Sailing with the BBC Yacht Club

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PENSIONERS

BBC Pension Scheme appoints new CEO

John Cullen took over as Chief Executive Officer, BBC Pension Trust Ltd in mid-March. He has experience of managing complex pension schemes and supporting Trustee Boards, including six years as Pensions Director of the industrywide Merchant Navy Pension Funds.

Prior to that he worked as a consultant to commercial and not-for-profit organisations on the funding, administration and restructuring of occupational pension schemes.

At an earlier stage of his career he was the National Pensions Officer of the GMB Union and worked with the TUC to establish the TUC Stakeholder Scheme.

He has professional qualifications in pension scheme management (FPMI) and as a financial adviser (FPC) and is a graduate of Cambridge University.

Do you need a helping hand?

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

The Trustees of the Grace Wyndham Goldie (BBC) Trust Fund, in their discretion, will consider giving assistance towards educational costs in small ways, such as travelling expenses, school outfits, books and additions to educational awards.

For example, the Trust Fund helped one recipient to complete his MA at the National Film & Television School (NFTS). He says, ‘A demanding course in a fiercely competitive industry, the NFTS has given me the resources to become a professional documentary filmmaker. Had it not been for the Trust’s support, this opportunity would have remained out of reach. I am sincerely grateful to the Grace Wyndham Goldie Trustees for their help and hope that the Trust will continue to play its fundamental role for many years to come.’

The resource of the Fund is limited. So that help can be given where it is most needed, applicants must be prepared to give, in confidence, full information about the circumstances supporting their applications. Those wishing to apply this year should write for an application form to: BBC Pension and Benefits Centre Broadcasting House Cardiff CF5 2YQ or visit the website where you can download an application form: www.bbc.co.uk/charityappeals/about/grace-wyndham-goldie

Application forms should be returned by 31 July. Applicants are considered annually in September and in no circumstances can continuing help over a number of years be promised.

Who is this?

Can anyone help with information on the film cameraman in the picture above?

In 1969 I had just started as an Electronic Engineering student at Lancaster Polytechnic in Coventry. I had always wanted to be a cameraman and as I had ambitions to work for the BBC it was only natural to search out the film crew when I heard they were arriving on campus to make a programme for the Schools Department.

As an enthusiastic photographer I also took a couple of pictures, which I have just rediscovered during a loft clearance.

My personal diary tells me the filming took place on Monday, 13 October 1969. Thanks to the wonders of the BBC Genome project, I have found it was for a Schools programme called ‘New Horizons - A Matter of Degree? 4. To College (Aspects of the daily life of a student)’, the producer being Gordon Cotron. It was transmitted on BBC 1 at 11:30 on Monday, 9 March 1970.

However, the identity of the cameraman in my picture remains a mystery to me. If anyone recognises him, knows whether he is still with us or knows any location for his family, I will be delighted to pass on my print to them. I am sure our Editor will act as intermediary.

By the way, my second photo suggests how a blimped Arriflex 16BL may possibly influence the future, as the magazine looks like a cross between E.T. and Angry Birds. How weird is that?

Chris Rogers
Email: chrisrtv@googlemail.com
Tel: 01548 550746

Honorary degree for BBC ‘scooter gran’

Former BBC employee, Sandra Coombs, has been awarded an honorary Doctorate of Arts by Kingston University in recognition of her outstanding contribution to the communities of Kingston and Surbiton and for her unwavering support of the university.

Sandra spent a large part of her career with the BBC in a number of roles which involved her working on the Eurovision Song Contest and assisting Latin American broadcasters during the 1966 World Cup.

Her first association with Kingston University was in the late 1990s when she joined a degree course, graduating in 2002 with a BA in art, architecture and design history. She came to university education quite late, having spent much of her adult life caring for her ailing parents.

Sandra says, ‘Kingston threw open its doors during the 1966 World Cup.

She explains, ‘The experience of studying was much needed, applicants must be prepared to give, in confidence, full information about the circumstances supporting their applications.

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Known locally in Kingston as ‘scooter gran’, Sandra, who is now 81, can be seen out and about on her foot-powered scooter. She volunteers with St Raphael’s Church and the university chaplain and attends the freshers’ fair every year in support of the Kingston University Christian Society.

She explains, ‘The experience of studying gave me a new lease of life and direction.’
BBC Shop shuts

BBCShop.com ceased trading with effect from Tuesday 29 March 2016. A BBC Worldwide spokesperson explained, ‘As more and more consumers move to digital viewing we will be focusing our efforts on BBC Store, the new BBC Worldwide digital service.

‘This is part of the BBC’s wider strategic investment to make more programmes available to audiences, as well as develop its creative partnerships with programme makers to help them increase digital revenue.’

BBC Store (https://store.bbc.com) allows you to buy BBC programmes to watch online, download and keep.

New brooms for BBCPA

The new chairman of the BBC Pensioners’ Association, Albert Barber, has been joined on the committee by Maurice Maguire who replaces Nick Whines after 10 years as the membership secretary.

Until recently, Maurice has been an administrator at Blackburn Cathedral, having spent the previous 30 years at the BBC in a career ranging from newsreader to producer of Songs of Praise.

Albert takes over from Hugh Sheppard as chairman. Albert joined BBC Film Department, then as network director, promotions producer in BBC TV Presentation, and finally producing Gareth Hill before being a freelance director on The Bill and EastEnders.

The culture secretary, John Whittingdale, has vowed to end the iPlayer ‘loophole’ soon, so those watching catch-up TV do not get ‘a free ride’. He said the licence fee would be extended so it no longer just applied to live television viewers.

Only UKTV licence holders can use iPlayer to watch BBC programmes as they are broadcast live, but currently those without a licence can view the shows at a later date.

Mr Whittingdale said: ‘When the licence fee was invented, video on demand did not exist.

And while the definition of television in the legislation covers live streaming, it does not require viewers to have a licence if they watch BBC programmes through iPlayer even if it is just a few minutes after transmission.

‘The BBC works on the basis that all who watch it pay for it.

‘Giving a free ride to those who enjoy Sherlock or Bake Off an hour, a day or a week after they are broadcast was never intended and is wrong.

He plans to bring forward, ‘as soon as practicable’, secondary legislation which will extend the current TV licensing regime, not only to cover those watching the BBC live but also those watching the BBC on catch-up through iPlayer. He would like to see an order drafted and agreed by Parliament ‘as soon as we can’.

He added: ‘It could be this session if I can get it done and get a slot.’

The current parliamentary session ends in July.
Caversham Park proposals

It is really sad to see Prospero repeating the anonymous BBC spokesman’s earlier glib comments about this ‘large site’, allegedly being ‘under-occupied’ without considering the reality of Monitoring.

The Caversham Park estate was chosen during the war because technically suitable it is logistically closer to the main consumers of its products in the London area than its previous site.

In those days receiving foreign radio and telecommunications required long aerials well away from sources of domestic electrical interference; a second aerial was built on another country estate some miles from Caversham, connected by underground cables.

In modern times, with the monitoring of satellite TV and radio transmissions, some of the aerial systems have been replaced by numerous large satellite dishes set up at Caversham and elsewhere, not only for monitoring work, but also for Monitoring’s own communications with its outposts in various countries.

The cost of keeping up with technical advances across the world has been a huge but necessary investment in Monitoring’s ability to know what our enemies and friends are saying and thinking, in real time, in a world which is constantly changing politically and militarily. A visitor to Caversham Park will probably be shown several large open work areas containing groups of foreign language monitors at work at individual computers. A close look at their equipment shows that it is not standard off-the-shelf equipment, but sophisticated gear designed for their specialised translation work and skills. If there are some empty seats, that may be due to shifts working, but it is also a consequence of the repeated cuts Monitoring has suffered at the hands of the Cabinet Office and Foreign Office under successive governments, and more recently the BBC itself. So much for the building being ‘under-occupied’ — it is packed with special equipment requiring its own environment.

As for the large site being ‘under-occupied’, I sense that in its desperate search for money to make up for the government’s ‘gift’ of the free TV licence, Broadcasting House hopes to sell off all or part of the estate — rich pickings indeed on the local property market. However, the issue is not simply one of moving 200 staff ‘out of their offices’, where else could they go with their equipment, and reconnect with the world, and at what enormous further unnecessary cost? The work done by Monitoring is vital to the nation, it cannot just be turned off and on like a tap.

The BBC owns Monitoring and Caversham Park; let’s hope that common sense prevails and the greedy ‘developers’ in Broadcasting House keep their hands off.

Alain J K Sanders
Russian monitor 1961-1968, manager of Monitoring’s Hong Kong office 1971-1975, editor of Summary of World Broadcasts Parts 1 (USIR) and 3 (Far East) 1976-1990

My DAB thinks it’s FM

‘On Long Wave and on DAB Digital Radio, it’s time for the Daily Service. Meanwhile, here on FM…’

In our kitchen we have a standard classic Roberts radio. The FM/DAB button is never touched and ‘DAB’ is always displayed on its screen. Why does my DAB think it’s FM?

(Me) Ber Phillips
Radio 2 Producer 1968-1989

More on DAB

The article on the development and history of FM broadcasting was most interesting. Perhaps someone could write a similar article on the development of DAB? Perhaps it could include the answer to the question as to why Europe changed to the superior DAB+ leaving the UK with the unimproved DAB. I bought a DAB radio in the UK and brought it to Italy, where I now live, to find that the two systems do not appear compatible. Is the UK likely to change to the improved DAB+?

Anthony Escott
Italy

Fancy flying?

I have just read the recent Prospero. Page 5 carries an article (Fancy Flying). It was written by Keith Bennett regarding the article you printed in December’s edition of Prospero.

In that article he gets his name wrong. It is (Tom) and not (Tony) Peckham as you printed it.

Just mentioning this error!

Tom Peckham
Apologies Tom — the editorial team should have checked the spelling on your name.

Bird–Eye View

Susanna Stevens’s article (February 2016) on the BBC Genome was highly informative. So I was surprised to find that one of her instances was not strictly accurate. There never was ‘the John Betjeman film A Bird’s Eye View, which appeared as part of Festival 77 in August 1977’.

Bird-Eye View was a 13-part documentary series, all shot from a helicopter, which was scheduled irregularly on BBC2 from 1969 to 1971. I was the Series Editor.

The individual films were made with eight different writers.

John Betjeman wrote three films in all, one of which, Beside the Smoke, was indeed shown in Festival 1977. It can be found on iPlayer now.

Edward Mirreffe

Renouncing my right to a free TV licence

I know I’m not the only ex-member of staff indignant that the BBC now has to pay for a licence. The BBC will pay for it.’

I contacted the TV Licensing Authority at the time to say that I would renounce my rights to a free licence, and would like to pay for it again. The brief reply was, basically, ‘We have no system for arranging this. You are over 75. Therefore you do not pay for a licence. The BBC will pay for it.’

I read recently that the BBC might set up their own system for pensioners to renounce this right. I hope they have more success than I did!

Gillian Ford
Bromsgrove

Referendum

Now that David Cameron has fired the starting gun on the referendum campaign, will the BBC need to reconsider transmitting any repeats of Dale’s Army between now and 23 June?

I mean, think of those opening titles and the retreat from Dunkirk.

Couldn’t they be taken as a coded support for the Leave campaign and be in breach of the BBC’s impartiality rules? As the Welsh lady in W1A might add, ‘Just saying…’

Joe Kenney

Using BBC experts to build an FM receiver

I remember back over the years to the introduction of FM broadcasting; particularly the great expectations for improved reception of music programmes. I joined the BBC Engineering Department in 1955, and being an impecunious TA I was interested in building an FM receiver.

The enthusiast’s bible at the time, WirelessWorld, obliged with a project designed by two well-known (even famous) BBC engineers, Stan Amos and Johnny Johnston.

The difference in size and difficulty in winding IF coils compared to medium wave AM, and the unfamiliar ratio detector, were new to the would-be constructor.

Fortunately at the time I worked in Recording Maintenance Unit at the convent (St Hilda’s) in Maiday Vale, where the authors also resided. I sought out Stan and was very grateful for the light he was able to shed on my darkness. Those were the days when you could find foremost experts on most broadcast subjects in the Corporation. Is it still the case and if so are they as unassuming?

LIVING on the other side of the world in the land of Oz, Prospero provides memories of a very happy part of my working career, although I see very few names that I recognise.

Derek Williams
Australia

Whirlwinds and Dragonflies

Just a throwaway observation after reading Brian Hawkins’ most interesting story, Operation Snowdrop in Prosper, February 2016. The actual photo shows a Royal Navy Westland Sikorsky Dragonfly helicopter, not doubt being used during Operation Snowdrop.

The actual article mentions only Whirlwind helicopters, not Dragonfly choppers.

Did HMS Glory have a complement of Whirlwinds on board? I know Prince Philip had the use of a Whirlwind that regularly landed in the gardens of Buckingham Palace while he served in the Navy.

While on the subject of visual observations, I noticed on BBC Breakfast a couple of months ago, it was reported that the prototype de Havilland Mosquito was rebuilt for state viewing in their museum and the BBC showed early wartime footage of Metroes in formation, implying that they were Mosquitos! We must have excellent colour definition and H.D. etc., but what about the content?

This reminds me of 1950s budget films when the star boards one type of airliner at Heathrow and walks off a different type in America — perhaps they changed airliners in mid-Atlantic.

David Stone

PROSPERO APRIL 2016

LETTERS
Who’s that in the Top Gear pic?

Does anyone know the names of the two cameramen? (Prospe, February 2016, page 6.)

The big toothy smile is that of the incomparable Jim Knights of Magpie Film Productions, without whom many a fledging film and video director at Pebble Mill might never have taken off.

No stranger to being on award-winning teams, Jim made significant contributions to the success of many Birmingham productions in the 70s and 80s in particular. As well as having a superb eye he was one of the hardest-working cameramen I ever had the privilege to work with.

Michael Fitzgerald (Fitz) Erstwhile Editor Features, BBC Midlands; and founding editor of Countryfile.

I’m told that in the photo of BBC, Marx and media personnel, the cameraman second from right is Jim Knights. The director (first right) is Ian Thomas, who was directing the Marx sequences of that edition of Top Gear.

The article seems to have brought back a lot of happy memories, both for BBC retirees and friends in the media who were there (and on the IoM) and say ‘it only seems like yesterday’. Indeed!

Chris Bates REGARDING YOUR QUERY in the Top Gear photo, the cameraman second from right is Jim Knights of Magpie Films and the guy behind the camera is Pete someone – also Magpie. Penny Snailby

I was producer’s assistant to Hugh Pitt based in Glasgow when Jim Knights worked on Hugh’s film, The Homecoming, about the 1977 Gathering of the clans. We had some wonderful locations on the north and west coasts of Scotland which can be imagined and those, combined with Jim’s good nature and sense of fun, have resulted in many happy memories of that shoot.

I enjoy reading Prospe and look forward to receiving the next edition!

Annette Rogers (nee Mover)

The second in from the right is Jim Knights of Magpie Film – who did much work for Pebble Mill for such programmes as Midlands Today, Midlands Opt-outs and others too many to mention.

The other gentleman is not a cameraman… his name is Ian and I cannot remember his surname. He was a contract person (if my memory serves me correctly) employed mainly as a researcher/occasional director.

I worked with them both during my time in Regional TV at Pebble Mill in the 1980s and 1990s. Maybe somebody else will recall Ian’s surname. I hope this helps.

Fran Phipps

How Genome helped solve a 51-year mystery

The two adjacent stories on page 3 in Prospe (February 2016) – ‘Complete Radio Times listings online’ and ‘BBC success at 56th Rose d’Or Awards’ – struck a chord.

On 31 May 1964, BBC TV broadcast the Swiss programme Happy Days that had won the 4th annual Golden Rose of Montreux TV award. I was 14 years old and had just bought a reel-to-reel tape recorder.

Desperate for some pop music I recorded the programme with a microphone held next to the TV speaker. The programme included an exciting instrumental in a similar style to the Tornadoes who’d hit the charts a few months before with ‘Telstar’. I tried to find out the name of the song and the group playing it at the time, and subsequently, but with no success.

I kept the 1/4 inch tape labelled ‘Montreux instrumental’. Recently the BBC released the complete Radio Times schedules on genome.ch.bbc.co.uk and I was able to look up the programme details which yielded the name of the group. A search on the internet for Les Abbydon gave ‘Stalacite’ as the name of the instrumental that had remained nameless to me for 51 years.

Now I just need to persuade Brian Matthew to play it on Sound of the Sixties.

Cllve Manuell
Retired London VT

Tribute to Terry

In the flood of newspaper and broadcast tributes to Wogan, there was minimal reference to the great man’s Irishness, which so flavoured his wit and wisdom.

He was an ardent admirer of Brian O’Nolan, aka Flann O’Brien, whose novels and newspaper columns inspired him to leave the bank and become a whimsical, self-effacing radio announcer.

I discovered in the 1980s that he was also a fan of Patrick Campbell, aka Lord Glenary, who wrote humorous pieces for magazines, and became a stammering star of Call My Bluff.

Campbell’s collection of biographical disaster stories – A Short Trot with a Cultured Mind – had been my bedside security blanket in grim Catholic boarding schools, and when I became a TV producer, I had the idea of dramatising these stories for BBC2, with Terry Wogan as the tongue-in-cheek narrator. I was invited to lunch at Wogan Towers, and we had a nice chat about Irish attitudes to life, sex, religion, comedy and survival. He had run away from his very first day at a Limerick nun-run prep school. We laid a plan to pitch our idea for a comedy series to the BBC2 Controller, but the project was then scuppered by Campbell’s widow, Lady Glenary, aka Vivienne Orme, who said that she couldn’t allow us to adapt these stories for television.

She had worked as a publiscist in the British film industry. I spoke to her on the phone to ask her why she wouldn’t let us go ahead. She said that the problem was Wogan: ‘He’s not a real Irishman.’ I was mystified. Did she have any suggestions as to who might make a better narrator for the series? ‘Yes’, she said: ‘Sir Donald Wolfit.’ She wasn’t joking.

I rang Wogan to tell him that we had fallen at the first fence. He took it like a man, and thought the alternative suggestion was genuinely hilarious. We never made that series.

Tony Staveacre
Bingley

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
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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:

Gaynor Leach, BBC Club, BC2 B3 Broadcast Centre, 201 Wood Lane, London W12 7TF
Tel: 020 8752 6666 or email bbc.club@bbc.co.uk

BBCPA
For details of how to join the Pensioners’ Association, see the panel on page 3.
Colin Prior, Former Head of Outside Broadcasts, wrote in to tell Prospero about his new-found love of sailing – a hobby he first took up in retirement.

I didn’t start sailing until I retired from the BBC after 32 years of service. My colleagues bought me an Experience Voucher as part of my leaving present and I used it to have a day out in the Solent on a yacht from Southampton.

My experience of boats hitherto was mainly cross-channel ferries that made me feel sick! So how refreshing it was to find out how different a yacht feels as it cuts through the water propelled by the forces of nature.

I have discovered that you are never too old to learn new things and sailing is an excellent opportunity to do this and make lots of new friends.

The Yacht Club has two boats, aptly named Ariel and Prospero, which are kept on the Hamble near Southampton. Ariel is a 40ft Dufour cruiser and Prospero is a 33ft racing yacht, which also cruises during the summer months. There are plenty of opportunities for sailing mid-week, which is ideal for someone who is retired. The club can provide one-day taster cruises, whole week trips for the more ambitious and even racing!

It is a great way to meet new people and no experience is necessary as we are a training school and can take on complete novices. We run full courses to allow members to gain Competent Crew or Day Skipper qualifications. However, no qualifications are necessary to come out as crew. Spending a few days on a boat with good friends visiting harbours around the Solent to enjoy good food and drink is not a bad way of life!

The club is keen to encourage more members to join and if anyone reading this article would like to find out more, you can do so by going to our website: www.arielyc.org.uk. You can log in as a guest with the username: bbcyc and password: k4589r. You will find everything you need to know about the Yacht Club and how to join as a member, which only costs £25 per year!

Want to give it a go?

If you would like to try out sailing for a day, like Colin did, he is running a couple of days exclusively for BBC pensioners and their friends or family.

It will be a full day out at sea in the Solent from the BBC Yacht Club’s base on the Hamble in Southampton and the cost will be £45 per person. This will include refreshments and a light lunch on board.

The dates are Monday 25 April and Monday 11 July.

If you are interested, please email Colin at: colin.prior@ntlworld.com

Hobbies are good for you

Research shows that challenging hobbies are key to maintaining a healthy ageing brain. The findings, published in the journal Restorative Neurolology and Neurosciences, show that taking up a new mental challenge may help to maintain cognitive vitality.

Researchers at the University of Texas compared changes in brain activity in 39 older adults that resulted from the performance of high challenge activities that required new learning and sustained mental effort, compared to low-challenge activities that did not require active learning.

Have you taken up a new or challenging hobby in later life? Ice skating? Archery? Triathlons? Or perhaps you’ve learnt to play a musical instrument? We’d love to hear from you – please get in touch using the contact details on page 2.
When I look back at my long life I can reflect on how fortunate I am to be able to write about it now. However, I have twice borne tragic losses which have greatly saddened me.

I was born in 1930 in Breslau, a city which now finds itself in Poland and is called Wrocław. My father was a lawyer who was appointed district judge in a town called Oppeln (now Opole) where we lived until 1938. He was dismissed from his job in 1937 as a result of the Nazi law which excluded Jews from holding positions in the German Civil Service.

He left the family for over six months to gain a qualification as Hebrew teacher at a Berlin college. He found it hard to obtain a teaching post as so many members of the German Jewish community were emigrating. Fortunately the position of manager of the Hanover Palestine Office was offered to him and the family moved to that city in July 1938.

After some difficulties my parents found a suitable flat in a large villa owned by the single daughter of an eminent Jewish businessman who had died earlier in the year. Jews were only allowed to rent accommodation in properties owned by Jews so we were lucky to find this apartment.

My sister and I went to a Jewish school, as Jewish children were forbidden to attend non-Jewish schools. Jews were also not allowed to attend public performances in theatres, cinemas, concert halls or sports halls.

Nevertheless our family lived happily together in those times and our parents shielded us from the terrible events that were happening around us. Our flat overlooked a large square where the SS stormtroopers would parade regularly and Nazi rallies were held. Being a keen listener to the radio, with the ambition one day to become a radio announcer or sports commentator, I would sometimes hear broadcasts that included Hitler’s ravings and rantings to his followers.

Life went on peacefully for us until the night of 9 November 1938, Kristallnacht. We heard about the savage attacks on Jewish properties, including synagogues, and the arrest of Jews following the assassination of a junior German diplomat in Paris by a young Jewish student.

My parents were worried that my father would be taken away but fortunately that did not happen. However my grandfather and my uncle were arrested and my uncle did not return home. A few days after Kristallnacht my father took me to the site of our synagogue which was in ruins and still smouldering from the flames that had set it alight.

Thereafter my parents did their utmost to find a way to emigrate. My father would have liked to go to Palestine, as he had always been a keen Zionist, but only immigrants with manual skills were welcome there, not lawyers. He found a guarantor in the USA, and we obtained a good education that would set us up for successful careers and happy marriages in Great Britain.

‘Our family lived happily together in those times and our parents shielded us from the terrible events that were happening around us’

We heard little from our parents during the early part of the war apart from occasional brief messages via the Red Cross. These ceased to arrive at the end of 1941.

A few weeks after the end of the war we learnt the tragic news that our parents had been deported with 1,000 other Hanover Jews to the Riga Ghetto in Latvia. Nothing more had been heard from them. They presumably died either by being murdered or through disease or malnutrition. Although I had feared the worst for many months, the stark news of their death affected me palpably. It was the first really tragic blow I felt in my life and the pain of it will never go away.

Michael Brown
I had the pleasure of working with Terry (before he was Sir Terry) many years ago on a live Radio Links OB engineered by Ken Koen, at Gatwick Airport, for his morning radio show. Together we covered most of the airport, me carrying a heavy back-pack transmitter and talkback equipment. This would not normally be a favourite job, but it turned out to be a delight. Rarely does one have the opportunity to work with a true professional, who so early in the morning was chatting live to dozens of people, including children, without any rehearsal. Being in such good company got us to many places the public never see – we even went up the control tower! The ability of a performer to be just the same person when the mics have been switched off is, in my experience, somewhat rare and something some politicians could do well to emulate.

I was in the process of finalising the last of the BBC Northern Dance Orchestra (NDO) CDs when I heard the sad news. The NDO was of course a ‘legend’ in its own right and these new CDs celebrate the musical talents of Alyn Ainsworth, Bernard Herrmann, Brian Fitzgerald, Alan Moorhouse and Tommy Watt, and they also mark the contribution to the success of the band by the dedicated production team, the engineers and sound mixers involved over its career. I considered all the musicians to be legends, and the CDs celebrate them all, including contributions from Johnny Roadhouse, Gary Cox and the leader of the NDO Ernie Watson. Pat Nash and Alan Roper wrote most of the arrangements.

It was nice to see some members of the band again after 40 years, on the recent repeats of The Good Old Days. They made up what must have been the best ‘pit orchestra’ in the UK.

The NDO considered themselves to be a family; the orchestra had the unique ability to embrace the considerable talents and quirks of all its musicians, yet play like a finely tuned composite instrument on demand.

Studio sessions were easy for them. It was usual to record ten tracks in two hours and then go for a drink (or three)! Some of the tracks were the rehearsals, so good was their sight reading! However, where they excelled and were really tested was playing live – the band really showed how superb it was, to the great delight of audiences throughout the UK.

Part of CD 1 celebrates the life and expertise of my late BBC audio colleague, Ian Parr. During the Sixties Ian was one of those responsible for sound mixing the NDO at the Playhouse Theatre in Manchester. Included at the start of CD 1 are some of his vintage recordings from the tapes he gave me.

Additional unreleased tracks of Ian’s have been added, and some augmented NDO too.

The recordings on the new CDs are now over 45 years old but stand out as arguably some of the best playing and sounds ever heard from the NDO.

Sadly, in October 2015 we lost the legendary Bernard Herrmann, conductor of the NDO for 11 years, and The Good Old Days orchestra for much longer, who did so much to maintain the exceptional musical standards set by Alyn Ainsworth. A very great loss.

CD 2 is quite different in character and contains a variety of material including some of the last recordings the augmented Northern Dance Orchestra ever made. These were from the collection of my BBC colleague Peter Pilbeam, who championed the use of strings with the NDO, and who produced and mixed the band for 30 years. The augmented NDO was in essence very similar to the original Northern Variety Orchestra, but with additional brass.

These tracks enable us effectively to go back in time to the sounds of the Fifties when the NDO were not only broadcasting live from the Playhouse in Manchester, but also making their mark in many comedy and variety shows throughout the region.

This CD set containing 70 superb tracks will mark the end of the musical of the NDO on CD, but with over 490 tracks available to broadcasters and the public I feel that all of us in the NDO project have done what few others have achieved, that is to rescue the three big bands in Manchester and ensure that they will not now be consigned to the dustbin of musical history.

If I have a regret in what has been a truly pleasurable task over the last five years for all the NDO project team, it is that still in my collection are around 50 great tracks which no one so far has been able to name, and are therefore unusable. This may be because they were written by band members and never registered. There are now over 4,000 original scores in the Light Music Society library in Preston, rescued from a skip in the Eighties, and stored by Dr Robin Dewhurst, until their removal to Preston last year. This means that bands in the future can attempt to play their music as well as the NDO did!

Over the next year, all the cuttings, pictures and music details will be collated and available for others to cherish.

Full details of the new album and the other limited edition double albums still available can be found on the website: www.northerndanceorchestra.org.uk

There is a discount of 15% on this CD for all BBC retirees, and our supported charity is Nordoff Robbins music therapy.

Ian C Reed M.I.E.T

Archivist of the Northern Variety, Northern Dance and Northern Radio Orchestras

The orchestra had the unique ability to embrace the considerable talents and quirks of all its musicians, yet play like a finely tuned composite instrument on demand’

A history of the print and production of the Radio Times – can you help?

There are few people who can now remember a time without the Radio Times being present in a living room to guide you through what was on radio and television.

The digitisation of the London edition as part of the BBC Genome project has brought new life to the old schedules, providing easy access to a huge aspect of social history, but the stories behind the production of one of the largest circulation magazines in the UK are less accessible and being lost as time progresses.

This coming August is the 60th anniversary of the opening of the Radio Times printing works in East Kilbride. The printing works were opened to print the Scottish, Northern Ireland and North of England editions and take the strain off the main printing works in Park Royal (picture right) that opened 80 years ago next January and which had been working to capacity for some time.

I am researching the history of the Radio Times and other BBC magazines such as The Listener and London Calling, and would like to speak with anyone who was involved with the production of the magazines – editorial, composition, printing or distribution – who has stories or anecdotes, mementos, photos, or, most important of all, memories of day-to-day working.

Initially this is to preserve, for posterity, as much information as possible before it is lost, but ultimately it is hoped that the broader picture can be published.

I can be contacted by email: research@sarnlo.co.uk or you can write to me at: Dr Steve Arnold, 46 Orchard Road South Ockendon, Essex RM15 6HD.

Legends and the ‘good old days’

The death of Sir Terry Wogan in January prompted Ian C Reed to think about his career in Manchester and the legends he worked with…
A teenager for the second time

A 113-year-old woman became a hit on social media in January after an opportunity report by BBC Radio Solent colleagues. Ariel caught up with Dominic Blake after he helped Gladys Hooper tell her fascinating story.

‘I can see it now,’ Gladys told me. ‘Everything was on fire up there.’ She was describing one of the most famous incidents of World War One – the night that German airship SL11 was shot down after a bombing raid on London.

A teenager at the time, Gladys Aela Elizabeth Hooper is the only surviving eyewitness to the spectacle on 3 September 1916, and is now the oldest person in Britain.

With the help of her 86-year-old son Derek, she recalled how the sky was filled with pieces of flaming rag as the huge machine fell from 11,000ft before crashing at Cuffley in Hertfordshire.

It was a remarkable account from the former concert pianist who was also one of the UK’s first lady drivers and a close friend of aviation pioneer Amy Johnson.

The story could easily have been missed if it hadn’t been for BBC Radio Solent’s Kane Reeves. The producer had taken a call from Derek the day before, asking the station to play a 113th birthday request.

He spotted its potential, and as the local reporter I was soon on my way to Gladys’ home at Ryde on the Isle of Wight.

The remains of SL 11 after crashing into a tree.

During my visit I shot a video of the encounter for the BBC Radio Solent Facebook page, and the level of interest has been staggering.

It’s reached almost three million people, with just under a million views of the video itself. More than 15,000 people also 'liked' the post or used the site to wish Gladys happy birthday.

It’s fitting that, as she becomes a teenager for the second time, Gladys can add 'social media celebrity' to her long list of achievements.

The story of a remarkable man

by Tony Lazzerini, Edit Producer

Sir Nicholas Winton.

It is only rarely that you can say that something you did was truly important, but for me Children Saved from the Nazis: The Story of Sir Nicholas Winton is one of those moments.

The programme, directed by Matej Minar, pays tribute to an extraordinary man who saved the lives of 669 Czechoslovakian children from the clutches of the Nazis on the cusp of WWII.

Sir Nicholas Winton, or Nicky as he preferred to be called, who died last year, never thought that what he had done was of such significance and told no-one about it.

Indeed, we might never have known were it not for his wife Greta who found a scrapbook in the attic.

This remarkable book contained all the details of those he rescued, complete with photos, addresses and passports. This all came to the public’s attention when, on the 71st in 1988, he came face-to-face for the first time with an audience filled with his ‘Kinder’.

Touching interview

Partnerships are very important to the BBC and for this documentary we have been working with the UK Holocaust Memorial Foundation. Formed only a year ago, they had been searching for other survivors.

Just weeks before transmission, they heard from Susse Lind – who for the first time in over 70 years came forward to tell the story of how she had been rescued by Nicholas Winton. In a touching interview with Natasha Kaplinsky, she showed us the handkerchief that her mother gave her to wipe the tears away as she was put on one of Nicky’s trains. She has kept it freshly laundered ever since.

With the Holocaust Memorial Foundation, we were lucky enough to arrange a screening event at Lancaster House. The director-general Tony Hall was present to introduce the film. He said he had come across the story of Sir Nicholas in a very real way when he met one of Winton’s ‘Kindertransportees’, Lady Milena Grenfell Baines, at the Gillard Programme Award for her BBC Radio Berkshire documentary on hers and Sir Nicholas’ story.

Over 125 people attended the event and I can honestly say that, in my entire life, I have never seen a room of 125 adults cry all at the same time. Chatting to Eric Pickles, who closed the event, he revealed that his biggest worry was being unable to speak because he was too emotional.

Such is the power of Nicky’s story.

Three major BBC EU referendum debates announced

BBC One will stage three major debate programmes in the run up to the EU Referendum. All three of the programmes will feature key campaigners from both sides of the debate, and live audiences from a cross-section of the electorate.

Our first programme will be aimed at young voters, who are traditionally alienated by conventional political coverage. Victoria Derbyshire will present the programme live from Glasgow, Scotland on Thursday 19 May. Just over a week before polling, on Wednesday 15 June, David Dimbleby will moderate a special edition of BBC One’s Question Time programme, featuring one sensor advocate from each side.

And, as the campaign reaches its climax, David will be joined by Mishal Husain and Emily Mattlis, live at Wembley Arena for the BBC’s biggest ever campaign event. We will be inviting thousands of voters to question representatives from the ‘leave’ and ‘remain’ camps on Tuesday 21 June.

Additionally, all of the BBC’s regular political interview and debate programmes will continue throughout the campaign. They will travel to all corners of the UK.

Amazing member discounts at Club Western House

From April 2016 BBC Club are delighted to announce increased discounts for members on a wide range of food and drink. The discount on main meals*, half breakfast, hot drinks and alcoholic beverages has increased from 50p to £1, while the discount on a bottle of wine is now £3, instead of £1.50.

*Please note the cost of the reduced members’ lunch, at the special rate of £5 for one course and £6.50 for two courses, remains the same.

Propero Society Events

The second quarter finds Propero Society members enjoying a diverse range of outings. In April there is a trip to Richmond Theatre to see ‘Goodnight Mr Tom’. This Olivier-award-winning Chichester festival production is on a nationwide tour. During May there is a visit to the Guards Museum in Wellington Barracks, a must for anyone interested in the military and history, and May also has a tour of Lords cricket ground followed by afternoon tea at the nearby Lords Tavern. Whether you are a cricket fan or just want to find out more about the game and this renowned venue, what better way to round off the day than with tea!

We venture outdoors in June for a trip on the scenic Bluebell railway and there is also an informal visit to Kew Gardens. Let’s hope for sunny days!

Further details can be found in the newsletter: http://www.bbcclub.com/connect/prospero/newsletters

BBC 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 Propero Society.

Propero AGM

The Propero Society AGM will be held at Western House Club on Tuesday 26 April at 11am. It is open to all Prospero Society members.

BBC Club competitions

Don’t forget BBC Club members can enter the monthly competition! Recent prizes have included a case of wine, a champagne tea for two, £250 Blacks vouchers and many more. Congratulations to retired member Peter M who won the February competition of a pamper voucher courtesy of K Dental Studios.

April’s competition is for a round of golf for four with two buggies at Hever Castle Golf Club in Kent.

BBC Club Broadcast Centre

BBC Club Broadcast Centre

BCZ B3, 201 Wood Lane, London W12 7TP 020 8752 6666

BBCCLUB@BBC.CO.UK
Personnel Officer
Ronald Newbold joined the BBC in 1956, first at Broadcasting House, then Television Centre, finally moving to the brand new Pebble Mill as Head of Personnel – English Regions. Educated at Lancaster Grammar School but progress halted by WW2, he served in North Africa, rising through the ranks to Warrant Officer in the Pioneer Corps. Indicative of his organisation and people skills, he was only denied promotion to a Commissioned rank because, at age 23, he was seven years too young for army regulations.

He began a career in industrial relations and personnel management by working for the Transport and Allied Staffs Association, moving over to the management side at British Transport Services, then the London Brick Company before joining the Corporation. He worked in many areas but was most proud of his efforts in the English Regions, where he organised the personnel arrangements for over 2,000 staff and set up the working arrangements between management and unions that were used by both sides to keep good relationships during some tough years.

Throughout his career, he went out of his way to help colleagues with personal and job issues and was widely used as a mentor and confidant, as testified by the many notes received from all quarters at the time of his retirement.

Keen on sport, he always had a season ticket at a nearby football team and loved his time watching cricket and playing golf. He decided on early retirement in 1978 and enjoyed many holidays with his wife, Dorothy. He also acted as CPI representative on Midlands Region Industrial Tribunals before settling in Worcester, again near to both cricket and football grounds.

Active until suffering a fall just after his 73rd wedding anniversary, he died in January 2006 after a short illness. He leaves a wife, son and grandchildren with many happy memories.

Nigel Newbold

Television Personnel personality
Mary Sutherland, who worked in Television Personnel in the 1960s, died just before Christmas 2015. She was 94.

Mary's first job was at the Bank of England, but in 1942 she joined the WAAC as a wartime radar operator on coastal stations. After demobilisation she volunteered and was eventually commissioned as a fighter control officer in the RAuxAF, always retaining something of those disciplines the services often instil – a brisk, humane and focused efficiency, for organisation, people and resources.

Shortly after joining the BBC in 1950 she worked in Central Establishment Office – the repository at that time of the Corporation’s somewhat arcane grading system – led by David Hay, a former Group Captain, pipe smoking, and an early mellower of management jargon. Mary then became an administrator in Ealing’s Film Department under Jack Mewett, but she finally found her niche in Television Establishment – what now might be called HR – with Leslie Page. Here she had responsibilities for Design Group, collaborating in a formidable and popular management team with the legendary Clifford Hatts.

Mary was a woman of sound judgement, perceptive on selection boards, loyal to her bosses, but never afraid to pursue an unfashionable line or buck a political trend. She was a person of high integrity, in the best BBC public service tradition. She was a good listener, patient and understanding, excellent in a pastoral role but resolute in giving guidance, seeking just solutions and professing the best way forward. The values which guided Mary’s life seemed to some old fashioned, but they were always thoughtful and considered, and rooted in tenets she regarded as eternal virtues.

Her husband Fraser, who survives her, and she, enjoyed a devoted marriage for over 60 years. They travelled, loved opera and London concerts, and in their Suffolk retirement, the Aldeburgh Festival, with its wide cultural range and friendship. Their house was full of lovely things.

Mary was an enthusiastic member of the Prayer Book Society, admiring the resonance and dignity of its language. Her funeral followed the rubric of the 1662 Book she is buried in the village churchyard at Thrandeston, where they lived for nearly 40 years.

Denis Moriarty

A personal touch
After a long BBC career, Barry Smith retired in 1991 following several years as Head of Personnel and Administration at Pebble Mill, the Network Production Centre in Birmingham.

Throughout all the constant administrative changes and regular reorganisations which were a way of life throughout his career, he was known always to remember the needs of the individual. This has been the main theme of the many tributes which have now been paid to him.

He worked in London in his early years as an engineer in communications. Later, having spent time in consultancy, he was asked to join a working party looking at ‘Broadcasting in the 70s’, particularly in respect of regional structures.

He played a major role in the implementation of the organisational changes which resulted, while never losing sight of how staff were personally affected. He was a great supporter of entrepreneurial broadcasting.

When he became Head of Personnel and Administration in Bristol, he was an enthusiastic supporter of production staff, in particular the Natural History Unit which, as a lover of nature, suited him perfectly.

He and Cynthia spent many happy times at their property near Nantes in France, where Cynthia’s fluent French and Barry’s best Franglais helped them become part of the community in typical fashion. They were immensely popular there and are now remembered with a permanent tribute at the pond side in the village.

In retirement, he and Cynthia moved to Northern Ireland where they quickly made many friends and enjoyed family life together. Barry was always a joiner of things: Church Treasurer, Residents’ Association, Bridge Club, Golf Club and others, always ready to take responsibility but above all, a devoted family man.

His sudden loss came as a great shock to Cynthia and his extended family. He will be remembered with love and affection by all who knew him.

George Pagan

Reporting Scotland
As Editor News and, laterly, Editor News and Current Affairs, George Sinclair left a legacy of achievement over two decades in BBC Scotland.

His monument will be Reporting Scotland, still regarded as the best local news programme in the UK, but his influence extends to a generation of journalists who worked with him for and him.

George joined the BBC from newspapers. After a period in Fleet Street, he became the youngest news editor of the Scottish Daily Mail at the age of 27. He brought to BBC Scotland a repertoire of news values and techniques that marked a step-change in programme style and content. He replaced the tea-time magazine programme in 1968 with a fast-reaction and comprehensive news programme called – and still called – Reporting Scotland.

He was, in some ways, a journalist of the old school – thorough in methods and strict in style. One reporter was roundedly chastised for calling two of Scotland’s football teams the Hibees and the Jam Tarts rather than their proper names, Hibernian and Hearts. He did not last long.

As David Scott, who went on to become Head of Programmes at Scottish Television, put it: ‘There wasn’t a single journalist who worked for George who wasn’t a better journalist after the experience.’

Other former colleagues have added their weight to that judgement. Kirsty Wark, who was given her first presenting role by George, remembers him as ‘thorough, fair, but – most of all – a consummate journalist’. Scotland Correspondent Colin Blane considers that George ‘brought with him a fierce sense of competition. He inspired his colleagues to admiration and (yes, George) affection.’

Duty engineer at Warwick TOC
Peter Nicholas was born in Yeovil on 16 November 1945 and passed away on 21 November 2015 following a brave battle with cancer.

At college, Peter trained as an electrician and then worked for the Southern Electricity Board as an engineer. In 1970 he joined BBC Transmitters and his first posting was to the HF station at Wootton near Ludlow. Peter maintained a deep affection for this beautiful Shropshire town all his life and met local girl Maureen in 1971. They married in 1977.

Peter and Maureen had three sons, and they enjoyed many camping holidays. Peter loved the outdoor life and sports, and in his youth played football for Yeovil Town under 16s. He also played badminton and enjoyed running with his sons.

After Wootton, Peter worked at Droitwich, Daventry, Rampsham, Orkney, Sutton Coldfield and Wenvoe, where Peter was appointed duty manager at the Monitoring & Information Centre (MIC) in 1987, covering Wales, West & Channel Isles.

In 1994 the five MICs merged into one with the opening of the Warwick Technical Operations Centre, which oversaw BBC Transmitters & Networks and oversaw the huge digital switchover. Peter was appointed as one of the first duty managers and was on duty when the mast at Peterborough collapsed; a very busy shift!

Peter retired in 2005 and had many hobbies and interests to fill his time. He was the committee member in charge of the project to restore Warwick’s Myton Pool, situated behind Peter’s garden, which was rubbish filled and derelict. To help in this, Peter trained in the use of chainsaws and strimmers, and tree felling! Now it is a beautiful nature reserve.

Before his passing, Peter and Maureen enjoyed a family gathering in Norfolk for his 70th birthday and revisited the town he always loved, Ludlow. This true gentleman will be greatly missed by all.

F Condron and N Claxton

Editor of Woman’s Hour
I regret to have to inform you that Janet Thomas died on 16 November last year, 2015, after a battle with cancer.

Janet edited Woman’s Hour, Forget Tomorrow’s Monday, Pick of the Week, Be my Guest, and Putback. She then went into training of BBC staff.

After leaving the BBC, Janet made a new career in garden design and landscaping, and latterly created the Kington Gallery to promote her own art and pastel portraiture, and to train budding artists.

As all her friends and ex-coworkers will remember, Janet never did things by halves; whatever she set her mind on, she pursued with energy and dedication. This determination never left her, right up to the end.

Janet and I had been in a relationship for 35 years and when she was given two months to live, we talked everything through and decided we would get married asap.

We were married by Special Licence, in her home, just three days before she died.

Tony Bennett
DA's right-hand woman

Sheila Baker

(nee Marshall), who died on 26 November 2015 aged 83, was Personal Assistant to John Arkell, Director of Administration, in the 1960s and early 1970s. Sheila joined the Schools’ Broadcasting Council at the BBC straight from secretarial college in 1949. From there, she moved to Staff Administration and eventually became Personal Assistant to John Arkell, when he was Controller of Staff Administration. When he became Director of Administration, Sheila moved with him. Among her many duties was taking minutes at the Board of Management and Board of Governors’ meetings.

When she left to get married in 1972, John was asked to give her away as our own father had died six years previously. In his speech at the wedding, John remarked that he had been happy to perform the honour but questioned, ‘Who on earth would want to give Sheila away?’

His words were echoed in the many generous tributes to Sheila which our family has received since her death, praising her good qualities. Among them was one from a former secretary who later became a studio manager in Bush House and, coincidentally, a friend of mine when I was working in the Thai Service there. Sheila Atkinson wrote to me that when she was a very new and junior secretary, she worked for a few months in the Secretariat offices, filling in where needed. Sheila was one of the senior secretaries she worked with. She remembered her as being always there to offer gentle encouragement. ‘She was always kind, sensitive and pleasant,’ she recalls.

After their marriage, Sheila and her husband Tony moved several times until they ended up in Wokingham, where they remained until her death and where they were active members of their local church.

A year after their wedding, Sheila had a daughter, Marianne, who is now a consultant psychiatrist and lives in Essex with her husband and two little girls. Sheila and Tony also fostered a son, Brian, from the age of 12-16. He lives in Taunton, Somerset.

Rosemary Marshall (sister)

James (Jim) Bell

(Darky)

Driving across the Blackdown Hills is always a delight, whatever the weather, but when the journey would end in the beautiful Somerset town of Chard, visiting Jim Bell, it really made my day.

His son, David, writes that he joined the BBC in 1950 after his National Service in the Royal Navy. He joined as a studio rigger at the Paris Studio in Lower Regent Street, London, where he stayed for his 40 years of service. The Paris Studio was extremely busy, hosting most of the popular radio shows. Jim really enjoyed his work and he forged really good relationships with his work colleagues and the artists.

His sons say how he really enjoyed the big bands and high quality singers of the 1950s as well as the comedy shows of The Gnom and Round the Horn. He witnessed the start of the pop scene in 1960s and enjoyed the colour and vibrancy that it brought to the studio. In the early 1970s the John Peel Concert brought many famous groups and singers from Britain, Canada and the USA to perform at the Paris. Jim received a letter of thanks and a commendation from the BBC in 1980 for his support and help during the Iranian Embassy siege.

Jim was a quiet, intelligent gentleman who made sure his sons received the education he had not. His big smile had a shy interior, though he would come alive when talking about his experiences, including that he met the Kray twins when they visited his pub.

David said how very proud his father was to be employed by the BBC for 49 years and would often talk about his experiences to his children and grandchildren on the long country walks that he enjoyed so much and at family dinners. He was well supported in retirement by the Corporation with a reliable pension and greatly enjoyed regular visits from his BBC pensioner visitors. He died suddenly on Christmas Day 2015 aged 88.

His wife Pam died in 2009. Jim is survived by two children, four grandchildren and two great-grandchildren.

David and Paul Bell (sons), and Elizabeth McDowell (BBC niece)

Russian defector

Leonid Finkelstein, who has died at the age of 91, was one of the outstanding broadcasters to the Soviet Union. His BBC Russian Service career spanned 27 years, before and after the collapse of Communism.

He was born in 1924 in Tcherkassy, Ukraine. The family moved to Leningrad when he was a year old. After finishing school in 1941 he was conscripted into the Soviet army. He was parachuted behind enemy lines in the Ukraine. The family moved to Leningrad when he was a year old. After finishing school in 1941 he was conscripted into the Soviet army. He was parachuted behind enemy lines in the Ukraine. The family moved to Leningrad when he was a year old. After finishing school in 1941 he was conscripted into the Soviet army. He was parachuted behind enemy lines in the Ukraine. The family moved to Leningrad when he was a year old. After finishing school in 1941 he was conscripted into the Soviet army. He was parachuted behind enemy lines in the Ukraine. The family moved to Leningrad when he was a year old. After finishing school in 1941 he was conscripted into the Soviet army. He was parachuted behind enemy lines in the Ukraine. The family moved to Leningrad when he was a year old. After finishing school in 1941 he was conscripted into the Soviet army. He was parachuted behind enemy lines in the Ukraine. The family moved to Leningrad when he was a year old. After finishing school in 1941 he was conscripted into the Soviet army. He was parachuted behind enemy lines in the Ukraine. The family moved to Leningrad when he was a year old. After finishing school in 1941 he was conscripted into the Soviet army. He was parachuted behind enemy lines in the Ukraine. The family moved to Leningrad when he was a year old. After finishing school in 1941 he was conscripted into the Soviet army. He was parachuted behind enemy lines in the Ukraine. The family moved to Leningrad when he was a year old. After finishing school in 1941 he was conscripted into the Soviet army. He was parachuted behind enemy lines in the Ukraine. The family moved to Leningrad when he was a year old. After finishing school in 1941 he was conscripted into the Soviet army. He was parachuted behind enemy lines in the Ukraine. The family moved to Leningrad when he was a year old. After finishing school in 1941 he was conscripted into the Soviet army. He was parachuted behind enemy lines in the Ukraine. The family moved to Leningrad when he was a year old. After finishing school in 1941 he was conscripted into the Soviet army. He was parachuted behind enemy lines in the Ukraine. The family moved to Leningrad when he was a year old. After finishing school in 1941 he was conscripted into the Soviet army.
In Getting Out Alive: News, Sport and Politics at the BBC, he chronicles what it’s like to be at the top of the BBC, from dizzying highs in the wake of the London 2012 Olympics, to crushing lows as the Corporation was pushed to the brink of breaking point during the Savile crisis.

When did you join the BBC, and doing what?

I joined the BBC at Radio Lincolnshire in 1980 as a trainee. I’d applied for general producer roles, which was what I’d been doing in commercial radio, but both Lincolnshire and Sheffield offered me jobs in the newsroom. So that’s what I went to do, with Lincolnshire as the preference because it was a new station. Launching a BBC local radio station was so much fun that I did it twice in 20 months: I was part of the initial Radio Northampton team in 1982.

What role did you enjoy most during your 33 years at the BBC?

I always think the most thrilling adrenaline-packed journalism job is outputting The World at One. You start the morning with a blank sheet of paper, and sometimes by lunchtime you could shake the political world with a great story. It’s right up against the clock, and I always knew my stress level was at its highest when I started chewing my tie – usually at five to one! That said, nothing can quite compare with the honour of leading the BBC London 2012 teams. It was a magnificent time for the organisation working together as one, and audiences loving what we did.

Why did you decide to write your memoirs?

I wanted to give an idea what it was like being in the BBC – both coming up through the ranks and also being in management. When you’re in a top job, you understandably get criticised: that’s what accountability means. But I tried to convey my stress level was at its highest when I started chewing my tie – usually at five to one! That said, nothing can quite compare with the honour of leading the BBC London 2012 teams. It was a magnificent time for the organisation working together as one, and audiences loving what we did.

What advice would you give to a Prospero reader wanting to publish their memoirs?

Well, obviously – I’d say do it. One of my colleagues here at Selwyn [College Cambridge] has written a fascinating account of what it was like to be a BBC secretary in the 1970s, with a developing love affair; and if you have a story to tell and the means of making it interesting – then there’s an appetite in the outside world, I’m sure.

If you could summarise the BBC in just three words, what would they be?

Brilliant, intoxicating, odd.

The Independent describes your book as ‘a love letter to the Corporation’. What did you love about the BBC – and what did you not?

I loved the people: it’s thanks to the BBC that I have three of my five godchildren and some of the most wonderful friends in my life. I’m also very proud to have worked on so many great programmes – from It’s A Knockout! to 5 Live, and being responsible for the big sport events like World Cups and Wimbledon as well as the Olympics. What I worry about sometimes is that the people of the BBC have wonderful warmth and loyalty but the Corporation itself is rather cold-hearted. I’ve seen too many colleagues who’ve left in difficult circumstances, and it’s the opposite of what some outsiders think: the BBC isn’t good at looking after its own. That’s why, albeit tongue-in-cheek, I called the book ‘Getting Out Alive’ – because not everybody does.

Robin Lustig’s review of your book (in the New Statesman) concludes by saying, ‘Gordon Brown once said that there are only two kinds of chancellor: those who fail and those who get out in time. The same applies to BBC executives, and Mosey got out in time.’ Is it true what he says about ‘your relief being palpable’?

I thought it was an acute thing to say, yes, I suppose in retrospect I should have gone sooner after the Olympics, and I’d been thinking of doing that. But then I wanted to support George Entwistle, who is a good man and a friend; and I was asked to be Acting Director of Television, so I did that. But we immediately ran into the Savile crisis and a terrible year for the BBC, and it was absolutely horrible being in the organisation in that kind of prolonged meltdown. That’s why I was so relieved to leave when I did, in 2011.

Why, in the end, did you leave the BBC, and what are you doing now?

Well, I was elected as Master of Selwyn College Cambridge. A BBC colleague had seen the job advertised and sent me an email saying ‘I think you’d be good at it and you’d enjoy it.’ I never thought I’d get the job, but I absolutely adore it. It’s a beautiful place to live and work, and – like the BBC – I’m surrounded by very talented people. I used to use the code to my friends when I was fed up at the BBC ‘it’s time to get a dog’, which meant I was yearning for life outside. So when I came here, getting a dog was one of the first things I did, and she’s made a very pleasant difference to life too.