It is particularly important to think about this and, if relevant, to update the forms mentioned below if your personal circumstances change.

Death benefits may include a lump sum and/or pension payable to your dependant(s).

Lump sums are usually payable following the death of an active member, a pensioner whose pension started in the last five years or an Old Benefits member with a deferred pension and for whom no dependants' pensions are payable. Death benefit lump sums payable from the Scheme are held under a discretionary trust, which means that the Trustee decides to whom they are payable and they do not form part of your estate (and are therefore currently free of inheritance tax).

An Expression of Wish form tells the Trustee the person(s), charity or organisation that you wish them to consider paying any lump sum benefits to on your death.

Your spouse or civil partner will be entitled to a pension on your death if you live together. If you don't live together for any reason, they may still be eligible for a pension if they are financially dependent on you. If you are not married/in a civil partnership, or are separated from your spouse/civil partner and not living with them, but have someone who is financially dependent on you, then you should consider completing a Nominated Dependand form to nominate that person to receive a pension following your death. This is in addition to any children's pensions that may be payable.

You can find out more about the Scheme's benefits payable on death at [bbc.co.uk/mypension](https://bbc.co.uk/mypension)

## Sudoku

Complete the grid so that every row, column and 3x3 box contains the letters **CEHILNOTU** in some order. One row or column contains a word or name with a BBC connection.

Many thanks to Neil Somerville for providing this puzzle. We're no longer offering a prize for the sudoku, but we will publish the answer in the next issue. The answer to the sudoku published in April's issue was Ben Wright.

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## Member Survey 2024

The Pension Centre will be asking members to take part in a Member Survey again this year.

All feedback received will help us meet our aim of delivering a high-quality service to members by building on those aspects that you value and applying this approach across everything we do.

As with the previous survey, you'll be entered into a prize draw to win high-street vouchers with a first prize of £200 and two runners-up prizes worth £100.

You will receive an email with the link to complete the survey, or you can visit the news section of the website at [bbc.co.uk/mypension](https://bbc.co.uk/mypension)

Available throughout the UK to BBC pensioners over age 70

Visitors carry ID cards with them for your security

Visitors are also BBC pensioners

Would you welcome occasional contact with former colleagues?

We can also offer support during difficult times such as bereavement

Over 2,000 pensioners already use the scheme

Meet at home for a chat or somewhere public like a coffee shop

Operates from the Pension and Benefits Centre

Want to know more about what the VVS has to offer? Call the pension service line on 029 2032 2811 or email [myPension@bbc.co.uk](mailto:myPension@bbc.co.uk)



## BBC Radio Carlisle 50th anniversary

Even within its centenary year, the BBC has been celebrating many other anniversaries. One of these last November was the 50th anniversary of the founding of BBC Radio Carlisle, now BBC Cumbria.

Despite being widely separated across the UK, four of the original BBC newsroom team got together on 25 July for a reunion in Aberdeenshire.

The hosts for the evening were Arthur Anderson and his wife Andrea, and the group managed to set down their glasses of good cheer long enough for this photograph showing (left to right) John Jefferson, Arthur Anderson, Alan Douglas and Bob Dickson.

Arthur Anderson

## Woofferton remembered

Good to be reminded of Woofferton...

This was my first posting after the A2 Course at Evesham in 1971/2. WOF taught me many things:

- how to ride a bicycle
- how to drive a tractor
- exactly where to kick the HT cabinets of the BD272 to free a 'Sticky Dipper', and
- how to brew a drinkable pot of tea for the rest of the shift staff.

Also, mushroom spotting from the 200ft mast with binoculars and r/t to guide the rest of the rigging team to patches of mushrooms prior to a fry-up in the rigger's hut.

In 1972, decimalisation happened, and a pint at the Salway Arms was still half a crown as the till could not cope!

Greetings to all survivors who will admit to remembering me.

Peter Chamberlain

## A smoking incident



As the no-smoking bill passes through parliament, I am reminded of an incident in the days (late 1960s) when smoking was allowed in BBC premises.

The location was the Production Control Room (PCR) of Lime Grove Studio G. Studio G was in a bad state. The wooden floors had cracks in them, with flammable dust and litter in the space underneath.

Bill Cotton Jr (then Head of something...Variety?) was seated at the back of the PCR, watching the proceedings, and smoking a cigar. When it was finished, he tossed the butt towards the waste bin. It missed and fell through a crack in the floor. A curl of smoke rose through the crack and continued for some minutes. All eyes waited for a burst of flame.

Fortunately, a fire did not start, which might have brought about the destruction of Lime Grove several years earlier than its demolition in 1993.

Ray Liffen

## Dad's Army octogenarian

Knowing how much I really enjoyed working on *Dad's Army* from the start, for my 82nd birthday my wife commissioned the artist Erica Sturla to create a portrait of the *Dad's Army* team and myself on location!

The butcher's van was important because I was the one who found it (with help) and organised the modifications and the graphics to be made to it. Erica came up with a sketch, having done some research herself, and with photographs supplied by my wife of the van, and also how I looked all those years ago, she managed to create the most beautiful painting using acrylic paint for the background and polymer clay for the Magnificent Seven and myself. All of them instantly recognisable.

My wife and I now have a gallery in Mousehole which our children run, and Erica Sturla has several of her creations on our walls for sale. The website is [www.thejoelgallery.com](http://www.thejoelgallery.com).

Paul Joel



Paul Joel is holding the picture and behind him from left to right are his daughter Bethany, wife Judy and son Tim.

# 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. It is available online at [bbc.co.uk/mypension/prospero-online/](http://bbc.co.uk/mypension/prospero-online/)

**Please send your editorial contributions, comments or feedback to:**

*Prospero*, BBC Pension and Benefits Centre, Central Square, Cardiff CF10 1FT

Email: [prospero@bbc.co.uk](mailto:prospero@bbc.co.uk)

Please make sure that any digital pictures you send are scanned at 300dpi. Please also note that the maximum word count for obituaries used in the print edition is 350 words (although those published online do not have a limit).

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### Prospero April 2025

The next printed issue of *Prospero* will appear in April 2025. The copy deadline is Monday 3 March 2025.



Cover image shows Monument to Yuri Gagarin on Leninsky Prospekt in Moscow (credit: Pavel Byrkin).





# The ‘Harry Tate’ affair of 5PY

By Ian Reed

Back in 1974 (as you doubtless recall) it was a time to mark, not just the big BBC anniversaries but also the 50th anniversary of openings, including 5PY in Plymouth. This breakthrough essentially brought the wireless to Devon & Cornwall – ‘beyond the magnetic mass of Dartmoor’. Which means, of course, that 2024 is the 100th anniversary of invasion of the ether in the far West...

Now as someone whose BBC pension has been distinctly migratory (thank goodness), I’m not sure I’m technically qualified to send a message in a bottle to Prospero’s island. However, the flotsam and jetsam of a BBC training washes up everywhere, so some words celebrating this particular anniversary might be acceptable. Briefly, I was a BBC journalist and director in that Outpost of Empire initially known as 5PY – my stint in Plymouth being from 1968 to 1980.

Earlier this year, my colleague Tony Byers (self-effacing friend of *Prospero* and BBC History) rediscovered a television half-hour I made back in 1974 to mark 5PY’s anniversary. This might still be found (clunky Chromakey et al) on the invaluable ‘History of the BBC’ website at [bbc.com/historyofthebbc/south-west](http://bbc.com/historyofthebbc/south-west)

The privilege of making that programme was in meeting several original members of 5PY and their contemporary listeners. We interviewed Jean Tye, the first 5PY secretary, Auntie Madge Taylor of 5PY’s *Children’s Hour*, and Lilian Annear, who specialised in ‘Jan Stewer’ monologues. Melody united Grant Arnold of Boots’ Café and Albert Hosie of Spooners Restaurant Orchestras.

‘Listeners in’ included a crystal set entrepreneur, one who recalled the opening broadcast, and John Brock, transcriber of wireless news in the Post Office at Kelly Bray.

Viewing my programme again this March, mainly with other BBC youngster retirees (!), it became clear how inventive those begetters of BBC Plymouth had to be. They were defining the medium, not least with particular relevance to their rural counties.

Back in 1924, a 5PY listener wrote: ‘What does wireless mean to us? A human voice now grown so familiar as to be one of us as we sit round the fireside. Here in the West country we build a little shrine to that wonderful science which has bestowed so marvellous a gift on the humblest and most obscure corners of our land.’

This touching tribute to the shared aspirations of our trade resonated with retirees marking the 100th anniversary. We all claimed we were Aunts and Uncles of the Airwaves! And then, almost accidentally, it dawned on us that perhaps we’d gone through a similar

medium-inventing time. Relics of the 70s, we were part of that period of regional self-definition defined by *Broadcasting in the Seventies*.

It is true that in 1979, the succession of Margaret Thatcher PM led, as in the 1930s, to a down-scaling of British regional resources. However, in that decade from 1970, embracing devolvement in the BBC regions, the world was our oyster. In fishy Plymouth, we had to redefine that oyster. OK – cue Keith Floyd!

Back then we experimented expansively. Encouraged by David Rose’s Birmingham initiatives, we even made dramas again (e.g. with Bob Hoskins as Bonaparte, recreating Napoleon’s fortnight in Plymouth Sound on his way to St Helena). We stole (I think) a BBC Norwich idea when we injected showbiz into *Zodiac*, a curious chat show pre-guessing celebrity interviewees through their handwriting, palmistry and star-sign before they appeared on screen. We also inaugurated regional Access television, giving serious airtime to the early Hospice movement; and our *Brainwave* series reflected innovation in the South West, exploring ‘Alternative Technology’ long before today’s ‘green revolution’. Not to mention pioneering Local Radio, retaining the BBC’s role as trusted mouthpiece whilst able to confess if we forgot how to pronounce (say) ‘Perranarworthal’.

I’m sorry, this sounds like trumpet blowing for Plymouth, and I’m well aware that the only trumpet our BBC Plymouth should blow is ‘a tune on an ice-cream cornet’\*.

I am sure other newly liberated centres of ‘non-metropolitan broadcasting’ can share with *Prospero* fine instances of ‘seventies’ liberty. For us it proved terrific that, alongside maintenance of responsible news reporting, we could contribute (rightly or wrongly) inventive expressions of distinctive regional talent. We were greatly blessed with inspirational bosses; our Regional Television Manager was the exemplary Tom Salmon, and the revered broadcaster Frank Gillard oversaw our submissions of local programmes for national showing even after his retirement.

I was, like my colleagues, generously encouraged by such respected pioneers. We burgeoned under their guidance, and there was no deep end into which we were not thrown. We trained in making the tea, manning

the bar, and of course fronting the radio and television news reports. This allowed one viewer of my *Lunchtime* TV news-reading to name me ‘the grinning Irish bog pixie’. Other ‘frontmen’ trained in Plymouth did better in that role. You may have heard of Sheila Tracy, Angela Rippon, Hugh Scully, Sue Lawley and Jan Leeming?

Then again, back in 1924, our broadcasting progenitors had shown the way. They had to. As Clarence Goode, 5PY’s first director told BBC colleague Joe Pengelly in 1974, it seems the makers of crystal sets had (in Goode’s words) ‘jumped the gun’. They had been ‘completely hoaxed’ by false rumours of 5PY’s opening.

‘Every kindred store within miles,’ said Goode, ‘was stocked to the roof for months with wireless sets they couldn’t sell and couldn’t pay for... I was deluged with an avalanche of angry traders demanding immediate commencement of broadcasting when I hadn’t got a studio, or a transmitter or even a secretary.’

As so often then with our revered BBC, the innovation and enthusiasm of committed staff triumphed above what Goode called ‘the Harry Tate affair’\*\* of the technical roll-out.

Perhaps we too, the alumni of *Broadcasting in the Seventies*, were a privileged ‘Harry Tate affair’. But we acquired so many skills, some of which might even have enhanced the BBC.

My own job disappeared on a ‘last promoted, first out’ basis in 1980. Before I disappeared, ultimately to YTV, I did have a fascinating six months with BBC Enterprises. My job was to adapt broadcast programmes to match the 57-minute capacity of the Phillips’ Videodisc. I joked then that I got the Six Wives of Henry the Eighth down to the Three & A Half Wives of Henry the Fourth.

Well – unlike that gag – some jokes survive the intervening years. Joking apart though, here’s to a flourishing BBC as it adapts, belatedly, to the frightening fragmentation of the internet. All power to those next 50 years, even in our ‘most obscure corners of our land’.

\*Stolen from Dylan Thomas’s ‘Holiday Memory’, BBC Third Programme, 25 October 1946.

\*\*Cockney rhyming slang for ‘a right state’!



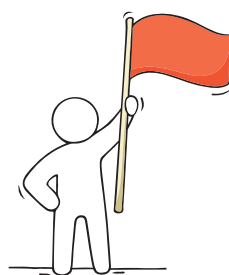
Pre-programme checks for *Zodiac*, one of Plymouth’s opt-out series developed in the wake of *Broadcasting in the Seventies*, which gave smaller regional bases greater freedom to cater for local audiences. Photo: Roy Melhuish

The 5PY team celebrate their first anniversary in 1925. A recording survives of Station Director Clarence Goode (centre, settee) describing how he had a row with Reith after being accused of recruiting only Catholics. He travelled up to London, demanded to see Reith and afterwards walked out, ‘kissing the BBC goodbye’.





# The failed Russian revolution of 1993



By Bob Prabhu

Sunday, 3 October 1993 was an ordinary, pleasant October day in Moscow. With the resident BBC Bureau Producer, Kate Whyte, and the visiting BBC Correspondent, Bill Turnbull, I drove to Oktyabrskaya (October Square) on the Garden Ring Road, south of the Moscow River.

A crowd of anti-Yeltsin supporters had gathered there to make emotional speeches denouncing Yeltsin's government and its economic reforms. There were many huge banners and Soviet Union red flags under the largest statue in Russia of Vladimir Lenin. I got the generic shots of the gatherings and gave my tape to Kate. She shot off to the BBC Bureau.

One of the demonstrators said there was another, larger crowd in the Ploshchad Gagarina (Gagarin Square). This place was better known to tourists for its huge, Soviet-era golden statue of astronaut Yuri Gagarin, the first human in space.

Bill and I drove down the Leninsky Prospekt, where we saw a large, lively and loud march heading towards us. They were moving faster than normal for marches and headed towards Oktyabrskaya. We followed this marching group on foot, with me carrying a 12kg camera on my shoulder and a 5kg bum-bag. By the time we got to Oktyabrskaya, the large crowd of hundreds of anti-Yeltsin supporters had disappeared.

It was unbelievable that in such a short time, the people who were there had dispersed. I noticed the police lines were in disarray and disorganised. I admit it was a mistake to go down to Gagarin Square, but things like that do happen. We needed to catch up with the agitated crowd.

We walked down towards Krymsky Bridge, past the famous Gorky Park and over the Moscow River and reached the corner of the big Aeroflot building. There were no people on the streets. The cars and trolley-buses, too, had disappeared. It felt very spooky. There was a burnt-out blue lorry and car and a ransacked trolley-bus.

We walked towards the Comecon building (used by the Russian army as its operation base), where a couple of blue ZIL trucks were being driven as battering rams into its front glass entrance. Many Russian soldiers in their uniforms were escaping through a smashed glass window on the side of the building.

We approached the smashed entrance and saw many civilians with various types of firearms. There was lots of shouting in Russian and some gunfire. Then I recognised a face: Colonel General Albert Mikhailovich Makashov.

## Soviet-era general

I had filmed him many times before. This time, he was in his Soviet army uniform without his medals. He seemed in control of the situation and the ragtag group of armed men. He headed up the stairs, and I followed behind him and his armed men.

Bill Turnbull was right behind me, courageous enough to follow me. He whispered that this was madness and that he had a wife and children. So do I, I replied.

**Bill whispered that this was madness and he had a wife and children.**

When I turned around, General Makashov was in front of me, asking who I was. I replied in Russian that I was an Indian, and he accepted my answer. To have said that I was the BBC would have been unwise, as Makashov hated the capitalist West and their Western press. He continued up the stairs, followed by three or four men, opened a door and shouted military-style orders. With my camera recording, I saw Russian soldiers laying down their firearms and holding their arms up. The mighty Russian army surrendering to this ragtag army was, in itself, unbelievable. Not a shot was fired.

More armed men rushed up the stairs past me. We followed the armed rebels, room by room, and watched the ransacking of papers and files. We came to a room where the rebels were trying to open a large safe and they started firing at the dial of the safe.

We escaped the way we came in and Bill did a piece to camera (PTC) telling the viewers what he had witnessed. At street level, there was mayhem. We took a people's taxi to the BBC Moscow Bureau.

## Lead story

We viewed the video tapes. Bill Turnbull spoke to the Foreign Duty Editor, Alan Roblou, in London about our coverage. Alan thanked me for my efforts; my coverage was the lead story that night on the Six and Nine O'Clock News.

Ben Brown, the resident Bureau Correspondent, said that the 'Comms were heading to Ostankino TV Station,' and he needed a few pictures for his Nine O'Clock News package.

A BBC driver drove me through the Moscow back streets to the Ostankino TV tower. The anti-Yeltsin banner and Soviet Union flag-waving rebels were heading towards the TV station. I took some generic shots and the driver took the tape to the Bureau. I then heard a couple of loud explosions, followed by a barrage of gunfire from the Ostankino TV Centre buildings. I realised the gunfire was from the tracer bullets.

The marching mob scattered. There were many volleys of fire from the TV Centre building throughout the night. Visually, the gunfire was not very visible on my camera viewfinder, but for the tracer bullets and the sound it made.

The army snipers had night sights and could pick out people in the dark. With my dark jacket, I kept low and a reasonably safe distance. I had not expected any live gunfire when I left the Bureau. I stayed flat on the ground

and watched some men trying to help their fallen comrade. That night, there was a lot of Russian blood splattered on the street of Moscow. Every so often, the ambulances would come from the right and cart away a few injured people.



The fire was billowing out of the ground-floor windows of the Radio building. The fire spread and lit the area, and allowed me to capture some arty shots of fire with crackling wood-burning sound and gunfire.

With enough dramatic coverage, I slowly crept on my belly. It was difficult but the path I took was much safer. I walked hunched back to a safe area past the TV tower. I stopped a car and persuaded the Russian driver to take me for a generous payment.

When I returned to the Bureau, it was too late for my pictures to be used. Moscow time was three hours ahead of London time. My Bureau correspondent used my video for his report the next day and told me well done and to get some sleep. My flat was on the same street as the Ostankino TV station. On my balcony, high on the 20th floor, I noticed a large hole in the wall. It was from a bullet fired by the Russian army. My superstition told me that a bullet meant for me outside the Ostankino TV station had found the balcony of my flat instead. Was I lucky or what?

That night and in the darkness of the morning, Yeltsin's army was outside the Kremlin and the White House. In the daylight, the tanks fired at the upper floors of the White House and by late afternoon, the rebels gave in and were imprisoned. The revolution was over, with Yeltsin still in charge.



*The Private Diary of BBC News Cameraman*, by Bob Prabhu, is a captivating and enlightening memoir of a BBC News cameraman who has witnessed some of the most significant and dramatic world events of the past four decades.

Alongside his recollection of these events, he also shares his hopes and fears for the next generation following in his footsteps, who will face new challenges and opportunities in the digital age. The book is a mix of personal and professional stories, that intertwine to fully paint a picture of the world on screen and of the man behind the lens.

The book cover price is £20. Order your copy from [bobskiprabhu@gmail.com](mailto:bobskiprabhu@gmail.com) or via Amazon.



## Bryce McCrirrick – Director of Engineering\*

**Bryce McCrirrick**, CBE, FEng, FIEE, FRTS, former Director of Engineering at the BBC, died on 26 December last, aged 96.

Born in Galashiels, and educated at the local Academy and Heriot Watt College, Edinburgh, he joined the BBC in 1943. His career was interrupted by two years’ National Service (RAF), and when he returned to the BBC, in 1949, he joined the Television Service.

He went on to hold a number of senior posts in the Television Service, including Head of Studio Capital Projects Department in 1969, followed by Assistant Director of Engineering, Deputy Director of Engineering (1976) and Director of Engineering (1978).

Bryce led BBC Engineering through a number of important technical innovations and organisational changes. He played an active part in the BBC’s management team and in the various engineering and broadcast institutions to which he belonged. He was highly regarded throughout the broadcasting industry as well as within the BBC, and although his preferred management style was to keep a slight distance from staff, he was completely committed to their interests. One of the first questions he would ask when organisational and technical changes were being discussed was how would staff be affected. He also took a detailed interest in the work of staff across the Directorate and was quick to recognise and celebrate special achievements.

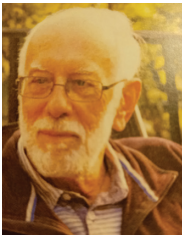
He retired from the BBC in 1987, but there were no signs of his enthusiasm and energy declining as he approached this milestone, or in the years that followed, as he welcomed new roles as a consultant and company director within the broadcasting industry. He also continued his work with the IEE and he became the Institute’s President in 1988. In 1990 he was delighted when a new conference centre opened at BBC Wood Norton which was named after him.

Classical music was one of his interests away from work, together with the theatre and travel, which included two or three cruise-ship tours each year. They were interests that he shared with Margaret, his wife of over 70 years, who survives him together with two of their sons, Alastair and Stuart.

**Albert Gallon**

## Chris Woolley – Chief Film Editor

**Chris Woolley** was born in Bognor Regis but moved to Harrogate shortly afterwards where his parents had bought a small hotel.



It was there as a boy he became fascinated with still photography, keenly

taking and developing the photos in his own darkroom.

After attending the local grammar school, he won a State scholarship to study Chemistry at UCL in London. Whilst at University, he joined the Film Society and later became its President. Alas, pursuing his newly discovered attraction for generating moving images meant his Chemistry studies took a back seat.

After leaving University to further his passion for film, he applied to an expanding BBC in 1967 as a Trainee Assistant Film Cameraman but as there were no vacancies he was instead offered a place as a Trainee Assistant Film Editor, a job which quickly delighted him. He worked his way up from Assistant Editor to Film Editor and then Chief Film Editor.

During his BBC career he proved to be a very industrious, reliable and creative Film Editor, contributing to a variety of notable programmes, but he became drawn towards those involving science. In fact, Chris prodigiously put together a remarkable 50 *Horizon* documentaries and even produced one himself.

Fortunately he was also blessed with that enviable trait for editing, of being ultra-calm in whatever crisis came along.

It is worth noting when the BBC in 1992 started to phase out film and introduce ground-breaking and daunting computerised editing systems, such as AVID, it was Chris with his very sharp brain who quickly mastered their finer technicalities.

After leaving the BBC in 1994, Chris and his wife Maureen boldly travelled extensively including to South America, India, Nepal, China, New Zealand and Australia. However, for many years their favourite excursions were venturing on bicycles along the mighty rivers of Europe, including the Rhine and Danube.

Despite his many achievements, Chris, with his endearing self-effacing relaxed personality, certainly was without doubt Mr Modesty. It goes without saying that those with fond memories who met and worked with Chris are all deeply and sadly bereft after his passing.

**Les Filby**

## Fiona Shore – School Radio and Children’s TV\*

**Fiona Shore**, who died on 22 January aged 70, joined School Radio in 1981 after teaching Religious Education.



Initially she produced *Contact*, a story series for primary school assemblies. Fiona became a well-liked colleague whose creative gifts sparkled when she worked in studios, especially with actors, musicians and writers. She always admired those involved in the performing arts, partly through her own

love of music and drama but also because she shared the world of her husband, Andrew Shore, the leading operatic baritone.

Fiona went briefly to Children’s BBC, working with Tony Hart on *Hartbeat*. On returning to radio, she produced the series she was most proud of – *Wiggly Park* – for young children. Andrew Sachs presented tales about five friends – a slug, a worm, a caterpillar, a bee and a turtle! Andrew did all the voices. *Wiggly Park* was broadcast on the launch day of Radio 5.

Fiona left the BBC in 1994 but developed her scriptwriting skills for many TV series, including work for Channel 4. She returned for a while to teaching in the primary and secondary sectors, her commitment and empathy greatly appreciated by pupils, staff and parents. She used her extensive knowledge of the diverse religious communities in the UK in teaching RE. For several years she led student visits to Auschwitz to increase awareness of the Holocaust.

She was active in her community of Chorleywood, especially in the local church and as a highly effective school governor.

Few people were aware that she had to contend with cancer treatment over many years. She was always positive and great fun. For her funeral, the packed church was an expression of the admiration and affection which was felt by all who knew her.

Fiona was thrilled to see her three daughters – Sarah, Emily and Hattie – happily married and to enjoy time with her five grandchildren. Arthur, the most recent, was born on the very day Fiona died. It was a huge joy to her that she not only knew that his birth was imminent but she was aware of the name he would be given.

**Geoff Marshall-Taylor**

## Graham King – Wood Norton

**Graham King** was born in London in 1936. His parents were friends of Tommy Cooper and, knowing his aptitude for fixing things, Tommy asked if Graham could repair his old valve wireless. He succeeded, and this led to his fascination with electronics.

Graham joined the BBC in the early 60s, transferring to the Engineering Training Centre at Wood Norton in 1963. A fortunate move as it was in nearby Tewkesbury he met Thelma, who became his beloved wife. He spent over half of his BBC career at Evesham, maintaining and repairing the wide range of broadcast equipment essential for the centre’s many courses. Graham and Thelma enjoyed being there, happily raising their two children.

In 1978, their five-year-old son became seriously ill with leukaemia. To be near David’s treatment centre, they moved to Bristol. Outcomes weren’t as good then as now and, sadly, David didn’t survive.

Graham transferred to Southampton as Maintenance Supervisor in 1979 where he was noted for his creative problem solving – for example utilising a ‘Henry’ vacuum cleaner to keep the VT machine running during an edition of *South Today*.

BBC South used to be based in the Victorian ‘South Western House’, originally built as a luxury hotel for Cunard passengers. There were many challenges, not least the installation of new cabling through its interstices ahead of the newsroom’s computerisation.

After five years in Southampton, Graham transferred to Cardiff before taking early retirement. Not ready to give up work entirely, he spent 10 years at Southampton University, providing technical support for course delivery.

Graham was immensely proud to work for the BBC, maintaining contact and friendships long after retirement. He became a Pension Visitor and enjoyed attending RELICs lunches.

Graham passed away on 29 January 2024, having never fully recovered from the stroke he had suffered four years earlier. Thanks to Thelma’s devoted care, he was able to remain at home throughout the final years of his life.

He is greatly missed by Thelma, daughter Helen, family and numerous friends.

**Jeremy Brown**

## John B Hobbs – TV producer\*



**John Hobbs** was born in Fishponds, Bristol on 14 May 1936, and was educated at St George’s Grammar School.

From an early age John loved reading and had a vivid imagination. His grandmother introduced him to the world of theatre and cinema, and John used to present ‘shows’ in his back garden to which other children in the street were invited.

John decided he needed to move to London as he wanted to somehow gain employment at the BBC. He applied, was offered a position and joined the staff of the BBC in the accounts department of the *Radio Times* in Marylebone High Street, in 1958.

A move to Gramophone Programmes followed, and finally he gained a position in Television as a floor assistant, working on programmes such as *Dixon of Dock Green*, *A for Andromeda*, *The Aldwych Farces* and *That Was The Week That Was*.

When promoted to a floor manager, he worked on the very first *Play School* and remained for over 100 episodes.

*Some Mothers do Ave Em*, *The Rise and Fall of Reginald Perrin*, *To the Manor Born* and *Butterflies* were to follow. Wendy Craig agreed to John being given the opportunity to direct an episode, and he was soon appointed a director, and in 1980 nominated for a BAFTA.



John then directed *Roger Doesn't Live Here Any More*, *I for Lester*, *Sweet Sixteen*, *Three Up Two Down*, *Late Expectations*, *Just a Nimmo*, *Leaving*, *Terry and June* and *Brush Strokes*.

After being appointed as a producer director, *Lame Ducks* achieved the highest viewing figure for a comedy episode on BBC2. He then took over producing and directing the very popular comedies, *Bread* and 'Allo 'Allo, followed by *Mulberry* and *Down to Earth*.

John, like so many other producers, had to accept early retirement in 1994, and as a result formed his own theatre production company, Swallow Productions, touring comedies and a revival of the musical 'Happy as a Sandbag'.

After a long illness, John passed away peacefully on 29 February 2024. He is survived by Iain, his partner of over 50 years.

Iain McCorquodale

## Joy Heffernan – BBC Radio Lancashire’s ‘Nurse Joy’



**Joy Heffernan** was born in Birkenhead, which was then in Cheshire, on 23 September 1931.

Joy was a staff nurse at

Manchester Royal Infirmary when she met Charles in 1953. After marrying in 1956, they moved to Blackburn when he accepted the post of consultant pathologist at the Royal Infirmary. Blackburn would be her home for her remaining 68 years but it didn't begin very auspiciously: she recalled the sight that greeted her when she and Charles drove into the town for the first time. Descending from the surrounding upland moors, she surveyed a rain-drenched valley of a hundred mill chimneys and she quietly shed a tear. But it was a town she would come to know very well and one where she made many friends.

After rearing three children, she became a volunteer at Radio Hospitals and was made programme planner. She was already a governor for the fledgling BBC Radio Blackburn when she took up a secretarial post there. She subsequently became a contributor on air to Norman Thomas's daily afternoon show, where she became known as 'Nurse Joy'. The station had expanded its reach and had been rebranded as BBC Radio Lancashire.

She made many friends at the King Street studios, many of whom were wine and dined at the family home, as Joy loved being the hostess. During her last few days, she would refer to this period as 'the happiest time of my life'.

Joy was delighted to become a grandmother in 1988, then twice more.

Her interest in, and knowledge of, local history led her to The Friends of Blackburn Museum. She also served the national governing body, The British Association of Friends of Museums as home news editor and became an honorary life president.

Joy was charitable in all respects, keeping an open house, making everyone feel welcomed. When time eventually caught up with her at the grand old age of 92, she would surely have felt content in her generosity, conviviality and responsibility as a beloved wife, mother and grandmother.

Seamus Heffernan

## Monica Atkinson (née Hinsley) – Personal Assistant\*

**Monica Atkinson** died on 16 March 2024, aged 93. She joined the BBC in 1949, working for the BBC Overseas Service in Bush House.

In 1950 she moved to the first floor of Broadcasting House, working in the Light Programme, as secretary to Franklin Engelmann. It was here she met her future husband Geoff, an engineer.

After a career break, Monica returned in 1975 on secondment to the Programme Complaints Commission, dealing with complaints by high-profile members of the public or contributors. She was there until the office closed down in 1980.

During the 1980s, Monica worked part time as a reserve secretary and was placed in a variety of departments, which gave her a great number of useful contacts and lifelong friends. One of these was Stephen Hearst, Special Adviser to DG Alistair Milne, and the newly appointed Controller Radio 3, John Drummond. Writing later in his autobiography, John wrote: 'I had the services of one of those amazing women who had for so many years been the backbone of the Corporation. Monica Atkinson...knew everyone and how to get hold of things. She became a great friend and was typical of a BBC now totally lost. She loved the place and all its oddities, and helped me avoid a hundred elephant traps with a cheerful "let me call Maisie" or Harry, or whoever it was. She always had a way around any problem and an answer to any question.'

After that she was asked to give secretarial support to the incoming DG, Michael Checkland, during a very difficult time in the BBC, then another secondment to the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association, and later on giving support to Sir Roger Cary on organising of the memorial services for Stuart Young and Sir Hugh Greene.

She finished her career in Continuing Education Radio, where she established more lifelong friends whom she delighted in keeping up with after her retirement in 1990.

The years after she remained at her home, and took a happy and active interest in her children, Paul, Philip and Sue, and her grandchildren.

Paul Atkinson

## Vivien Stuart-Mossop – a career of many parts



When her school's team appeared on *Top of the Form*, the experience heralded the start of **Vivien Stuart-Mossop's** life-long relationship with the BBC.

Following university, Vivien was accepted on the Broadcast Journalist Training Scheme, which led to several years from 1975 working as a studio manager and then presentation announcer with Radio 1 and Radio 2 under her professional name of Vivien Stuart.

The arrival of Derek Jameson as presenter of Radio 2's breakfast programme in 1985 catapulted her into the spotlight as the show's resident weather presenter. The role morphed quickly into an on-air sparring partnership of witty banter, which grabbed the tabloid headlines and gained Vivien a keen fan base.

She joined the News Journalist Training Scheme in 1990 and put her writing skills to use in the Economics and Business Unit before working as a publicity officer in News and Current Affairs. Launching *Working Lunch* and re-launching *Breakfast News*, she brought a playful element into the serious business of communications work. The brightly coloured plastic *Working Lunch* lunchbox became something of a collector's item, even if some of her more frivolous ideas never quite made it off the drawing board!

Vivien's interest in property renovation prompted a startling, but not untypical, career change when she trained and worked as a plumber for a while at the turn of the century. However, the BBC beckoned again and she returned, this time to Audience Services, escorting visitors around TVC and BH.

A stickler for correct pronunciation, good grammar and a clear presentational style, Vivien could be relied on to uphold traditional BBC journalistic standards and would express concern whenever she detected slippage.

Vivien was diagnosed with an aggressive form of cancer in 2016 and tolerated the subsequent years of treatment with both determination and a certain disdain. She continued with her final part-time job of Investigation Analyst in BBC Distribution until deteriorating health led to retirement.

\*Obituaries marked with an asterisk have been edited down to 350 words for the print version of *Prospero*, but are available online in full at [bbc.co.uk/mypension/prospero-online](https://bbc.co.uk/mypension/prospero-online)

Vivien split her time between her beloved Devon and Chiswick, indulging her passions of music, travel, DIY and walking her dog. She died in March 2024, aged 70.

Lesley Kettle

## Roy Davenport – a transport man

It is often said that someone was BBC through and through and this was never more true than of **Roy Davenport**.



After leaving school, he started an apprenticeship at Ian Miller's garage, which carried out work on the BBC vehicles based in Manchester. It was a natural move for him to join the BBC vehicle workshop in Daisy Works as a mechanic on 15 May 1967.

In 1975, the workshop moved to the New Broadcasting House site, and Roy was appointed rigging and transport manager, later taking on responsibility for scenic services. Significant expansion of the radio and television outside broadcast fleet led to the building of a self-contained transport centre, which was very much Roy's.

Roy's post closed in 1994 but, typically, he was undeterred, establishing 'Auntie's Wheels', which he ran with his devoted wife Connie in a portakabin in a corner of the NBH car park to service the taxi, hire car and transport needs of the centre. He was the natural choice to oversee the transport logistics for the BBC host broadcaster coverage of the 2002 Commonwealth Games in Manchester.

Roy was very much a transport man, chairing the local Transport Association and maintaining links which frequently benefitted the BBC, as well as his colleagues, with any car issues they had. He was a hands-on manager, quick to roll up his sleeves and get back on the tools to solve a tricky problem or pass on his skills.

Those of us who were privileged to work alongside Roy and consider him a friend knew him to be expert, innovative, reliable, a source of sound advice and utterly loyal to the BBC. He was a generous man with a keen sense of humour and a fund of stories that he told in his own inimitable way, making him great company. There was always a glint in his eye and the hint of a knowing smile.

Roy died peacefully on 6 May at a nursing home in Portsmouth with his children, Andrew and Alison at his side, but affectionate stories about Roy will live on.

Steve Schroeder



## Derek John Fawcitt (1930–2024) – Head of Recording Operations

When I moved from Television Centre’s engineering department to the videotape department, the first person I met was **Derek Fawcitt**, assistant manager on Shift One. That was the start of a life-long friendship.

Derek was the middle child of three born to Clifford and Ethel. Clifford had been in the RAF since school and during WW2 was a flying officer. Following service in Aden, Clifford died while returning home at the end of hostilities. Derek was 15.

During the war, Derek was at school in Hindhead but his progression to engineering at the BBC is unknown.

He started his career in radio, working in the Control Room of Broadcasting House. Anyone who knew Derek recalls him as calm and patient. He told a wonderful tale of how he used to treat panic phone calls when a line was lost. He would say, ‘Worry not, it will return.’ He would count to 10 and then ask, ‘Has it returned?’ Often it would have!

Derek transferred to television when videotape was new. It was an exciting time, when most production had little idea what they could do with the new medium, and Derek joined the team who, with BBC engineers and Ampex in the USA, progressed a temperamental recording format into a revered production tool.

Derek became Shift One’s manager, then videotape operations manager, before becoming Head of Recording Operations, a role he held until retirement in 1987.

On our last phone conversation before Easter, Derek told me something that I and his secretary, Nikki, had known for years: ‘I’ve realised that I just love people.’

He was indeed born to love people: kind, patient, forgiving and thankful. That came from an unshakable Christian faith that gave him such strength through his final hospice care months.

Married to Peggy Boud in 1955, they had two children, Kerry and David. Peggy died in 1996.

Derek married Barbara Chesser in 1999. They were looking forward to spending their final years in a retirement village.

We send our love and condolences to Kerry, David and Barbara and all the family.

Neil Pittaway

## Harry Dunn – BBC Publications

**Harry Dunn**, who died on 21 May 2024 after a long illness, joined BBC Publications in the mid-60s, working as a publications assistant based in Birmingham.

The job involved liaising with the wholesale news trade, promoting sales of the *Radio Times* and *The Listener*, and selling books to the retail and wholesale book trade.

In the early 70s, he was transferred to Newcastle upon Tyne as a senior publications assistant. Whilst in the north east, he met his future wife, Jenny. He then moved to Leeds where he stayed for some years. Following a major reorganisation, he became northern regional manager with a team of representatives under his control. After another reorganisation separating the magazine and book publishing sides of BBC Publications, Harry moved to London to take up a senior role in BBC Magazines.

After some time, he left the BBC to take up a position as circulation director for the *Autotrader* magazine, where he stayed until his retirement.

Then came another side to his career, that as a successful crime writer. He wrote two best-selling detective novels and one short story.

Although Harry spent most of his working life in England, he never forgot his roots and was a proud Scot.

During his time at the BBC, Harry was a much loved and popular man. His ability at sales conferences to tell stories and jokes was legendary.

Harry is survived by Jenny and children, Andy and Rachel. He will be greatly missed by all his family and wide circle of friends, of which I was fortunate enough to be one for over 50 years.

John Hayward

## Doreen Jordan – BBC Manchester Oxford Road\*



**Doreen Jordan** died in March 2024, aged 87. She was married to John for 58 years (he was employed as a rigger/driver for Outside Broadcasts Manchester). Their son Paul was employed as a scene hand and then redeployed to OB Manchester as a rigger/driver. Sadly, Paul died suddenly, 20 years ago, aged 42, and John died 10 years ago, aged 83. With the passing of Doreen, we feel BBC Manchester Oxford Road has finally closed!

Doreen joined the BBC after John and Paul as an assistant staff restaurant manager; colleagues would joke that the BBC was the family business! Doreen was very proud of working at the Beeb; her colleagues and ‘celebrity friends’ were like family to her and she cared about them all.

Looking towards retirement, she reduced her hours and went to work in the post room, where she was told she delivered sunshine as well as post. She was then redeployed to the archive/records office, where she was in her element – she was proud to be involved in the rich

history of work created by BBC Manchester.

Doreen was always happy to help and would support *Children in Need’s* programme of events in the summer, out and about with (GMR) radio productions. She would catch up with colleagues at the staff sports weekends at Pebble Mill and, nearer home, the BBC Club Manchester.

In retirement, Doreen enjoyed reading *Prospero*. She was proud when she saw names she recognised. She loved to get updates on colleagues and their families, and would share her own family news with them. She loved to tell everyone about her 17 great-grandchildren. As an only child, she would say, ‘From small acorns, mighty oak trees grow.’

Doreen (and John) had their share of difficult days, but they always wanted colleagues and friends to be happy – so, if you’re remembering them now, we hope the memories bring lots of smiles.

We were proud to present Francis House Children’s Hospice, Didsbury, with nearly £800, thanks to donations given in memory of Mum.

Julie Bradley (daughter) and Gary Jordan (son)

## Graham Wands – transmitter engineer\*



**Graham Carson Wands** was born on the Shetland Isle of Yell on 19 November 1933. He was educated at McClaren High School in Callander and Bredalben Academy, Aberfeldy. He spent his National Service in the RAF as a radar engineer, mainly in Malta, and then joined the BBC as a transmitter engineer in 1955, spending time at Kirk o’ Shotts before moving to the Stagshaw transmitter maintenance team.

This was where his involvement with the BBC’s transmitter automation programme began. By the 1970s, then based in London, he was playing a major role in converting manually operated stations to unattended working, and was a key member of the team developing the Monitoring and Information Centres. Bert Gallon described Dad as a highly skilled engineer, methodical and organised, a team player, whose staff enjoyed working for him, and one of them, David Russell, told us that Dad was ‘encouraging and caring and kind.’

Dad was an engineer at home too and loved technology and gadgets. He was a DIY enthusiast, had amazing patience

fixing things, and Bryan Holroyd, his long-term friend, colleague and neighbour, was very grateful when a leak in his hot water cylinder was fixed by Dad at 4 o’clock in the morning! Dad also enjoyed gardening, visiting historical sites and museums and attending classical concerts. Mum and Dad supported local music events, loved walking in the Chilterns and in Scotland, and they travelled more widely too after Dad retired. They also enjoyed spending time with their grandchildren, and photographs of them replaced those of transmitters in Dad’s collection.

Dad was devoted to Mum and cared for her tirelessly without complaint as her health deteriorated, but the strain resulted in a stroke, and to his great regret Mum was moved to a nursing home. After she died in 2012, he remained in the family home, and once a week one of us would visit and take him out for lunch. When his own health also deteriorated, he never complained and, if asked how he was, would invariably reply: ‘Och, not bad really.’ Sadly, he died on 30 March 2024.

Vivien, David and Catherine (Graham’s children)

## Margaret Steven – Studio Manager



**Margaret Steven** passed away peacefully just before her 88th birthday last year, after a long battle with a debilitating lung disease. She will be sorely missed by all her friends and ex-BBC colleagues with whom she kept in touch after her retirement.

Margaret was born in Wick, Caithness, on 9 August 1935. She came to London to study the piano at the Royal Academy of Music. Graduating, she joined the BBC as a trainee Studio Manager, inevitably moving to the Classical Music section of SMs, eventually becoming its manager, all the while driving around in her beloved E-Type Jaguar!

Always caring by nature, Margaret was the kindest, most sympathetic and respected of leaders, with always a shoulder to cry on, or friendly advice, when needed. After her retirement in January 1992, she became a member of the Volunteer Visiting Scheme for retired staff.

Margaret led a full and happy retirement herself with her second husband John Kemp – visiting friends and family across the globe, involving themselves with a couple of operas written by an ex-colleague, and contributing to the running of the local church choir in the Arundel area.

Margaret’s brother, Duncan, lived with his family in Perth, Western Australia,



where Margaret actually bought a property which she often visited with John. Margaret leaves behind Rebecca, Duncan’s daughter, and her family, to whom we extend our heartfelt and deepest sympathy at this sad time.

Keith Wilson

## Peter Rosier – a spokesman like no other\*

**Peter Rosier**, who died in March, aged 82, joined the BBC in 1968 as publicity officer for TV News & Current Affairs. He retired in 1993 as Head of Corporate Affairs and Press Relations.



At 16 he’d rejected the family’s shoe-making business and trained as a journalist. A decade later, Peter moved into PR, initially with Southern TV, then to the BBC at TVC to represent the programmes and the personalities of Lime Grove and The Spur with deft skill and distinction.

Peter was in his thirties and en route to being the consummate comms professional when cancer struck. He was one of the youngest people at the time to have a laryngectomy and became a poster child for the procedure. With grit and determination, he fought the battle and graduated seamlessly, via Head of Radio Publicity and Head of Information Division, to become Head of Corporate Affairs and Press Relations.

Key tasks at the time included explaining the effects of efficiency savings and justifying the benefits of the BBC to opinion formers and the public in the run-up to the charter renewal debate.

Peter seemed born to this post, overseeing with dexterity all the Corporation’s press and PR activities, under Director-General, Michael Checkland.

Sir Michael said: ‘Peter was perceptive, well-connected with the press and amusing – a powerful combination for anyone advising the DG, and I always appreciated so much his advice and support over the years.’

As a colleague and boss, Peter was astute, disciplined and thrifty. *Panorama* reporter and author Tom Mangold said: ‘The end of a brave man, and one who was superb at his job.’

Over a quarter of a century at the Beeb, Peter proved ‘superb’ at every turn, winning the respect of everyone he encountered inside and outside the Corporation – well almost!

As a friend, Peter was kind, generous, erudite and witty. A devoted dad, fond of decent wine and company, and a dedicated follower and season ticket holder at Brentford FC.

Peter Rosier (1941–2024) leaves a widow, Pamela, daughters Lottie and Milly, son Ben and three grandchildren.

Bob Dulson

## David Cannings-Bushell – Lighting Director and BAFTA nominee

With deep sadness, we share that **David Bushell** died in June 2024. He passed, without pain, in Royal Worcester Hospital, due to acute myeloid leukaemia but, at the age of 75, was taken far too early.



‘Bush’, as he was often called, was a beloved husband to former BBC NVQ Training Manager, Monica Cannings-Bushell, and much-loved father to two daughters, Catherine and Louisa.

He was best known as a gentle man and a gentleman, with a wicked sense of humour and a lifelong love of learning.

David was born in Cirencester, a strapping boy and the eldest of three. He joined the BBC as a young man in Bristol in 1968.

His career at the Beeb spanned over three decades and saw him mastering his Television Lighting craft at Wood Norton, White City, Pebble Mill and on numerous Outside Broadcasts.

He worked on productions that included *Dead Head*, *Howard’s Way*, *Lizzie’s Pictures*, *Shalom Salaam*, *Olly’s Prison* and *Pebble Mill at One*. He received a BAFTA nomination for his work on *Vanity Fair* in 1987.

After leaving Pebble Mill, he worked briefly on *The Gadget Show* and then got involved with lighting poker competitions all around the world.

He filled his life with many and varied interests, from trainspotting to amateur dramatics, amateur radio, choral singing, cycling in the country (always with a pub pit stop), geocaching, receiving a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Art History, photography, researching family genealogy, travelling extensively across the world, devouring big tomes and beating his family hands down in any sort of trivia quiz!

Words cannot begin to convey how much he will be missed. He leaves a big hole in our lives but all our hearts have been warmed, not only by him, but with the beautiful messages we’ve received since his passing, letting us know how much he was liked and respected – much more than he knew.

A celebration of his life is planned at Bredon Hill, Worcestershire in the autumn.

Catherine Tan-Gillespie

## John Julian Clapham – cameraman and rally driver\*



**Julian Clapham** (1940–2024) was born into a musical family, the oldest of four children. At the time, his father was working for the BBC in Bristol as a sound engineer. The family moved to Aberystwyth and Julian attended a Welsh-speaking primary school, but his secondary education was mainly at Bootham School in York, to which he travelled by steam train.

In 1959, Julian embarked on an electrical engineering degree course at Manchester University, but left two years later, after failing his exams. In 1961, he applied to the BBC in London and eventually progressed to cameraman class one.

Julian thoroughly enjoyed working on classical music programmes, and also worked on many of the classic shows of the time, including *The Likely Lads*, some *Doctor Who* episodes, *Till Death Us Do Part*, *Blue Peter*, *Nationwide*, *Midweek*, *Grandstand*, etc.

While he was working for the BBC, Julian played the bassoon in the Ariel Symphony Orchestra and enjoyed sailing on the Thames with the Ariel Sailing Club. However, driving was his great passion, and for three years he was Champion Rally Driver of the BBC Motoring Club.

Julian married his first wife, Gwyneth, in 1968. Seven years later and after the birth of their two daughters, they moved to a smallholding in Pembrokeshire to embark on a life of self-sufficiency. By 1978, the marriage had failed and Julian returned to television, first as a freelance but then securing a job as a cameraman at HTV Bristol in 1980. In 1981, he married his second wife, Jennifer, and they settled in Chew Magna – a village within easy reach of HTV. In 1992, he left HTV and went freelance again, working on news gathering and numerous OBs – such as rugby and horse racing – and Princess Diana’s funeral.

His retirement at 60 in 2000 coincided with his diagnosis of Parkinson’s disease. He was fortunate that the disease developed only slowly and he continued to enjoy his hobbies. He was able to live at home with increasing help, until the last three weeks of his life. These he spent in a local nursing home, where he died peacefully.

Jennifer Clapham & James French

## Cliff Linnitt – radio engineer

My father **Cliff Linnitt**, formerly MHOS at BBC Pebble Mill, passed away on 20 June. He was 97.

He began his BBC career aged 15, leaving home in Northampton to live in London and train as a radio engineer. I’m not sure if he was at Bush House or Broadcasting House.

He recalled many stories of his time in London and was very proud to have been in front of Buckingham Palace at the Queen’s Coronation whilst working on the broadcast, which I believe, at the time, was the biggest live broadcast ever undertaken.

He moved from London to Broad Street and settled in Solihull where he met my mother, Bobbie, who sadly died in 1986. When Broad Street ceased operations, Cliff moved to BBC Pebble Mill. At that time he was TOS, and later in the 70s he became MHOS.

He took early retirement in 1984 to care for my mother for two years. After her death, he continued to enjoy his allotment and following Birmingham City until he moved to Pembrokeshire in 2000, where he was able to spend his time with myself, his granddaughter and more recently his two great-granddaughters.

Joy Dixon, daughter

## Al Barnett – costume designer (1932–2024)



Al, an only child, was born in London and the family lived briefly in Fulham before moving to Addlestone near Weybridge. Al and his mother later moved to be near family in Folkestone

whilst his father did service for five years in Burma during the war. Sadly, their marriage broke up.

Schooling having been disrupted, Al left aged 14 and was apprenticed to a blacksmith, learning the art of welding. He did his National Service in the RAF and, as a proficient jet mechanic, was posted to a fighter squadron in Germany. On his return to the UK, he dabbled in various jobs including fetching fishing boats from the North Sea coast and training for the Dungeness Power Station in underwater diving.

Al took part in many long-distance sea races for the local swimming club, including one cross-Channel relay race

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that led to his future career with the BBC as he doubled for an actor falling into the harbour. He applied as a dresser but was turned down. However, *The Hollow Crown* was in production and urgently needed in-house help mending and maintaining the armour – they gratefully employed him.

Al soon became friends with costume designers Reg Samuel and Charles Knode, working as Series Costume Designer on such heavy shows as *Colditz*, *War and Peace* and *Boys From the Blackstuff*, and occasionally as a designer – on *Juliet Bravo*, *Live From Pebble Mill* and *Howard's Way*. Following retirement he worked freelance on the epic Mel Gibson film *Braveheart*.

Al married four times, fathering two sons, Russell and Scott, by his second wife Jennifer, whom he met on a production of *Dr Findlay's Casebook*. He settled in the Isle of Wight with his beloved fourth wife Jane. As his health gradually failed, he was moved into care.

It is hard to imagine such a vital and energetic colleague fading slowly away, leaving only the memory-echo of his trademark bursts of hearty laughter. He is fondly remembered by colleagues as a charismatic man, truly great fun to be with, happiest when working hard.

Maggie Partington Smith

David Heycock – producer and director, Television Music and Arts



**David Heycock**, who has died aged 80, lived most of his life in south London. He was educated at Dulwich College where he excelled academically and gained an exhibition to read English at Pembroke College, Cambridge. He gained a first in the English Tripos and his debating skills took him to the Cambridge Union, where he was asked to propose the motion in the now famous 1965 debate ‘The American Dream is at the expense of the American Negro’, alongside the writer James Baldwin and the right-wing commentator William Buckley.

After a year in the States, David returned to the UK to take up a place on the BBC General Trainee scheme. David became a producer in Television Music and Arts, where he thrived. He was involved in Kenneth Clarke’s *Civilisation* and directed four programmes in Alistaire Cooke’s *America*. David was in his late 20s and Cooke, in one of his *Letters from America*, described David as ‘a very sharp and perceptive young director’.

During the 70s and early 80s, David produced and directed a wide range of films involving literature, theatre, the visual arts and history. Productions included *Writers Houses* (1973–4),

*Where we Live* (1974), *Spirit of the Age* (1975), *Royal Heritage* (1976), *D.H. Lawrence: A Portrait* (1980) and *An Evening with Queen Victoria* (1981). David worked with writers such as John Betjeman, Alan Bennett, Laurie Lee and Edna O’Brien.

David’s achievements as a BBC producer were remarkable and varied before being cut short by Multiple Sclerosis. He developed MS in his late twenties, and as his condition worsened it became difficult to continue as a producer within Music and Arts. He spent several years in TV training, lecturing and making training films before taking early retirement in his late forties.

In retirement, David moved on to other projects: taking an MA in Media Studies, lecturing at Birkbeck College and adapting English classics for the Japanese market.

Although confined to a wheelchair for the last 15 years, David continued visiting exhibitions and going to the theatre. He is survived by his wife, Isabel and by two sons, Tom and Carlos.

Isabel Heycock

Ysanne Churchman/ Isabel Pilgrim – Archers star\*



**Ysanne Churchman**, who played Grace Archer in BBC Radio 4’s drama *The Archers*, died peacefully at home in July, aged 99.

Her character’s storyline on the long-running radio show was one of the soap’s most shocking, and sabotaged the launch of the BBC’s rival TV channel.

In 1951, 26-year-old Churchman joined the cast of *The Archers*. But four years later, on 22 September 1955, her character was killed in a stable fire. Her death, listened to by more than 20 million people, overshadowed the launch of ITV and became the talk of the nation. Thousands of distraught listeners jammed the BBC switchboard for 48 hours, and even more people vented their grief in newspaper letters pages.

In 2015, a BBC Radio 4 docudrama – *Dead Girls Tell No Tales* – resolved the mystery of why Churchman’s character was killed off. It was ‘victimisation because I’d been to Equity to get my fees put right’, the 90-year-old revealed. She wanted the same pay as her male co-stars, and for actors to be in the union. *The Archers* creator Godfrey Baseley allegedly wanted her out.

‘But don’t feel too sorry for me,’ Churchman continued. ‘In some ways Godfrey Baseley may even have done me a favour.

‘They say that when one door shuts another opens. And on the very night Grace died, ITV started, and immediately needed people with just exactly my experience to voice the commercials. And so I was able to make a good living from voiceovers for years.’

Churchman continued to be involved with *The Archers* and voiced five other characters, the last being Mary Pound in 1983.

She was also involved in *Doctor Who*, and in 2017, aged 92, voiced alien Alpha Centauri.

Churchman’s second cousin, Anne Kilby, said in a statement: ‘Ysanne was a warm and friendly person, charming to meet and always elegant. As children, my sisters and I thought of her as “our glamorous grown-up cousin”. Now we remember her with pride and affection.’

Alun Owen – Head of Engineering Training Department (Wood Norton)\*

Alun first joined the BBC in the early 1960s as an engineering trainee, after graduating from Swansea University. He trained at Wood Norton in Worcestershire, though was written off as ‘not suitable to be an engineer’ by the course tutor – an unintended irony, given where his career later took him.

A spell in both the navy (up to the rank of Lieutenant Commander) and the Open University carried him through the 70s, until the fateful year of 1979. To his great surprise – and delight – he was recruited back by the BBC to head up...the Engineering Training Department at Wood Norton, succeeding Harry Henderson.

Any feelings of vindication were subsumed by the more pressing requirements of the new role, at the start of a decade of profound change at the organisation. His natural character came to the fore in an education environment – affable, unfazed by hierarchy, and an instinctive communicator.

The Wood Norton estate was by this point vast, with a dozen fully equipped studios and residential halls for the thousands of trainees who studied there. The original building and estate (commissioned in 1837 and later lived in by the claimant to the French throne, the Duc D’Orleans) included a swimming pool once used as a polar bear pit, a completely intact original bathroom used by the Duc himself, and a secret nuclear bunker.

Alun loved the estate’s incredible story – reflective of his wider interest in history, which occupied much of his later life in Pembrokeshire (where he was born, just before the Second World War).

In 1993, Alun left the BBC and subsequently retired to Fishguard, in west Wales. He retained his passion for broadcast engineering, evidenced by a home-made mast he erected in the

corner of his garden. From there he could indulge in his preferred hobbies of ham radio – sometimes chatting with fellow enthusiasts over in Ireland – and tinkering with all manner of electronic devices and appliances in the garage, interrupted occasionally by one of his 11 grandchildren.

He is survived by his wife Marie and their five children, Sian, Raymond, Paul, Matthew and Huw.

Dave Doogood – Camera Supervisor, Pebble Mill\*



**Robert David Doogood** was born on 9 February 1935 in Kingstanding, Birmingham. A younger brother tragically died in

infancy, so he was raised as an only child. His father was a chartered accountant and his mother worked in a jewellery shop. They moved to Bewdley at the start of the Second World War.

Dave went to grammar school in Kidderminster and became interested in photography. He left school at 16, having passed six O-levels. His father wanted him to follow in his footsteps by becoming an accountant. He persevered for a year but found the job very mundane – he escaped by signing up for three years in the RAF in 1952.

When his three years were up, a friend suggested that he investigate joining the BBC. He was invited for interview and was asked to bring in a hobby or two. So he took along some of his photographs and talked about his experiences in the RAF. They offered him a job at Lime Grove, London. After a year he transferred to BBC Birmingham and was assigned to Radio Links before joining the Camera Department.

He took a flat in Wheeleys Road, where he met his future wife, Joan Girling, who was a teacher. They married in 1963 and moved to a house in Moseley, where Susie was born in 1971, followed by Helen a year later.

Dave became Senior Cameraman at Pebble Mill in 1974, and he and the family moved to Solihull. Around 1981, a camera crew system was formed at Pebble Mill, modelled on London’s TV Centre. Dave was made Camera Supervisor of Crew 1.

He retired in 1991 and enjoyed holidaying in Europe, playing snooker and photography. He had built up an impressive motorbike collection – all sadly sold a few years ago. He also found a new interest in microcomputers and enjoyed visiting computer shows.

Unfortunately, around 2018, Dave started developing dementia and in February 2022, he moved into a care home in Stratford, before finally passing away on 11 July 2024. He will be greatly missed by his two children, five grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

James French & Joan Doogood



# Maida Vale visit



Members of the BBC Prospero Society, which organises regular trips to famous venues and West End shows, sometimes decide there are parts of the BBC well worth a visit too.

After a successful tour of BBC Archives in Perivale in 2023, two sold-out groups went in June to see around the BBC's famous recording studios at Maida Vale. This historic and fascinating BBC building has recently been sold to a consortium that includes leading film composer Hans Zimmer, so we wanted to visit before the sale.

For those not in the know, the building was originally built as a roller-skating rink. It has played host to many famous bands and orchestras over nearly 90 years, was the last place Bing Crosby recorded at before his death, was rumoured to have hosted the Beatles and has been in regular recent use by Radios 1 and 2 for their live sessions.

As we wound our way around the seven studios and many other rooms, you could feel the history almost dripping down its walls. It was evident that our tour guide, Maida Vale BBC resource manager Huw Robinson (left of picture) felt every bit as proud of his workplace as we all did.

Two hours quickly disappeared as we marvelled at the orchestra in Studio 1 rehearsing Beethoven, enormous

mixing desks in small studios, a state-of-the-art sound effects studio for the Drama Department plus the lovely old architecture all around from its original function as a skating rink. The clever mixture of analogue and digital technology in each studio had our older, more technically minded Society members purring with delight and then debating their qualities. Others took many, many pictures of desks, diagrams, banks of wiring and other paraphernalia that by 2027 will become a BBC memory.

As we stepped outside blinking into the Maida Vale sunshine, those who'd worked there in the past and those like me who had never been before, all felt proud of being part of an organisation that had produced so much from one small place.

The whole operation will move in 2027 to new, purpose-built premises in Stratford. Hopefully music, magic and memories will be created there similar to Maida Vale, which continues to flourish in 2024.

**Charles Runcie**  
(second right of picture)

## Tales from The Proms

Dan Zerdin, a retired radio producer with the BBC, has published a collection of stories from The Proms, which is available through Amazon and bookshops generally.

The Henry Wood Promenade Concerts (now the BBC Proms) have been a constant thread throughout Dan's life, from his first schoolboy visit to Sir Henry Wood's rehearsals, to his World Service documentary series chronicling the first hundred years of 'The World's Greatest Classical Music Festival'.

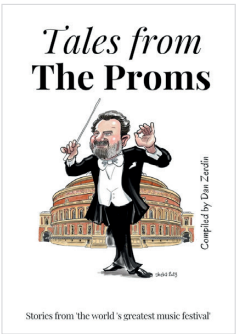
*'They said there wasn't a public for great music 47 years ago; the critics wagged their heads, but Robert Newman said we'd make a public – and we did.'* **Sir Henry Wood, BBC Home Service radio, 1941**

Dan has provided a few tasters from the book, published below.

In Broadcasting House, the BBC duty officer took a call after a Prom relay from the Royal Ascot Hall one evening from a listener who complained that he had distinctly heard a dog barking during the broadcast. The duty officer checked with the Hall and was told, *'Yes, a dog did enter the hall this evening, but as it didn't have a ticket, it was thrown out.'*

\*\*\*\*

Sir Georg Solti, rehearsing the London Symphony Orchestra for a Prom, told the brass players he wanted a particular note 'attacked'. They repeated a few bars, and then again the conductor called for more attack. Once more, they tried the passage. 'My dears,' said Solti in his throaty, truly inimitable Hungarian accent, *'You seem not understand; I wish you to 'attack' this note,'* at which point a trumpeter (a Yorkshireman) called out, *'We are attackin' the note, Sir Georg – but the note is defendin' itself!'*



In July, BBC Club held its 100th anniversary celebration party at the newly opened home of BBC Club, W1 Media Café, London Broadcasting House (formerly New Broadcasting House), Portland Place, London. The party was a huge success, with cocktails, a light-up dancefloor, photo booth and chocolate fountain, as well as other surprises. We were delighted to see many of our retired members there – we hope you all had a great time!

### BBC Club W1

As referenced above, BBC Club W1@Media Café is now fully open. Here, Club members can enjoy a daily changing light lunch menu, with specials, to suit all tastes! There is a small-plates menu served in the late afternoon from 4pm. Members can also pick up their copy of the *Radio Times*. The Club is open weekdays from 8am and closes at 10pm on Mondays and 11pm Tuesday to Friday.

Retired members can access the Club by signing in at the London Broadcasting House reception. Please make sure you have photo ID with you. If you are a Club Life member and you have NOT visited the W1@Media Café already, you must contact BBC Club (contact details below) so we can facilitate your access.

### Connect Clubs

The Photography Club has a wealth of exciting events and projects coming up and are offering new members the opportunity to join for FREE for the first year. You must be a BBC Club member to take advantage of this offer. After the first year, you will be given the option to renew for £15 annually. There is NO auto renewal. Please contact BBC Club to express your interest. Contact details below.

We have scheduled activities throughout the autumn and winter for lots of clubs, including the Wine and Beer Society, Snowsports Club, Ariel Sub Aqua Club, Music, Running, Radio Theatre and Rambling Clubs.

[bbcclub.com/clubs/connect](http://bbcclub.com/clubs/connect)

### Prospero Society

The Prospero Society is BBC Club's Connect group for retired members. It is totally separate from this *Prospero* newspaper! Annual membership costs £20; call the Club Hub on 0208 752 6666 to join.

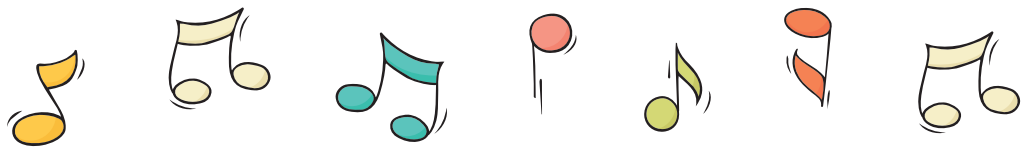
[bbcclub.com/connect/prospero](http://bbcclub.com/connect/prospero)

### BBC Club contact details

BBC Club Hub  
Zone A Floor 2 London Broadcasting House  
Portland Place  
London W1A 1AA  
  
Tel: 020 8752 6666  
  
Email: [BBC.CLUB@BBC.CO.UK](mailto:BBC.CLUB@BBC.CO.UK)



# Using Gen AI to add subtitles on BBC Sounds



A crucial part of the BBC’s mission is that everyone across the UK feels the BBC is for them. Sometimes that’s about the content reflecting our different backgrounds, interests and identity, but it’s also about ensuring everyone can access our content.

As an example, BBC Sounds currently produces approximately 27,000 hours of content per month – but much of it can be difficult to access for the approximately 18 million people in the UK who are deaf, have hearing loss or tinnitus in the UK. We have been exploring ways to add subtitles so people can follow the audio with the help of text.

Doing this manually would be time consuming and prohibitively expensive.

However, as we pilot new technology and explore how we can work with and use Generative AI tools to benefit our audiences, we have been looking at whether AI can help us add high-quality, accurate subtitles to our audio content.

We have been using a speech-to-text AI tool called Whisper AI, to quickly generate a high-quality transcript of the audio. This is reviewed by a member of the editorial team and edited where necessary. A final transcript can then be uploaded with the audio on BBC Sounds.

At the end of August, we started to make this trial public. For the next three months, we’ll be running a limited trial in which we’ll add subtitles and transcripts to a select range of audio content for the first time on BBC Sounds. This trial started on the web and Android app versions of BBC Sounds, and will come to iOS in the coming weeks.

The programmes included in the trial will be *In Touch*, *Access All*, *Profile*, *Sporting Witness* and *Economics with Subtitles*, and we’ll look to add more programmes across the course of the trial.

The way it works is that on the web version of BBC Sounds, when playing programmes in the trial, users will now see a new ‘subtitles’ button in the play bar on the right hand side next to the settings and speed buttons. This looks the same as our accessibility icon on BBC iPlayer. Pressing this icon will make subtitles appear on screen, showing the words being said as they’re spoken just as they would on TV or BBC iPlayer.

On the BBC Sounds app, users will see the same icon, this time under the play button. Pressing this will open a timed, full transcript of the full episode – which highlights the words being said as they’re spoken, and dynamically follows the text through the episode – a bit like how it looks when you follow the lyrics in some music apps.

After three months, we’ll review the progress made in the trial, how well the tools are working and if they’re a cost effective way of making transcripts available in Sounds. After that review, we’ll determine whether or not to continue, and if successful whether to roll them out to more of our content on BBC Sounds, and potentially to expand to our archive as well.

**Aniruddh Dimri**  
Head of product, BBC Sounds

## 100 years of the BBC in Northern Ireland



This year marks 100 years of the BBC in Northern Ireland. As part of a series of events and activities, Christine Lampard hosted a special BBC gala concert at the Waterfront Hall, with support from Belfast City Council as part of its Belfast 2024 programme.

*A Century Of Stories* was recorded for BBC television and radio in the Waterfront Hall on Tuesday 24 September. The concert celebrated the range of the BBC’s work and its important role in local community life – bringing the best of everything to everyone.

Adam Smyth, Director, BBC Northern Ireland says: ‘BBC programmes and people have been at the heart of local community life for the last 100 years. This concert will celebrate that legacy and the stories of the audiences we serve. It’s a celebration in words, music and pictures and a birthday party unlike any other. *A Century Of Stories* is also a reminder of the BBC’s role in showcasing talent and creating events that bring all of us together.’

Christine Lampard says: ‘I am really delighted to be coming back to Belfast to present this fantastic show. This is where it all began for me and my career working for BBC Northern Ireland, and it will be a real pleasure to be part of the BBC’s 100th birthday celebrations.’

The event will be broadcast on BBC television and BBC Radio Ulster later this year.



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Please note that your BBC Pension number is in format like this: (M12345A)

## Reunions

### BBC Scotland

The annual BBC Scotland retired staff lunchtime reunion will take place this year on Friday 4 October at the Crowne Plaza Hotel in Glasgow, just across the River Clyde from BBC Scotland’s headquarters at Pacific Quay. Please contact [exbbcreunion@googlemail.com](mailto:exbbcreunion@googlemail.com) or [andrew.longbottom@outlook.com](mailto:andrew.longbottom@outlook.com) for further details or to be added to their list for next year.

### Plymouth anniversary reunion

The BBC Alumni, BBC Pensioners’ Association and the British Entertainment History Project (BEHP) will be marking this centenary year of the BBC in Plymouth on Tuesday 3 December with presentations of extracts from interviews in the BEHP collection and others of people associated with the BBC in Plymouth. There will be optional tours of the Box, where much of the BBC archive of output from Plymouth is held. If you’re interested in attending, please contact Sue Malden ([sue.malden@btinternet.com](mailto:sue.malden@btinternet.com)).

