

PROSPERO



LETTERS

We'd love to hear from you!

One of the things that makes *Prospero* special is reading your experiences, memories and stories from your time with the BBC.

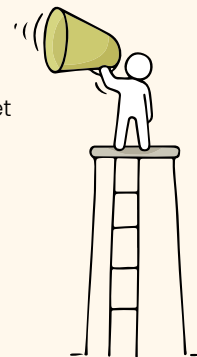
Do you have a favourite memory from your working days? Perhaps you remember a colleague, a particular programme or project, an unusual day at work or a moment that has stayed with you over the years. We'd also love to hear about the clubs, groups and activities you enjoy now, or anything else you think your fellow readers might find interesting.

Your story doesn't have to be long or polished, just get in touch and tell us what you'd like to share. You can send us a letter, a few memories or even a photograph from your BBC days.

If you'd like to see your story in a future issue of *Prospero*, please get in touch.

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

Email: prospero@bbc.co.uk



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 published twice a year, in April and October.

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Prospero October 2026

The next printed issue of *Prospero* will appear in April 2027. The copy deadline is 26 February 2027.



1986: the year *Top Gear* nearly killed rallying on television

Tom Ross tells the story of how, newly appointed to run the original format of *Top Gear*, he nearly presided over a major broadcasting disaster.

By an accident of history, and thanks to the determination of a Pebble Mill-based producer called Brian Strachan, it was *Top Gear* which had (since 1984) produced coverage of the Lombard RAC Rally – the final round of the annual World Rally Championship.

With a fraction of the resources available to their sports colleagues and a minuscule budget, *Top Gear* produced early and late-evening roundups on BBC2, known as *Rally Report*, with a longer compilation at the end of the week. Staff were begged and borrowed from other programmes, while Pebble Mill and its resources staff pulled out all the stops to get the complex live programmes on air from wherever the rally stages were being held.

In the summer of 1986, I took over as Executive Producer of *Top Gear* and inherited the planning for the autumn series, the annual coverage of the British Motor Show and *Rally Report* that November.



Brian Strachan had everything totally in hand. At the first planning meeting in Pebble Mill, I learned of the ambitious plans: a multi-camera live stage from Badminton, an evening highlights programme that night and then a move each day with the Rally HQ to Harrogate, Ingliston (near Edinburgh) and finally the Albert Dock in Liverpool. There was also to be extended early-evening live coverage of the Ingliston stage on BBC2.

In the days before small electronic cameras and satellite links, this was no mean logistical feat. Crews had to be sent to inaccessible forest stages early in the morning, tapes had to be physically transported back to wherever Rally HQ was that night, and then the whole operation had to be packed up and moved to the next location.

It was gruelling and often physically uncomfortable, but, to my amazement, cameramen, sound recordists and numerous others asked to work on the show year after year. It was certainly different from working on a costume drama or *Gardeners' World*!

Top Gear presenter William Woollard would present the programmes, with Barrie Gill and a new man, Tony Mason, providing commentary on the live stages.

The plans were ambitious, if not foolhardy. Coverage from the early-morning stages in Kielder Forest in Northumberland, for example, relied on tapes hitching a ride on an RAC helicopter to Edinburgh. And then, of course, there was the dreadful November weather...

Sadly, before seeing any of his plans realised, Brian Strachan died suddenly that summer.

The BBC Pebble Mill team had a very good relationship with the then RAC Motor Sports Association and, in particular, with Malcolm Neill, the down-to-earth Ulsterman responsible to the FIA: the international body overseeing rallying. His word was law and, while he was



The *Top Gear* team in 1986: Tom Ross, Jon Bentley, Sue Baker, Chris Goffey, William Woollard and Ken Page.



Tony Mason – 'Mr Rallying'.



William Woollard in 1986.

prepared to help broadcasters as much as he could, there were limits to what he would do. That relationship was about to be stretched to the very limit.

Top Gear presenter William Woollard would present the programmes, with Barrie Gill and a new man, Tony Mason, providing commentary on the live stages. John Burkill, normally a VT editor at Pebble Mill and a total rally enthusiast, was borrowed to produce packages and supervise the editing, while Tony Rayner would produce the highlights programme.

It started well enough. John G Smith directed the live stage at Badminton and the first evening highlights programme, and we all packed up and moved the 200-odd miles to Harrogate.

At this point, the wheels came off the rally car!

There were considerable difficulties putting the kit back together at Harrogate. Some crews had experienced problems accessing the various stages and, to cap it all, there was a major 'professional disagreement' among the production staff about who was responsible for what.

The plain fact was that there was no one replacing Brian Strachan in the overall co-ordination role. In the end, I had to step into the director's chair to get the live shows on air, while John Burkill became producer of most of the output.

It was to get much, much worse.

At Ingliston, BBC Scotland was to provide the main Outside Broadcast Unit. The weather had been atrocious, with high winds and torrential rain disrupting traffic across central and southern Scotland. When I arrived, the Pebble Mill crew were already assembling their kit. The Engineering Manager, Bob Hood, a former colleague from my days in Glasgow, asked if I was really aware of what had been planned...

There were two 'slight' problems. The scanner and its cabled cameras were on the opposite side of the course from the parc fermé, where the drivers and cars were based. Secondly, the stage was not lit, so all viewers

would see for half an hour was headlights through torrential rain.

To cap it all, the helicopter in Kielder had been unable to fly because of the rain, and crews were still battling to get the tapes to us through gridlocked Edinburgh streets. We might just have enough material for the late-night programme, but the live stage and early-evening highlights faced utter disaster.

Tony Mason and some of the bedraggled crews who arrived thinking that their early-morning start meant they had done their work for the day were dragged into crossing the stage to interview the drivers. It was a baptism of fire – and one that would earn Tony a place as BBC *Top Gear*'s 'Mr Rallying' in the years to come!

I had to find a friendly voice in London Presentation who would agree to run the equivalent of wall-to-wall *Tom and Jerry* to fill the live coverage slot we could no longer fill because of the bad weather. 'How much can you provide?' I was asked.

I finally had to strong-arm the formidable Malcolm Neill into delaying the start of an international rally stage because of the weather. I threw myself on the mercy of a bewildered Malcolm and told him that, if we went on air with the little footage we had, rallying would be dead on the BBC for a generation. No pressure there, then!

In the end, all the viewers saw was William Woollard in a blackened glass box, signing off after a shortened programme and explaining that the stage had not yet started. In the background, Juha Kankunen was just setting off into the gloom. Malcolm could hold the cars no longer.

The fiasco was a widely known secret, but no one in the sport or the motoring press ever spoke about how the BBC had contrived to delay the start of an international rally stage because it had got things so badly wrong. The rest of the rally was wet but uneventful, and rallying stayed on the BBC for the next 12 years.

All those who worked on the 1986 Lombard RAC Rally – too numerous to mention individually – will never forget it. I certainly won't!

A very 'English by Radio' reunion

A group of us who worked for *English by Radio* (ExR) during the analogue age thought it would be a good idea to organise an annual meeting to keep in touch. As we had to agree on details such as when and where to meet, we took into consideration facts usefully recorded in the ExR archives, which are more than 80 years old!

While the Second World War was in full swing, the BBC used a Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) 'Grant in Aid' to teach English as a foreign language to people in European countries under occupation. Soon, two five-minute programmes a day were being put together under the watchful eye of passionate linguist, Vernon Duckworth Barker.

The first BBC ExR transmission was broadcast on 4 July 1943 from Bush House. The original theme tune was a crackly, upbeat classical violin melody, followed by the Greenwich Time Signal pips. At that time, the programmes were broadcast at uncomfortably early hours and confined to shortwave.

We easily agreed on 4 July for our meet-up, but deciding on a place for our get-together needed a little more thought, as BBC Bush House had been relocated in 2012 to the new Broadcasting House.



eccentric of the golden era of broadcasting, famously driving a Rolls-Royce to work yet always showing immense kindness, guidance and patience to young journalists and crew members just starting out.

I miss him deeply, and I'm trying to piece together a fuller picture of his life, his incredible character and his professional legacy.

If any retired camera operators, sound recordists, directors or journalists remember working with Christopher 'Python' Marlow, or have any behind-the-scenes stories, memories or old crew photos they would be willing to share, I would be profoundly grateful to hear from them. You are welcome to contact me directly via email at: chris.marlow83@gmail.com

Chris Marlow Jr

Since its beginnings, the creative hub of ExR had been in Queen's House, a historic building with two frontages. The entrance at 28 Kingsway is a stone's throw from Bush House, while the entrance at 55-56 Lincoln's Inn Fields leads to the historic garden square, with its artworks and listed memorials, surrounded by notable premises such as Sir John Soane's Museum, the Royal College of Surgeons and the Old Curiosity Shop. Knowing that security is extremely tight at the new Broadcasting House, we decided to meet in Lincoln's Inn Fields.

Therefore, on 4 July 2026, 83 years after the first ExR transmission, those of us who braved the heat and public transport problems met at Pear Tree Café. We raised a glass, had coffee and nibbles, and shared memories of our years working together as a creative team who adapted to the rapid changes in technology and broadcasting, paving the way for today's online *Learning English*.

At the end of our annual reunion, we decided to do it all again on the same date next year, although we'll keep in touch and consult on the location nearer the time!

Rodica Mager



An Archers anniversary to remember

This year has seen plenty of celebrations of *The Archers'* 75th anniversary, but it has also reminded former BBC Radio Norfolk presenter and producer, and lifelong *Archers* addict, Tony Mallion, of his involvement in the programme's 25th anniversary.

In 1975, I was a journalist on a local weekly newspaper, and it has only dawned on me this year that I was the only 'outsider' at the recording of the 25th anniversary episode of *The Archers* at Pebble Mill. The big storyline was the birth and naming of John Archer.

The BBC was keen to generate plenty of publicity for the 25th anniversary, with celebrations including a personal history of the programme, *Forever Ambridge*, written by Norman Painting. As well as playing the leading role of Phil Archer, Norman wrote more than 1,000 scripts under the name of Bruno Milna.

I was Chief Reporter of the *Great Yarmouth Mercury* at the time and decided that, if I could arrange it, spending a little time with the Archers at Pebble Mill would make a good feature and provide some filler for the paper over Christmas, when it was often difficult to find stories. My editor challenged the lack of a local connection, but my response was that plenty of our readers were listeners of *The Archers*, and I would do it in my own time.

BBC publicity welcomed the interest and offered to let me sit in for part of the November recording session. Little did I realise that this was the big 25th anniversary episode, due to be broadcast on New Year's Day 1976. It's only now, 50 years later, that I've realised what a privilege I was given to be there on this momentous occasion!

The big anniversary event was the birth, in the early hours, of Pat and Tony Archer's first child. His name, John Daniel, was announced, much to the delight of his grandfather, Dan.

I was taken into the control room to sit, in awe, next to Tony Shryane, the long-serving producer, who spent 28 years with *The Archers*. He was also responsible for two of my other favourite radio shows, the quizzes *My Word!* and *My Music*, both featuring Frank Muir and Denis Norden.

The 25th anniversary episode opened with the Bull's landlord and landlady, Sid and Polly Perks (played by Alan Devereux and Hilary Newcombe), in bed, hearing the church bells ringing in the New Year. They cosied up on a sofa in the studio to create the right atmosphere.

The big anniversary event was the birth, in the early hours, of Pat and Tony Archer's first child. His name, John Daniel, was announced, much to the delight of his grandfather, Dan. Naturally, like so many other listeners, I was deeply upset more than 20 years later when John died in a tragic tractor accident – all the more so because I had actually been there at his 'birth'!

In the control room behind us, the assistant responsible for the recorded sound effects was at work. After the episode's recording, he showed me how the system operated, using a tape of Dan Archer's car. I'm no great expert on car

engines, but for some reason I did recognise the distinctive sound of an Austin A60 when I heard one. I casually remarked that Dan had been driving that same car for years, which was true.

I thought no more about it until, some months later, there was a whole storyline about the consequences of Dan selling his car to his grandson Tony! Was it just coincidence, or did I inadvertently create an *Archers* storyline?

Norman wasn't involved in the New Year episode, so I didn't meet him at the time. However, it turned out that he and I had an unusual link...

After the recording, I was taken to the Pebble Mill restaurant, where I had the pleasure of eating with 'me old pal, me old beauty' Walter Gabriel (Chris Gittins) and Dan Archer himself, then played by Edgar Harrison, who, for my money, was the best of the actors in the role. I also met some other members of the cast, who kindly kept my copy of Norman Painting's book and sent it back when everyone, including Norman, had signed it. I treasure it in my *Archers* book collection.

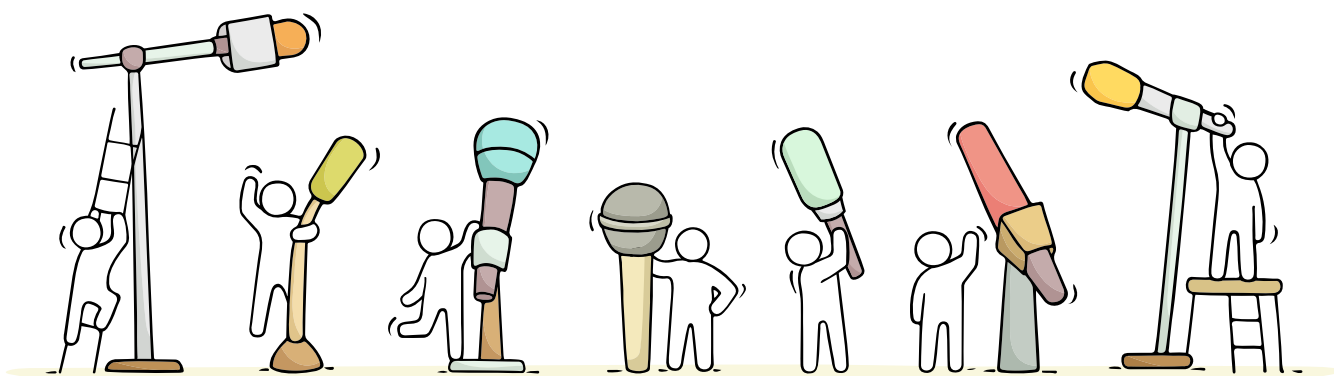
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My grandfather, Bertie Beavers, was the coxswain of the Gorleston Lifeboat for four years, from 1948 to 1952. He died in the late 1970s, but he often told me stories about his lifeboat days, including one about taking a BBC producer and team out to Scroby Sands, off Great Yarmouth, to view the seal colony.

Twenty-five years later, in the year 2000, when I was a senior producer and presenter at BBC Radio Norfolk, we were given the chance to interview anyone we had always wanted to meet as part of the celebrations marking the station's 20th anniversary. Top of my list was Norman Painting, who was still playing Phil Archer and holding a world record for his time in a radio drama.

To my surprise, Norman began the interview by saying he knew our part of Norfolk because, before *The Archers*, he had been a producer with BBC Schools and had been taken out to Scroby Sands on the Gorleston lifeboat to make a programme.

'And it was my grandfather who took you,' I told him, with some pride!



Peter Dorling, journalist and Head of Television News Training Park



Peter Dorling devoted more than 35 years to the BBC, building a distinguished career in radio and television journalism defined by his belief in fair, accurate and impartial reporting.

From helping launch *The World at One* to producing, directing, reporting and presenting BBC Television News, journalism was not simply his profession but his passion. Away from broadcasting, his greatest joy was his long and happy marriage to Isobel, his wife of more than 50 years, and the family life they shared.

Born in 1934, Peter grew up in Woodford Green, Essex, and experienced evacuation during the Second World War. A gifted musician, he remained devoted to church music throughout his life, singing in choirs and playing the organ. After leaving Chigwell School, he completed National Service with the Royal Corps of Signals, where his fascination with radio technology deepened.

That fascination had begun during childhood illnesses that left him confined to bed listening to the BBC. Joining the Corporation seemed an ambitious dream, but in 1956, after three rigorous interviews, he began his career as a Studio Manager in BBC Radio.

His ten years in radio cemented his love of journalism. He helped devise and produce the pioneering news programme *The World at One* and was one of its first reporters when it launched in 1965. In 1969 he moved to BBC Television News, where he worked as a producer, director, interviewer, presenter and newsreader, covering many of the major political and social events of the post-war era.

During the 1980s and into the early 1990s, Peter headed BBC Television News Training, a role he was immensely proud of. He took great pleasure in helping to develop the next generation of journalists. Long after he had retired, he would see a familiar reporter on the news and, with a twinkle in his eye, proudly declare, 'I taught them everything they know!' Those who knew him understood the affection and pride behind the remark.

After retiring from the BBC in 1992, Peter advised television news in Singapore and became a popular lecturer aboard Cunard ships, delivering around 200 talks on the history of the BBC.

Peter died aged 92 with his daughters, Tamsin and Karen, at his side. He will be remembered for his dedication to journalism, his affection for the BBC, his long and happy marriage to Isobel, and the warmth, curiosity and kindness with which he lived his life.

Karen Mason

Brian Murray, picture editor with two wristwatches



An Old Trafford-born Mancunian, Brian Murray (04.05.1942 – 17.07.2026) joined the BBC TV News as a trainee film editor at Alexandra Palace back when news film was physically cut and compiled under brutal, zero-margin-for-error deadlines.

He progressed quickly to electronic tape editing, eventually graduating to Chief Picture Editor and travelling the globe to cover world news, royal events and international cricket.

In my younger years, a wristwatch was the ultimate status symbol – long before mobile phones took over. So when Brian arrived in Bombay for the 1981 cricket tour, I was stunned to see a watch on both of his wrists. My initial thought? What a show-off. Watching him edit was like seeing a frantic dance, his arms darting back and forth as he checked each watch. He later explained that to hit tight UK News deadlines for sending tapes to TVC London, he needed both local and home times at a glance – left wrist for London, right wrist for India. It made practical sense, though he remains the only person I've ever seen pull off double-wristing.

Working alongside Brian across the world, I grew very fond of him. He was a big, tall man – and surprisingly handsome, even when sporting shorts on assignment! He insisted on proper, full portions at mealtimes, which were never truly complete without his beloved pudding.

Brian was a wonderful colleague and a joy to socialise with. His early life trademarks were his Groucho Marx-style cigar smoking, and a short burst of laughter at whatever absurdity the location, people or nature threw at us next. I was lucky to celebrate his 40th birthday with him in Montevideo during the Falklands War, and decades later, to toast his 80th at our News Curry retirement gathering.

He was a good man, a fine friend and a legend of our industry. Rest in peace, Brian. I will always remember you.

Bob Prabhu

BBC Club



BBC Club Lottery

Since it began in 1993, the BBC Club Lottery has had more than 130 £10,000 winners and over 400 £1,000 winners, giving away more than £2 million in prizes. Our July £10,000 jackpot winner was retired BBC Club member Marion W. She was debating whether to buy a new sofa or a stairlift – she's now had the stairlift installed and the sofa is on order! Why not give yourself the chance to join Marion in the £10,000 winner's club? Email bbc.club@bbc.co.uk to find out how.

Competitions and offers

BBC Club EXTRA gives members access to a wide range of offers, including discounts on jewellery, flowers, food hampers, clothing, experiences and attractions. Members can also enter free monthly competitions, with recent prizes including luxury hampers, jewellery, chocolates and *BBC Proms* tickets. Visit bbcclub.com/clubs/extra/competitions for prizes and details of how to enter.

Currently, we have two unused vintage BBC Club Tennis polo shirts to give away – one medium and one large. This competition is open to all readers, whether you're a BBC Club member or not. Simply email bbc.club@bbc.co.uk stating which size you would like to be in with a chance of winning. Entries close on 30 November 2026.

Prospero Society

The committee continues to organise a varied programme of visits, from amazing and unusual places to well-known favourites and theatre trips. Visit bbcclub.com/clubs/connect/prospero for more information. BBC Club members with an email address can receive the newsletter by email, but postal copies are available to Prospero Society members.

Ariel Rambling Club

Join the Ariel Rambling Club for monthly weekend rambles, usually circular routes of six to 12 miles in the Home Counties. Lunch is at a local pub, or you can bring your own. All abilities are welcome, and friends are encouraged to join too. Visit bbcclub.com/clubs/connect/rambling or email arielramblers@gmail.com for more information.

Ariel Wine and Beer Society

The Ariel Wine and Beer Society meets regularly to enjoy, discuss and learn about wine, beer and related topics. Informal themed tastings cover everything from countries and regions to grapes and styles, with some led by members and others by speakers from the trade. No expertise is required and beginners are very welcome! Meetings are usually held on the second Wednesday evening of each month in a BBC London building. Visit bbcclub.com/clubs/connect/wine-beer or email Robin at bobbin163@gmail.com to find out more.

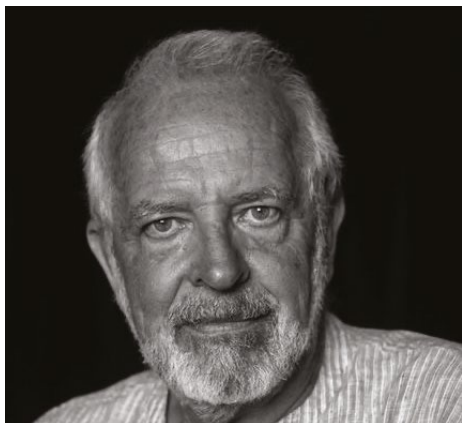


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Graham Battye, producer and music-lover



My husband, **Graham Battye**, died suddenly of heart failure on 27 February 2026. We had just celebrated our 40th wedding anniversary and, during our celebratory lunch, I asked Graham, somewhat whimsically — and possibly after two or three flutes of champagne — ‘What was the happiest day of your life?’

Immediately, without hesitation, he replied, ‘When I received a letter from the BBC saying I had been accepted as a trainee studio manager at Broadcasting House.’

Was I surprised? Not really. Even after taking early retirement and moving to France, he continued to listen to Radio 3 and Radio 4, and hardly ever missed the ***News at One*** on Radio 4.

Graham was born in Leeds and educated at Ashville College in Harrogate, followed by Manchester University, where he studied drama.

After establishing himself in London, he worked at Broadcasting House and for the World Service at Bush House. He moved to BBC Radio Leeds in the mid-1970s as an assistant producer. In the early 1980s, he moved to BBC Radio Derby as a producer responsible for music and arts. He embraced the whole scene, producing and recording country, folk, jazz and classical music.

From Derby, Graham moved to Pebble Mill, coordinating Music Live 2000 for the Midlands and ***The John Tayton Show***.

When we both took early retirement and moved to the medieval village of Montréal in Burgundy, we inherited a large renovated barn, which perfectly suited Graham’s baby grand piano. Then, more by serendipity, pianists and musicians found us and offered to give recitals, with a hat at the door. As it was usually full, we decided, with the help of our French friends, to start a charity to aid local children in their music education and enjoyment of music.

We called the charity Le Serinette, after the River Serein that runs through our village, and with reference to the serinette, an 18th-century small barrel organ. Over 15 years, Graham established a highly respected annual musical programme covering all types of music, often with the musician giving a special talk for the children.

I am having inscribed on a small memorial stone, to be placed in the grounds of our beautiful collegiate

church where Graham’s funeral took place: ‘If music be the food of love, play on.’ — Shakespeare, *Twelfth Night*.

But perhaps I should also add: ‘Inform, educate and entertain,’ because the BBC — and its survival — was of paramount importance to Graham. Let us hope it continues to ‘play on’.

Christine Battye

Tim Smith, Studio Manager



Tim Smith was an inspirational SM colleague at Bush House. He combined exceptional technical skills with sensitivity and respect for everyone he worked with, and he had a quirky sense of humour too.

Tim’s first jobs were as assistant projectionist at the Classic Cinema, Croydon, and at the Odeon, Penge. He then joined the BBC as a Studio Manager in 1965 at the age of 20, initially working at Broadcasting House but then transferring to Bush House because it was ‘more fun’. He enjoyed the varied, challenging and collaborative work there, particularly when he had opportunities to be creative with sound or mixing effects.

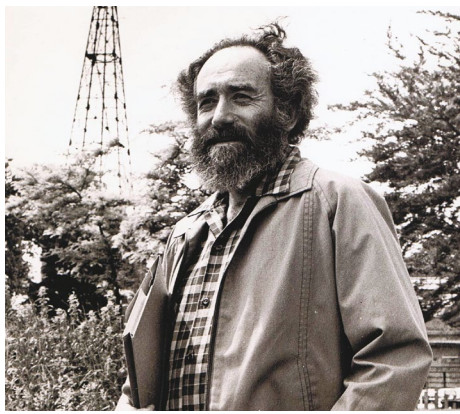
As a fan of ***The Goon Show***, he assisted on the research for a colleague’s book about the show. This included listening carefully to many episodes (which made his already eccentric sense of humour even more so) and checking through the manuscripts of this and later books, proving to be an excellent sub-editor.

He left the BBC in the early 1980s and for a time was a freelance technical journalist, covering recording studios and other areas for tech magazines. On more than one occasion, an interviewee would contact him to thank him for listening and understanding and then writing a clearer version of what he had wanted to say. That ability to connect with people was the basis of Tim’s success in his later work, driving a taxi in Malvern for some years.

In 2022, Tim injured his back. He spent several periods in hospital and his mobility was compromised. There were occasional temporary improvements, but his condition gradually worsened and he became unable to walk. Tim went into a nursing home in 2025 and died peacefully on 24 May 2026.

Former SM colleagues and friends, Roger Wilmut and Jennifer Davies

David Seligman, Executive Producer for the Social Sciences, BBC/ Open University Productions



David Seligman (1932–2026) led a multi-faceted life, with his work at the BBC forming just part of a varied career, with periods as a musician, a teacher and an international consultant in distance education.

Born in South Africa, his bugling in the school band would lead to trumpeting in the police band in Jerusalem in the 1950s, to studying French horn in France and on to a career as a musician. After marrying Shirley in Johannesburg, David settled in London in 1960, where he became a teacher and lecturer.

He entered the BBC in 1970 and was posted as a producer and director in BBC–Open University productions at Alexandra Palace and later in Milton Keynes, creating programming in the humanities and social sciences.

In 1978, David was seconded to the OU Centre for International Co-operation and Services with special reference to the use of media in distance-learning systems.

In 1979, he was promoted to the position of Executive Producer for social-science programming. During this period, he developed an international arm aimed at providing consultative services and training in distance education (EDTV) which aided government and production centres in a multitude of countries.

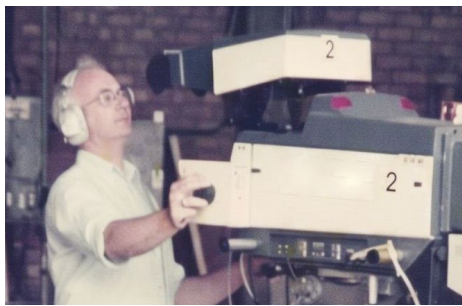
David resigned his position at the BBC in 1984 to take up a posting in New Delhi as Chief Technical Adviser through UNESCO/UNDP, for the establishment of the Central Institute of Educational Technology for the Government of India to educate some 200 million children in rural areas through the technological tools of distance education. He would go on to work in development projects for UNESCO, the Council of Europe, the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank and other international agencies in Asia, Africa, South America and Europe until 2003.

After moving from London to Jerusalem in 1998, David trained as a tour guide, and guided groups in Israel. He also became active in Rotary International and was three-time-appointed President of the historic Jerusalem club, where he promoted programmes aiding Israeli and Palestinian schoolchildren.

David was a warm family man, deeply proud of his three children, six grandchildren and two great-grandchildren. He will be greatly missed.

Jon, Gideon and Timna Seligman

David John Barnwell



David John Barnwell was born in October 1939 and began his life in Northfield, Birmingham. His family fondly remember the stories he told of barrage balloons, vapour trails from dogfights in the sky, and the excitement of opening unlabelled food cans during rationing, always hoping the tin might contain peaches.

David’s first job was running a local newsagent. However, he always had an ambition to work in the world of television, something that would later become an important part of his life.

During this time, David also followed in his father’s footsteps as a Freemason. Through hard work and commitment, he achieved the honour of becoming Master Mason of his lodge. His dedication, support and charitable contributions through the lodge continued throughout his life.

David settled in Hall Green with his wife, Patrisha, where they raised their three children: Julie, John and Andrew.

David went on to work for Lucas as an engineer before applying for a cleaner role at Pebble Mill, simply to be closer to his passion for television. It was not long before an opportunity arose for him to join the outside broadcasting team, where he managed the OB Stores and the equipment used for TV production at Pebble Mill.

These became some of my dad’s fondest memories, and they were stories he would share with anyone who would listen. Working with the riggers at Pebble Mill led to wonderful friendships that continued long after retirement. It was, by all accounts, a mischievous but very happy time in his working life.

One of my dad’s proudest moments at the BBC was developing his methodical paper-based records system for managing broadcasting equipment into a new computer system. The system became known as the Barnwell System, and he received a certificate in recognition of all his hard work.

I am still approached by neighbours, friends and sometimes complete strangers who remember his funny stories and the love he had for his work at the BBC.

It has been a pleasure to write this for your magazine. I would like to thank you all for the fond memories my dad shared with me and our family.

Andrew Barnwell

Alan Scales, Producer/Director



Alan Scales (1937–2026) started in Paris as a member of the NATO press team. It was in that city he met a beautiful Danish student, Alette Rye, who was to become his wife for 60 years.

Then to London, where the BBC appointed him to their film camera team. For years, Alan travelled the world for *Nationwide*, *Panorama*, *Newsnight* and *The Money Programme*, often filming in the most remote parts of the world.

As a BBC Producer/Director, Alan made major films and documentaries, including the multi-award-winning *The Brendan Voyage*, *A Prince for Our Time* – with an audience of more than 11 million – and *The Great Palace* series, where he persuaded the authorities to permit cameras inside Westminster for the first time.

But Alan’s ambitions took him much further, and in the late Eighties he left the BBC, lured by the independent production company Imagicians, which he ultimately ran for more than 40 years. During that time, he produced more than 50 documentaries on the lives of different members of the Royal Family and the age they were living in – programmes that were sold throughout the world.

Wherever Alan worked, he was a much-loved and admired man. Sir Richard Stilgoe recalls: ‘One of the nicest men I or anyone knew, who guided a new and ignorant reporter through his first NW film.’

Ron Neil, former CEO of BBC Production, added: ‘Alan was an outstanding production craftsman. He combined the rare joint skills of capturing memorable images with fine story telling. And he was never happier than when he was mentoring the upcoming younger generation and passing on the many skills of his trade achieved during a lifetime in television. Above all, he was a modest, self-effacing delightful gentleman whom everyone cherished having as a friend.’

Alan Scales – a man who spent so much of his life looking through the viewfinder to bring television programmes to many millions of viewers worldwide, and then in his later years that camera was always recording images of his friends and family: his beloved wife Alette, children Nina, Christopher and Lucia, and his six much-adored grandchildren, all of whom, along with his many many friends, now miss this gentle giant and much-loved gentleman.

Ronald Neil

Oliver Scott, World Service news presenter



A friend to many at LBH and Bush House, **Oliver Edmund Allardice Scott** died in hospital on 3 June 2026. He was 81.

In the late 1970s he was recruited to Radio 4’s *Financial World Tonight* (FWT) by editor Vincent Duggleby, who was adept at spotting and bringing on new talent, even if they had little knowledge of broadcasting.

In those days there were still echoes of the old upper, middle and lower class system in the way Bush House worked. Given his guardsman’s height, educational background (French and German at Oxford) and ‘toff’ sounding accent, you might have expected Ollie to live up to his ‘officer class’ status. The complete opposite was the case. In the first part of the day, he would persuade City grandees and politicians to come to the microphone; later he would readily join the SMs, and even Control Room Technical Operators, for ‘refreshments’ in the Hat and Stick or the Yorkshire Grey.

After graduating to present *FWT*, Ollie moved as a reporter to *The World Tonight* and also did shifts on *Newsbeat*. Few had the breadth to combine the two. While on-the-day, tightly edited *Newsbeat* items were never much longer than 1’30, the R4 sequence could accommodate tailor-made packages well over 10 minutes in length. I know he was particularly proud of a series of reports during the miners’ strike in 1984. Despatched to South Yorkshire, he was able to charm a group of NUM diehards and stayed with their families, no mean feat given their fierce animosity to London-based correspondents.

Not long after this, Ollie set up a company, along with his SM friend Chris Cox, to make audio programmes for City institutions. Parallel to this, he began presenting editions of *Newshour* at Bush House, where he was to remain for the rest of his career.

His professionalism on air is remembered still by many of those he worked with. Little has found its way online, apart from a phone-in he did with Mrs Thatcher a few months before her downfall in 1990. Listening back, it’s refreshing to hear that he lets Thatcher answer the questions in detail without interruption and resists any temptation to insert his own opinions into the exchanges between her and the listeners.

In 2005, as new presenters were brought in, Oliver was suddenly ‘let go’. A little later he wrote: ‘I’m no longer with the BBC and except in terms of personal friendships don’t have anything to do with it any more. They showed me the door when I was 60. But I was also falling out of fashion by then. I’m not bitter. I did it for 25 years, which is long enough for anyone. And when I left, I was the best-known voice in the entire history of the BBC World Service, that’s as measured by time on air. And what other plausible yardstick is there?’

Howard Benson

Jeff Bottom, Network Radio

It was with great sadness that I learned of the unexpected death of **Jeff Bottom** at the beginning of 2026, aged about 80.

Jeff had an interesting career, of which I know only part, and some of my memories of the tales he told may be a little inaccurate. Others will have their own recollections.

Blessed with a forensically logical brain, Jeff was not always easy for those who had not fully thought through their position. However, I always found him a great manager, from whom I learned a lot, and I shall miss our occasional rambling chats where we’d put the world to rights.

Jeff joined the BBC around 1961, becoming a Technical Operator in London Control Room (LCR). He opened the launch of Radio 1 in 1967 with ‘Flowers in the Rain’, being chosen because he was seen as a better fit than his more experienced (and older) colleagues.

Later, Jeff became the acting Technical Operations Manager for Network Radio.

Jeff was assigned to SCPD Radio Studio Section to help with a project and subsequently stayed. This was when I first met him.

Around 1984, Jeff transferred to SCPD Radio Broadcast Systems Section A, taking over project team refurbishing LCR routing and switching systems.

With the dissolution of SCPD, Jeff moved to Resource and Developments (RD&ER) within Network Radio, leading the team responsible for projects in Network Radio systems.

Throughout this time, Jeff also headed the team responsible for DF developments.

Jeff retired from the BBC prior to the reorganisation that set up BBC Technology in around 1995, and he went on to manage projects in the independent radio sector for several years.

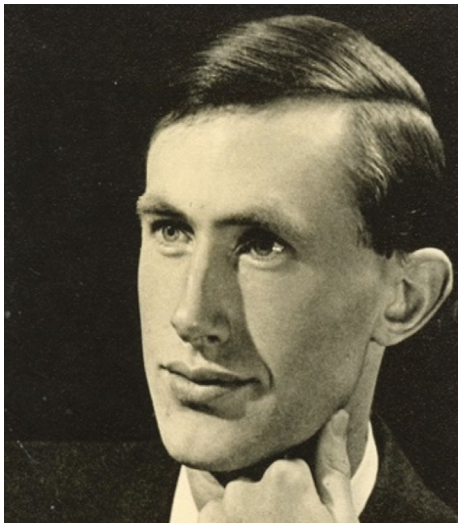
Jeff had many interests, some of which were radio ham, railways and diving (at one point, Jeff was the head of diving for BBC Network Radio). Gozo, Malta, was Jeff’s favourite diving location, and he became a regular visitor, even when he could no longer dive, returning several times a year up until a few months before his death.

Latterly Jeff contributed to the development of **BBCeng.info**, a website dedicated to capturing the achievements of BBC Engineering Division.

Jeff was a character and will be sadly missed by those who knew him.

Nick Bentley

Colin Dixon, Senior Sound Supervisor



Colin Dixon, who has died at the age of 90, was a Senior Sound Supervisor in the BBC Sound Department.

Colin was born in Watford and educated at a private school in Uxbridge. After his father’s death, his mother went back into teaching, remarried and Colin moved to Colchester. Always the academic, he went to Colchester Grammar School and excelled at sports: water polo, cross-country running and playing for the Rugby 1st XV. At 18, he served his National Service in the Essex regiment, where he became a driver.

After National Service, Colin joined the BBC as a boom operator. He then left to take up further education and rejoined the BBC in 1964.

Colin was passionate about sailing, cars and photography. In his early years at the BBC, he lived on a yacht on the Thames and would often go sailing.

He quickly moved up to Senior Sound Supervisor and worked on numerous programmes of the day at the BBC Studios London. These included *The Morecambe and Wise Show*, *Lulu*, *Shakespeare’s Henry I, IV and Richard II*, *Dee Time*, *Telford’s Change* in 1979 and the *Legend of King Arthur*. He was nominated for a Bafta for his work on *You never can tell*.

It was at a BBC party that Colin met Bridget. They married (honeymooning in Barbados), moved to Maidenhead and had three children: Chris, James and John.

Colin decided to leave the BBC and retrained as an IT consultant, teaching Microsoft programming.

Colin eventually retired to rural France in the early 2000s and spent many a happy year with his grandchildren and family.

After a steady decline to his health, Colin passed peacefully at a care home in Worthing. Colin will be remembered for his kindness and his undying love for Bridget and family.

John Dixon

Joyce Hawkins, Senior Costume Designer



Joyce Hawkins died peacefully on the morning of 3 May, in Stratford-upon-Avon, aged 95.

Joyce was a much-loved, legendary figure who will be sorely missed by her family, friends and former colleagues. She is survived by her husband, Robert and children, Stephen and Caroline, and their families.

Joyce was always interested in all things theatrical from an early childhood spent in wartime Whitton, Twickenham, inventing plays and performing to classmates at primary school. At school, her ambition was to become a professional actress; she enrolled at 17 in a student acting course at the amateur theatre, Questors, in Ealing, and at the Ealing School of Art. Both establishments enabled her to study dress and theatrical design, as well as Stanislavsky's stagecraft system and, after one year, to join the main acting group at Questors. This was all to prove useful in her future discussions and fittings with actors preparing for their television roles.

Still undecided on her career path, she applied to Bermans Costumiers in London, hoping to be employed as a trainee designer and was offered a job in the millinery department for £2 per week. She worked there until she was offered a larger wage at Samuel's Costumiers to assist in their ladies' department.

Joyce left Samuel's three years later to marry Robert Hawkins, who was to be Art Master at a school in Evesham, Worcestershire. It was a wrench for her to leave London and Questors, which had played such an important part in her life, but she made new friends and settled for a quieter life as a schoolmaster's wife... Until, one day, she chanced on an advert which was to change her life – the BBC in Birmingham needed a Wardrobe Supervisor.

Joyce started work for the BBC in 1958, ultimately becoming a Senior Costume Designer, heading a department of 30 at Pebble Mill by the time she retired in 1988.

She had a long and brilliant career and remained a BBC matriarch in retirement. Joyce knew everyone, kept in touch with everyone and brought everyone together.

During her career, she was a talented designer, understanding how garments were cut and constructed, as well as the importance of getting period details correct.

She was also an excellent manager and was highly respected as Head of Costume by other departments, Costume colleagues, costumiers in London and staff from other BBC regional centres in the UK.

Career highlights included a BAFTA nomination for *Vanity Fair* in 1987 and an RTS Logie Baird Medal for Services to Television.

James French, with contributions from Janice Rider, Vanessa Jackson and Caroline Hawkins

Magda Newman, BBC Monitoring, Caversham Park



My namesake and dear friend **Magda Newman** (30.06.1945–11.08.2026), Czech and Russian language monitor, always believed the best job at Monitoring was on the shop floor – combining linguistic skills with journalism.

A colleague remembers Magda as 'always efficient', 'enthusiastic', 'a good colleague from whom I learned a lot'; adding that after a shift working alongside her, 'I knew the team had given of its best.'

Born in Czechoslovakia as the Germans retreated at the end of WWII, Magda lived part of her childhood in her grandfather's pub, which had an interesting literary history: his friend, Jaroslav Hašek, wrote *The Good Soldier Schweik* there.

At school she loved sport and English. When the 1968 Soviet invasion happened, Magda left for Britain in the human wave that followed. She never forgot the image of Russian tanks on the streets of Prague.

Magda enrolled for Russian and International Relations at the University of Surrey. Later she married Roger, had two children and made her life here. But she never lost touch with her friends in Czechoslovakia throughout the oppressive communist regime.

In 1985, Magda joined BBC Monitoring at Caversham Park, where her language skills and interest in international affairs found a natural home. She loved the place.

Another colleague recounts how, in her first months at Caversham, she lived over an hour's drive away and often worked beyond midnight, so she would drive home with a blow-up male figure beside her to deter unwelcome intrusions. Typical Magda

– feisty, never intimidated, with that characteristic twinkle in her eye that everyone remembers.

She was eternally passionate and forthright about politics, particularly her opposition to Brexit, attending several marches. If only she had lived to see change.

In 2016, Magda was diagnosed with lymphoma. She bore it with dignity and good humour, living a full life, keeping fit and tending her beautiful garden.

She celebrated her 80th birthday with family and friends in her beloved hometown of Lipnice a year ago, before her illness took over. She died at the Sue Ryder hospice in Reading.

We will all miss this generous, caring friend.

Magda Ralphs

Ray Morgan, prop-man

I first met Ray when I was assigned to Jay Stinton's crew in 1983. It was not an accident that the crew was named A-1. Jay was not just a very adept supervisor; he had selected his three prop-men with enormous care.

Directors, producers and designers of some of the best productions, such as *Cymbeline* and *The Beggar's Opera*, would ask for this crew, as the quality of the staff was first class.

Ray had been the manager of a very well-known shoe shop in the West End before joining the BBC. It was hardly surprising that he should be running this establishment as he had such a way with words – he could entice the birds out of the trees, and he did, to buy almost anything!

Involved with many studio-based programmes as well as outside broadcasts, from 1964 he also got into filming. I remember he was very fond of working with a cameraman named Remi Adefarasin. I think one reason this worked so well was that Ray was a very good amateur camera person himself – he seemed to know instinctively just what was required of him.

He continued for some time as a freelance standby prop-man for several years after the disintegration and the very sad end to TVC.

Ray died on Saturday 11 July 2026 and is survived by his daughter Bindy.

Martin Carley



Contacts

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