

Chairmen of the BBC

Lord Gainford

Lord Gainford of Headlam, Joseph Albert Pease, 1860-1943

Gainford worked in the family coal and iron business before entering Parliament as a Liberal. He served in Lloyd George's Government as Postmaster-General. After the British Broadcasting Corporation was formed he continued as Vice-Chairman, and then left for the Federation of British Industries.

Earl of Clarendon

George Herbert Hyde Villiers, Sixth Earl of Clarendon, 1877-1955

Chairman 1927-30

Clarendon was the first chairman of British Broadcasting Corporation. His political career included serving as chief Conservative whip in Lords. Named 'Mussolini' by some newspapers, he clashed with John Reith (who referred to him as 'Silly Bertie' in his diaries). Each felt their position to be the senior. He left BBC to become Governor-General of South Africa.

Rt Hon JH Whitley

Rt Hon. John Henry Whitley, 1866-1935

Chairman 1930-1935

Whitley entered the family cotton business, became an MP and was later Speaker of the House of Commons. John Reith liked him and together they established the differing rights and duties of the Chairman and Board of Governors (later known as the Whitley Document). He felt the BBC should appear unified to the outside world and never issued separate statements on behalf of the Board of Governors. He died in office.

Viscount Bridgeman

Lord Bridgeman of Leigh, 1st Viscount, William Clive Bridgeman, 1864-1935

Chairman 1935

Bridgeman was a career Conservative politician who was a BBC Governor from 1933. He died the year he was appointed.

RC Norman

Ronald Collet Norman, 1873-1963

Chairman 1935-1939

Norman worked in local politics, including the London County Council, between 1907 and 1922. He was brother to the Bank of England's Governor. He was thought to be an intelligent and knowledgeable Chairman and had a harmonious relationship with John Reith. When Reith resigned in 1938, Norman tactfully refused him a place on the Board of Governors and appointed his successor, FW Ogilvie. He went on to serve on many cultural organisations, notably the National Trust.

Sir Allan Powell

Sir George Allan Powell

Chairman 1939-1946

Powell was a lawyer who held many public offices. He admitted he knew nothing about radio but was well-connected and experienced in chairing boards and committees. He defended the BBC's independence during World War 2 while ensuring the Corporation supported the war effort. Between 1939 and 1941 the Board of Governors was reduced to himself and the Vice-Chair. Subsequently, he sacked Ogilvie and appointed his wartime successors: Cecil Graves and RW Foot and later William Haley.

Lord Inman

Lord Inman of Knaresborough, Philip Albert Inman, 1892-1979

Chairman 1947

Inman was connected to the medical profession and the Church and was director of various industrial firms. A member of the Labour Party, he resigned after 4 months to become Lord Privy Seal in the new Labour Government.

Lord Simon of Wythenshawe

Lord Simon of Wythenshawe, Sir Ernest Emil Darwin Simon, 1879-1960

Chairman 1947-1952

After working in the family engineering business Ernest Simon became a Liberal MP in 1923. He joined the Labour Party in 1946 and was a founder of *New Statesman* magazine. In 1947, the Labour Government gave him a peerage and appointed him BBC Chairman. He agreed with the Beveridge Committee recommendation that the Chairman and Governors should have more executive powers. He was the first Chairman to spend several days a week in Broadcasting House. A respected authority on post-war Britain's rebuilding, he always kept close connections with Manchester and his family business. He chaired Manchester City Council until 1957.

Sir Alexander Cadogan

Rt Hon. Sir Alexander George Montagu Cadogan, 1884-1968

Chairman 1952-1957

Cadogan had been a career diplomat. He had a close and easy relationship with Ian Jacob. He exercised his regulatory powers with care and established relations with the new Independent Television Authority. He was a director of the Suez canal company and a friend of the Prime Minister Anthony Eden. However, he ultimately defended the BBC over impartial reporting of the crisis. He did not hold public office after retiring in 1957.

Sir Arthur fforde

Sir Arthur Frederic Brownlow fforde 1900-1985

Chairman 1957-1964

A solicitor by profession, fforde became a civil servant in the Ministry of Supply. He helped establish under law the basis of Unit Trusts. Despite never being a teacher, he became Head Master of his old school Rugby. An erudite Chairman, he was gentle and unobtrusive. He was very different to his later Director-General Hugh Greene but was supportive. He retired on health grounds and went onto hold various city directorships. Vice-Chairman Sir James Duff (1898-1970) acted as temporary Chairman, having deputised for him on many occasions during his frequent ill-health.

Lord Normanbrook

Lord Normanbrook of Chelsea, Norman Craven Brook, 1902-1967

Chairman 1964-1967

Grammar-school educated Norman Brook became a civil servant in the Home Office, Cabinet Office and Treasury. In 1963 he was given a peerage and became BBC Chairman the following year. He cared about the role of Chairman and wrote and spoke about it in public. He was described as unflappable and had a friendly relationship with Hugh Greene. His death in office was much regretted. Vice-Chairman Robert Lusty (later Sir Robert, 1909-1991) took over until Lord Hill became Chairman.

Lord Hill

Lord Hill of Luton, Charles Hill, 1904-1989

Chairman 1967-1972

Hill was a medical doctor and became MP for Luton (switching from Labour to Conservative). He held many ministerial posts in the Commons and Lords, including Postmaster-General, when he conflicted with the BBC over reporting of the Suez crisis. As Chairman of the Independent Television Authority he was often hostile to the BBC. His appointment as BBC Chairman surprised the Governors and several resigned. Prime Minister Harold Wilson encouraged him to be active in editorial decisions. He had a difficult relationship with Hugh Greene and often communicated through the BBC Secretary Kenneth Lamb. Greene later described him as a "vulgarian". He had a quieter relationship with Charles Curran. He retired in 1972 and died in 1989.

Sir Michael Swann

Lord Swann of Coln St Denys, Sir Michael Meredith Swann, 1920-1990

Chairman 1973-1980

Swann was a scientist and one of the most popular BBC Chairmen. He was appointed by Conservative Prime Minister Edward Heath, who admired his strong leadership during student protests at Edinburgh University. By contrast with Lord Hill, he avoided programme-making decisions but he sometimes criticised BBC administration. He was gentle in manner, discreet and popular with both Ian Trethowan and Charles Curran. He steered the BBC through the Annan Committee, Licence Fee

negotiations and various political conflicts, especially about Northern Ireland. He returned to academia in 1980 and became a champion of educational and scientific issues in the House of Lords.

George Howard

Lord Howard of Henderskelfe, George Howard, 1920-1984

Chairman 1980-1983

A long-serving Governor, Howard was a surprise choice as Chairman. He was nicknamed "Gorgeous George" because he often dressed in caftans. He owned Castle Howard and chaired the County Landowners' Association but said he would have given up his castle to be BBC Chairman. He defended the BBC's impartiality and public service status, for example during the Falklands war. Ian Trethowan liked him and described him as supportive with an astonishingly wide-range of interests and knowledge. These went from art to engineering, valuable when programme content and new technology were crucial issues. He retired due to ill-health.

Stuart Young

Stuart Young, 1934-1986

Chairman 1983-1986

Brother of Cabinet minister Lord Young, Stuart Young was an accountant who founded his own firm. He later became director of many companies, including Tesco. When he became a Governor in 1981 he believed the BBC should be advertiser-funded, but changed his view, and successfully led the BBC argument for licence funding during the Peacock Committee. But relations between the Governors and management collapsed when Governors watched current affairs programme *Real Lives* before it was transmitted and wanted to change it. The documentary *Maggie's Militant Tendency* caused another serious rift between the BBC and Government. During both of these crises Young was ill, and he died in office. Vice-Chairman Lord Barnett (1923-) became acting chairman until the appointment of Marmaduke Hussey.

Marmaduke Hussey

Lord Hussey of North Bradley, Marmaduke Hussey, 1923-

Chairman 1986-1996

Hussey was the only Chairman to sit for two full terms. He was severely wounded during World War 2 and his leg was amputated as a prisoner-of-war. On his return he had a long career with Associated Newspapers but left to join Times Newspapers. When they introduced electronic typesetting he gave an ultimatum to the print unions which closed the newspapers for a year. He was connected to the Conservative Government (his brother-in-law William Waldegrave was a Cabinet Minister) but was refused a Knighthood in 1990. He admitted he knew nothing about broadcasting when he became Chairman. He has the distinction of having dismissed two Director-Generals - Alasdair Milne and Michael Checkland - and later fell out with John Birt over his management style. Relations deteriorated further when Hussey (whose wife was a Lady-in-Waiting to the Queen) was not told in advance about *Panorama's* controversial interview with Diana, Princess of Wales in 1995. He now sits as a cross-bencher in the House of Lords.

Christopher Bland

Sir Francis Christopher Buchan Bland, 1938-

Chairman 1996-2001

Bland competed in the 1960 Rome Olympics for the Irish Fencing Team. He left his Northern Ireland Army career to chair the Bow Group, then served on the board of many different companies including IBA and LWT. This gave him regulatory, broadcasting and commercial experience which helped his appointment as BBC Chairman in 1996. He was connected with the Conservative Party but had disagreements with both the Conservatives (over the appointment of Labour Party donor Greg Dyke as Director-General) and Labour (over the rescheduling of the *Nine O'Clock News*). He resigned in 2001 to become Chairman of BT. He has worked extensively with the NHS and was knighted in 1993.

Gavyn Davies

Gavyn Davies OBE, 1950-

Chairman 2001-4

An economist, Davies advised the Labour Government Policy Unit in the 1970s. He worked in the City, notably for Goldman Sachs, as a journalist and part-time academic before chairing the 1999 enquiry into BBC funding. He joined the Board of Governors as Vice-Chairman in 2001 and took over when Christopher Bland left. He resigned as Chairman after the Hutton Report.

Michael Grade

Michael Ian Grade CBE, 1943

Chairman 2004-6

Michael Grade began his career at the *Daily Mirror* in 1960, then entered his family theatrical agency, becoming joint Director in 1966. In 1973 he joined London Weekend Television as Head of Entertainment and Director of Programmes, then moved to the USA to become President of Embassy Television in 1981. He returned to the UK in 1984 to become Controller of BBC1, later becoming Director of Programmes, Television. In 1988 he became Chief Executive of Channel 4 where he spent nine years. Between 1997 and 1999 he was Chief Executive then Executive Chairman at First Leisure Corporation. Subsequently he held executive roles at Pinewood and Shepperton Studios, Hemscoff plc and the Camelot Group, operators of the National Lottery. His non-executive interests include Scottish Media Group, the National Film and Television School and Charlton Athletic Football Club.

Michael Lyons

Sir Michael Lyons 1950-

Chairman 2007-2011

Michael Lyons is Chairman of the English Cities Fund, a former Deputy Chairman and Acting Chairman of the Audit Commission (2003–2006) and was Professor of Public Policy at Birmingham University (2001–2006). He was knighted in 2000 for services to local government after serving as Chief Executive of three major local authorities: Birmingham, Nottinghamshire and Wolverhampton. Other roles have included Governor of the Royal Shakespeare Company, Chairman of the City of Birmingham Symphony Orchestra, non-executive director of Central Television Ltd and Chairman of the Regional Advisory Council for ITV. His early career was as an economist working in the public sector, following a period lecturing economics at Wallbrook College London and the University of Nottingham.

Christopher Patten

Lord Patten of Barnes 1944-

Chairman 2011-2014

He has had an extensive political career, as MP from 1979 to 1992, then holding various ministerial roles before becoming Secretary of State for the Environment in 1989 and Chairman of the Conservative Party in 1990, orchestrating the Conservatives' electoral victory in 1992. Lord Patten was appointed Governor of Hong Kong (1992-7), overseeing the return of Hong Kong to China. He then became one of the UK's two European Commissioners from 1999 to 2004; on leaving office in Brussels, he was made a Life Peer and took his seat in the House of Lords in January 2005. In addition to political positions, Lord Patten has been Chancellor of Oxford University since 2003.

Rona Fairhead

Rona Fairhead CBE 1961 –

Chairman 2014 -

Rona Fairhead has held a variety of senior positions in financial media and global businesses. She was Chairman and Chief Executive Officer of the Financial Times Group from 2006 – 2013, having previously been Group Finance Director of its parent company, Pearson plc. Prior to joining Pearson, she had senior executive roles at Bombardier Inc and ICI plc. Rona is currently on the Board of HSBC Holdings plc and PepsiCo Inc and is Non-Executive Chairman of HSBC Northern America Holdings Inc. She is also a UK Trade & Investment Business Ambassador, and in 2012 was awarded a CBE for services to industry.