

# ariel

HOW TO REPORT THE VIRUS THAT IS  
NEITHER 'PLAGUE NOR PUSHOVER'

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PHOTOGRAPH: MARK BASSETT

## Global call from tent city

◆ **GLOBAL NEWS** put up its tents at White City and put on a show that included live programmes and lively debates. Here Nadia Arshad, assistant editor for BBC World News, records a piece to mark the tenth anniversary of the World Service Trust. Report [Page 3](#)

## Top slicing is on the agenda

◆ **WE MAY HAVE REACHED** an historic moment in the history of the BBC with the government officially putting forward a plan to give around £130m a year of licence fee money to other broadcasters. Implications of Digital Britain [Pages 2, 10](#)

## Right place at the right time

◆ **MARCUS GEORGE** a Farsi speaker in World Service, went to Iran to find stories during the Iranian elections. Suddenly he found himself filing reports to many outlets as the post-election demos transformed the story [Page 3](#)

## Nice work if you can get it

◆ **IF IT'S NOT THE BEST JOB** in the world (see P15), Ryan Morrison's is surely a contender for best job in the BBC this summer. He'll be spending it beside the sea, painstakingly updating BBC Jersey's online beach guide [Page 8](#)



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**FERGUS WALSH** the BBC's medical correspondent on reporting swine flu and what will happen this autumn  
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**ANNA CASSAR** of Radio 4 explains the enduring appeal of messageboards  
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## NEED TO KNOW: THE CARTER REPORT

# September showdown looms over top slicing

◆ **DIGITAL BRITAIN** is the government's attempt to map the UK's communications needs for the next five years. From a BBC perspective the key issue involves a proposal to take around £130m from licence fee revenue each year and give it to independent regional news providers.

The report also recommends an expanded role for BBC Worldwide as a global business but with 'greater separation' from the BBC.

Digital Britain is largely the work of Stephen Carter, minister for communications, technology and broadcasting, who says it should be seen as 'resoundingly good news' for the BBC which the government is encouraging to be a 'bigger and broader' media player.

That, of course, sets to one side the licence fee question and here Michael Lyons positioned himself on a collision course. The chairman

of the BBC Trust in an email to everyone made it clear that the licence fee should not be regarded as a 'slush fund' and that his trustees would 'not sit quietly by' while the government raided the kitty.

Since then the temperature has cooled a little and the BBC has until early September to accept top slicing, suggest a workable alternative or try to force the government to back down. **Debate: Page 10**

#### ◆ WHERE'S THE MONEY COMING FROM?

Until 2013 the government wants to use any underspend (estimated to total £200m) from the digital help scheme for two purposes: to help achieve a universal broadband network and to fund three pilot news operations in Scotland, Wales and an English region by independently financed news consortia (IFNCs, see below). The pilots would establish how much funding might be required by new entrants into news provision. It is anticipated that they could work more cheaply than the traditional news gathering operation of ITV.

◆ **WHAT ABOUT LONG TERM?** After 2013, when licence fee levels will be renegotiated, £130m a year would continue to be drawn from the licence fee in what Carter calls 'a contained contestable element' (colloquially top slicing) and given to IFNCs. Carter says the BBC remains the gold standard for broadcasting and should not be weakened. The money he wants to go to regional news would be in addition to the BBC's licence fee settlement. The Conservatives are opposed to top slicing but threaten to reduce the licence fee.

#### ◆ WHO PROVIDES ALTERNATIVE NEWS?

The government will invite local groups to form IFNCs as news providers across the UK. These could include existing commercial tv companies, local newspapers, news agencies, other publishers. They would bid for a franchise in much the same way that the old regional television companies divided the territory – only this time successful bidders would receive licence fee funding. A licensing body would be responsible for allocating money and ensuring high editorial standards. (This is a role envisaged for the BBC Trust by Peter Bazalgette, see Page 10).

#### ◆ HAS LICENCE FEE MONEY PREVIOUSLY GONE ELSEWHERE?

Yes. The present licence fee includes a sum of around £150m a year to help pay for digital switchover, principally providing the elderly with set top boxes. The BBC agreed to this because the spending was allied to its mission to help drive digital uptake. Michael Lyons predicts that once government starts using licence fee money for other things it won't stop at tv news.

#### ◆ WHAT HAPPENS TO THE BBC'S PARTNERSHIP OFFER TO ITV?

In the event that top slicing happens, Mark Thompson has said the BBC would probably take its offer to share content and facilities with ITV 'off the table'. However, if non-licence fee funding is found to help either ITV or new IFNCs, the BBC would extend a helping hand.

#### ◆ TIMESCALE

The government wanted to announce top slicing as a done deal until Michael Lyons objected so forcefully. Instead, the proposal to take a 3.5 percent portion of licence fee – the 'contained contestable element' – has been opened for consultation until early September. Carter is convinced regional news needs support from somewhere (although Sky is unconvinced) and has ruled out direct treasury grants. The government says it is open to other suggestions but if nothing viable emerges by September the BBC will either have to accept or fight the plan.

#### ◆ WHAT'S THE PLAN FOR RADIO?

The government wants to move all national and large stations away from FM and AM to DAB, switching off analogue in 2015. The reasoning is that the nature of audio 'puts it at the forefront of device and platform convergence' with availability through the internet, mobiles, digital tv where it will need its own digital medium. With 9m DAB sets already in use in the UK, switchover is the chosen route. The government is asking the BBC to extend national DAB coverage so that it is at least comparable to FM radio; it wants manufacturers to come up with receivers that cost no more than £20 and it wants car makers to move to DAB no later than 2013. Although there has been criticism of the quality of the signal and environmentalists have complained that DAB uses four times the power of traditional radios, the BBC is supportive.

#### ◆ WHAT ELSE DOES CARTER SAY ABOUT THE BBC?

BBC Trust should encourage the BBC to exceed its 2012 targets for network production in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland. (The current plan is for 12 percent of network spending to go to the three nations by 2012 and 17 percent by 2016.)

## What's in it for Worldwide?

#### ◆ IN A WORD, EXPANSION.

Carter says it would be a missed opportunity to 'limit Worldwide to a narrow supporting role' to the BBC. He says the future route for the company is 'not to restrain it but to give it more freedom and more breadth'.

This will probably be music to the ears of John Smith, WW's

chief executive who has led a growth policy and who pulled off the acquisition of the Lonely Planet business.

Carter seems to say 'go forth and multiply' although at the same time he's calling for greater separation between Worldwide and its parent, even to the point of suggesting the

possible sale of part of the business.

How expansion could be achieved while protecting and promoting the BBC brand and at the same time avoiding undue market impact, he doesn't say. 'Please go away and have a look,' he says.

**Ariel View: Page 10**

## COMMENTARY

# The bigger threat to the BBC



**BILL THOMPSON**

#### ◆ THE DEBATE

about how we build Digital Britain reflects the im-

portance of connected computers in our lives, but I like to think that I've been living in my own digital Britain for a while. I've been online for 25 years, and remember the BBC's first internet connection as well as the first world wide web conference.

Today I am rarely offline and on an average evening there are seven or eight computers, phones and games consoles sharing my 20megabit home internet connection. I am a wired citizen of the network age, or something like that.

Like many early adopters I am having to work hard to keep up as new tools, services and technologies emerge and toys that were once cutting edge become commonplace, from email to social media.

This is also a problem for organisational early adopters like the BBC, since being a big web publishing success story is no guarantee of survival in the age of social networks, while success in streaming conventional television doesn't ensure relevance in an always-on, two-way world filled with connected devices.

This may become a serious issue for the BBC if Carter's proposals are implemented, because they include plans to provide next generation broadband to the whole of the UK, and once the whole country has 50 or 100mbps available the iPlayer is going to look very old-fashioned.

The plan for comprehensive next generation access was a welcome improvement on the widely criticised suggestion that 2mpbs universal broadband might suffice.

The fast network will be partly funded by £6 a year levy on ordinary phone lines. Since it will raise only a small portion of the billions such a network will cost, perhaps it should be seen not as a policy but as a nudge, as used by Cass Sunstein and Richard Thaler in their book on 'improving decisions about wealth and happiness'. It tells ISPs that fast broadband allows companies to work on the basis that marginal areas will be subsidised and so should be included in their plans, and offers those providing content and services due notice that high speed connectivity will be made available.

Today's levels of internet access in the UK have already forced a rethink of the need for a public service broadcaster and a re-evaluation of the BBC's role. Forget top slicing the licence fee: building a high speed network is a greater threat to the BBC's continued existence.

*Bill Thompson is an internet commentator*

# Ideas and issues to match inside the big tent

by Sally Hillier

Roll up, roll up, the circus has come to town. Not really, but the tents that were erected at the Media Village last week certainly provided an unusual venue for Global News Live, a one-day conference and showcase for the BBC's international operations.

The canvas surroundings went down well with some. 'My surname in Arabic means bedouin so I feel quite at home,' smiled Zeinab Badawi, who chaired one of the sessions inside the 'big top' aka Tent 1.

And was that a sandstorm outside? No, just exceptionally strong winds which, combined with the roar of traffic on Wood Lane and, at one point, a helicopter overhead, created a lot of noise. Hardly ideal conditions, particularly as some of the sessions, including *Business Daily* and *World Have Your Say*, were being recorded for broadcast.

It's also not ideal when an interviewee lets you down; even worse when the replacement fails to show as well.

'Some of you may be scratching your heads wondering where the bloody hell is Oliver Stone,' said presenter Stephen Sackur as a crowd

gathered expectantly for a recording of *HARDtalk*.

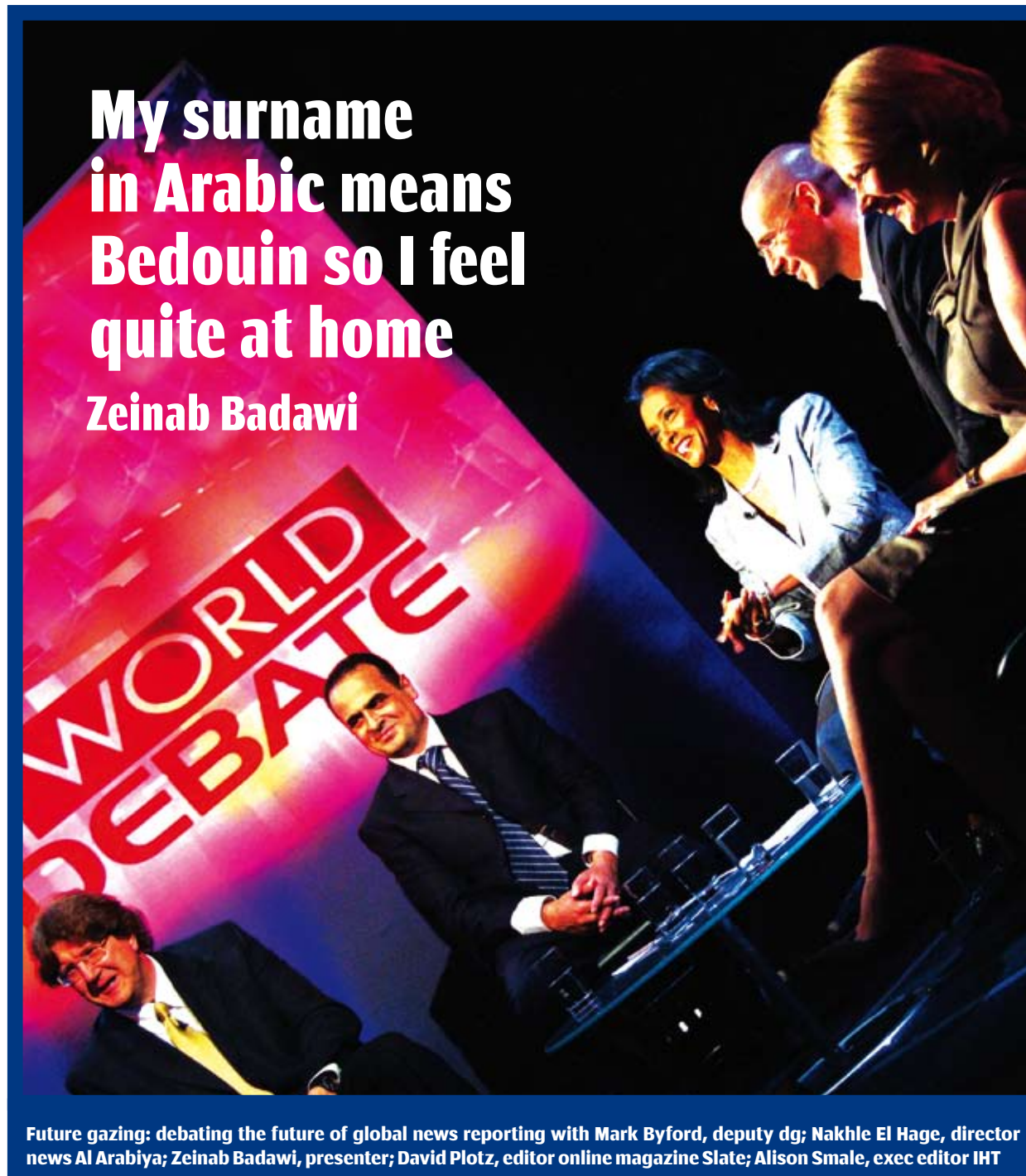
Stone couldn't make it due to filming commitments, Sackur explained, so architect Richard Rogers had been lined up instead. 'But he got into a punch-up with Prince Charles, so our third choice is Richard Eyre.'

The show must go on and all that, which nobody understands better than Eyre, former director of the National Theatre and a one-time BBC governor. He proved an engaging subject, describing how he had grown up in a culturally impoverished household, with no books or music, and how television had been his salvation. 'I saw drama and classical music, and it changed my life.'

A socialist, he was also candid about why he had accepted a knighthood: 'Vanity.'

Over in Tent 2 there were more illuminating moments when Persian TV highlighted some of its most popular output, and who should pop up on screen but Michael Palin and Jeremy Clarkson - dubbed into Farsi.

For those who didn't understand a word, there was almost the same problem during a recording of the World Service programme *The Forum*, with 'intellectual powerhouses' Clive



Future gazing: debating the future of global news reporting with Mark Byford, deputy dg; Nakhle El Hage, director news Al Arabiya; Zeinab Badawi, presenter; David Plotz, editor online magazine Slate; Alison Smale, exec editor IHT

James, Marcus du Sautoy, professor of maths at Oxford University, and the philosopher Slavoj Zizek. 'I don't know how I'm going to control them,' said Bridget Kendall introducing the panel, complete with du Sautoy's trumpet, which he proceeded to play.

But it was Zizek, whose books include *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, who proved the real handful, barely pausing for breath as he opined on communism, censorship, life in his native Slovenia, literature, cinema, and multiculturalism. It was hard to

keep up, and if that wasn't enough Sautoy couldn't resist throwing in a maths puzzle and asking delegates to solve it. Being clever BBC people, some of them did.

Big brains and big tents; it was that kind of day.

# Iran drama gave reporter unexpected role

It's back to the regular routine this week for senior broadcast journalist Marcus George whose name now has a certain familiar ring.

Normally based in the Bush House newsroom, where he writes stories and produces bulletins, he unexpectedly found himself playing a crucial role in Iran, joining John Simpson and Jon Leyne on one of the biggest and most challenging stories of the year.

A Farsi speaker, with a couple of reporting attachments under his belt, George was sent to Tehran initially to help with World Service coverage of the presidential election and to produce some lighter items about the place and its people. He left the UK on June 11 on a ten-day visa, which meant he was still in the country for the worst of the bloody confrontations between pro-government militia and supporters of opposition candidate Mir Hossein Mousavi.

More experienced colleagues, including Lyse Doucet, who had arrived in Iran some days earlier, had had to leave, their visas having expired. So George, whose interest in the Middle East inspired him to take a degree in Farsi at London's School of African and Oriental Studies,

and who was back in Iran for the first time since a study trip there 13 years ago, had, as he puts it, 'to get on with it'.

He reported for the World Service, 5 Live, the News Channel and BBC World News, and contributed blogs and updates for the website. 'It was his big moment, and he did a great job in difficult circumstances,' notes Jon Williams, world news editor.

George says: 'It was an extraordinary experience, pitched into something like that and asked to do live after live after live. I had great support from Jon Leyne



Marcus George: the right place at the right time

and Jackie Martens [producer in the Tehran bureau].

'It was useful for Jon to have me there because it freed him up to get out and about more. Things changed very quickly, from the easy-going, almost festive, atmosphere before the election to the violent clashes afterwards.

'On Tuesday [June 16], the authorities imposed severe restrictions, barring foreign journalists from covering anything other than official events. It was difficult to go out and report after that.'

There were more tricky moments on Saturday when George arrived at Tehran airport to fly home and was held at passport control. 'They had a good hard look at me and disappeared with my passport. I wondered whether they recognised me from my World News reports and had me down as someone who had, in their eyes, helped to foster unrest.' But after an anxious wait, he was allowed to proceed.

Now back in London, he hopes that his experiences will stand him in good stead the next time a reporter's job comes up.

## MEANWHILE BACK IN IRAN...

The BBC is trying to accredit another correspondent, following the expulsion of Jon Leyne. He had been in the country for two years, and was waiting to have his resident's permit renewed for another year.

But the reporting restrictions imposed on foreign journalists last week, followed by the ayatollah's denouncement of the BBC as 'satanic', were an ominous sign, and at the weekend Leyne was told to leave.

His work will be continued by Middle East editor Jeremy Bowen, who is in Iran on a temporary visa, and the BBC bureau, in the heart of Tehran, will remain open. The small local team that is based there will be key in helping the BBC to report the story, says Jon Williams, world news editor.

In an email to colleagues, he expressed his sorrow that Leyne's posting had ended in such a way. 'He deserves better. Jon's reporting has been of the very highest standard, never more so than during the past two difficult weeks. His measured tone, full of insight and nuance, has been in the finest traditions of the BBC.'

# Partners on the Clyde...

by Sally Hillier

BBC Scotland's rivalry with STV has taken on a new twist, with a partnership agreement that could see them sharing material and resources.

The broadcasters, neighbours at Pacific Quay, Glasgow, have signed a memorandum, paving the way for possible collaboration in six areas: news pictures; facilities; training; content and production; archive programmes; online.

On news, they will consider sharing some raw picture footage and live OB resources.

'We have identified areas where we see potential for working together,' says Ian Small, head of public policy, Scotland. Unlike the memorandum between the BBC and ITV on regional news partnerships, Small says the agreement is not financially driven, but is about trying to provide better services for audiences.

He adds that 'significant reciprocity' is expected from STV, which will have to bring as much to the arrangement as the BBC, particularly over the pooling of pictures, and that any final agreement will have to ensure that the editorial integrity of both broadcasters is preserved. Exclusive stories and features will not be shared.

How all this will work in practice is not yet clear, nor is the likely impact on respective programmes (STV's flagship evening news broadcast airs at 6pm; *Reporting Scotland* at 6.30pm).

'I can understand that people might find it odd for the BBC to be embracing a rival broadcaster, but nothing that has been suggested so far will affect the healthy competitive relationship between the two,' says Small.

Scotland staff had a chance to quiz Mark Thompson about the deal when he visited Pacific Quay last week. He faced few tough

questions, but after the meeting some people expressed alarm at the proposals, wondering what could be 'in it' for the BBC. Others though were more philosophical.

'For years we have set out to beat STV, but on the plus side there seems to be no question of doing anything that will damage our own output,' one producer told Ariel. 'In reality, there's reasonable opportunity for sharing cameras, feeds, trucks etc, as long as there's a sensible protocol to cover what happens when editorial priorities change, and the two sides don't necessarily agree what to do next.'

'There's a feeling of let's wait and see what the detailed arrangements are.'

Talks with STV will continue over the summer. As well as sharing material and facilities, the two sides are looking at their properties and at teaming up to support students through placements and work shadowing.

## BBC Three could start at 3pm to attract more teens

Change is both imminent and on the horizon as a result of the BBC Trust's review of the services provided for younger audiences. Coming soon is a change to the 1Xtra schedule where the weekday *Max* programme of news and discussion will be replaced by two 15 minute news bulletins at lunchtime and drive.

These will be modelled on the successful *Newsbeat* format on Radio 1 which draws an audience of more than 10m a week. The trust, in its review of Radio 1, 1Xtra and BBC Three, accepted that listeners to 1Xtra did not want a long news programme.

In what was a broadly supportive review, the trust said the BBC faced a 'growing challenge' to deliver news to young people and to reach teenagers on television. It said both Radio 1 and BBC Three had an important function in this area, and is asking the radio station to come up with new ideas targeted at the 15-19 age group where numbers have 'fallen significantly'.

The long term change could see BBC Three starting its schedule at 3pm instead of 7pm to be more available to teenagers. Although there has been no formal application the trust says it understands 'the logic and potential benefits' of an earlier start time.

## Sport keeps its cool as Formula 1 breakaway threat comes to head



It could be the pits if this goes ahead: Jonathan Legard, Jake Humphrey and David Coulthard discuss off track drama at Silverstone

There is a discernible air of non-panic in BBC sport at the threat of a breakaway from Formula 1 by eight top racing teams. If this were to happen as a result of the row with motor racing president Max Mosley, the BBC's five year rights deal would be thrown into confusion, to say the least.

But it's clear that everyone – and that includes Mosley – expects the issue to be resolved, perhaps with the powerful president standing down. Bernie Ecclestone, the other big player, is emerging as peacemaker and when he and Mosley address a meeting of the

teams in Paris this week a solution is thought to be the likely outcome.

As a live sporting event, F1 has attracted big audiences since the BBC regained the rights from ITV at the start of this season. The combination of tv, radio and online coverage has proved hugely popular with nearly 6m people watching the British grand prix on BBC One on Sunday. For the first four grands prix of the season BBC audiences have on average been 90 percent higher than ITV managed last year when Lewis Hamilton was a big attraction as a rising star.

## Lumsden and Murphy reunited

Lucy Lumsden, controller of comedy and *Stacey*, *Psychoville*, *Harry & Paul*, commissioning, will leave in the autumn to become head of comedy at Sky – a role that will reunite her with Stuart Murphy, former controller of BBC Three.

During her time at the corporation, where she was the first person to hold the post, Lumsden commissioned shows for BBC One, Two, Three and Four – including *Outnumbered*, *Gavin*



Call of comedy: Lucy Lumsden is leaving for Sky

*and Stacey*, *Psychoville*, *Harry & Paul*, *Mitchell & Webb*, *Lead Balloon*, *Two Pints*, *Man Stroke Woman* and *Newswipe*.

'I've absolutely loved being at the BBC, but Stuart's unstoppable enthusiasm for comedy is infectious and I am looking forward to working with him again,' she says.

With Murphy, when he too was at the BBC, they worked together to bring *Mighty Boosh*, *Ideal*, *Nighty Night*, *Pulling* and *Tittybang* – among others.

## Dotun and Deborah's MBEs

'It was a complete surprise. I just got a letter out of the blue. It's not the kind of thing you expect to open,' says Deborah Cohen of the MBE she was awarded in the birthday honours.

Editor science, audio and music, she got the award for services to broadcasting and science. She works on programmes such as *Material World* and *Case Notes* on Radio 4, as well as editing four science and technology strands for the World Service.

Radio 5 Live's *Up All Night* presenter Dotun Adebayo also received the MBE. Both will receive their honours later in the year.



Birthday surprise: Deborah Cohen and Dotun Adebayo



## NEWS BITES

**THE ISSUES** facing Pakistan and Afghanistan are the focus of a week of special output, across radio, tv and online, that began on Monday. *Today*, *Newsnight*, *Panorama* and the main news programmes are all involved.

**BBC TWO'S** *Iran and the West: The Pariah State*, marking 30 years since the Iranian Revolution, won the tv documentary prize at Monday's One World Media Awards. *Crossing Continents: Dharavi*, a Radio 4 current affairs special from Asia's biggest slum, was best radio documentary.

**UNIVERSITY CHALLENGE** rules have been changed by production company Granada to ensure that contestants are current students. In the last series, shown on BBC Two, Oxford's Corpus Christi team was disqualified after it emerged that team member Sam Kay had graduated before the latter stages of the competition.

**BEN PRESTON**, executive editor at *The Independent*, is the new editor of Radio Times, and will take over from Gill Hudson this summer. He has held various senior positions on national newspapers, including *The Times*, where he spent eight years as deputy editor and a year as editor.

**ADAM SHAW**, business presenter of *Today*, has been named broadcast journalist of the year by the Association of Investment Companies.

**PATRICK DOWLING**, the former BBC producer/director whose credits included *Vision On* and *The Adventure Game*, has died in Australia, aged 89. He joined the BBC in 1955, rising to become a senior producer in children's.

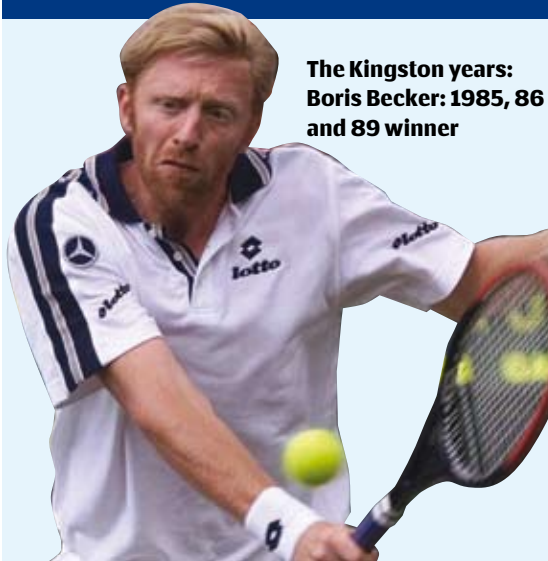
**ALAN SUGAR** has been confirmed as presenter of the next series of *The Apprentice* after the BBC said it was satisfied there would be no conflict of interest with his new job as enterprise champion with a seat in the House of Lords.

**BBC NEWS** School Report won the innovation category at the Royal Television Society Educational Television Awards at Bafta.

**MORE THAN** 20 up and coming artists and bands will be showcased at the BBC Introducing stage at Glastonbury this weekend.

## Listen to this deal

**THE BBC Symphony Orchestra** will perform at various London locations on June 25, including St Pancras International and Spitalfields Market, as part of BBC Proms Out+About. Those attending the concert at Westfield shopping centre at 7pm will receive a ten percent discount on BBC Proms tickets.



**The Kingston years:**  
Boris Becker: 1985, 86  
and 89 winner



**Steffi Graf:**  
champion  
in 1988, 89,  
91, 92, 93,  
95, 96



**Venus Williams:**  
2000, 01, 05, 07  
and 08 champ



**Rafael Nadal:**  
2008 winner

by Claire Barrett

**WHILE AN ANDY MURRAY WIN** at Wimbledon could kick-start a new era for British tennis, behind the scenes another era is drawing to a close.

Once the 2009 champions have been crowned, lead engineer manager Adrian Kingston will be leaving the green, green grass of SW19, and what has become something of a second home, and trading tennis for 2012. After 25 Wimbledons, he'll be heading east to a new role masterminding BBC sport's outside broadcasts from the London Olympics.

The SIS Live (former BBC OBs) man's first job at the championships was as a vt editor. But it was a baptism of fire when, a decade ago, he took charge of the BBC's technical operation there.

He was in his office, reflecting on that year's successful transition from analogue to digital, while Venus Williams fought Lindsay Davenport for her first title out on Centre Court.

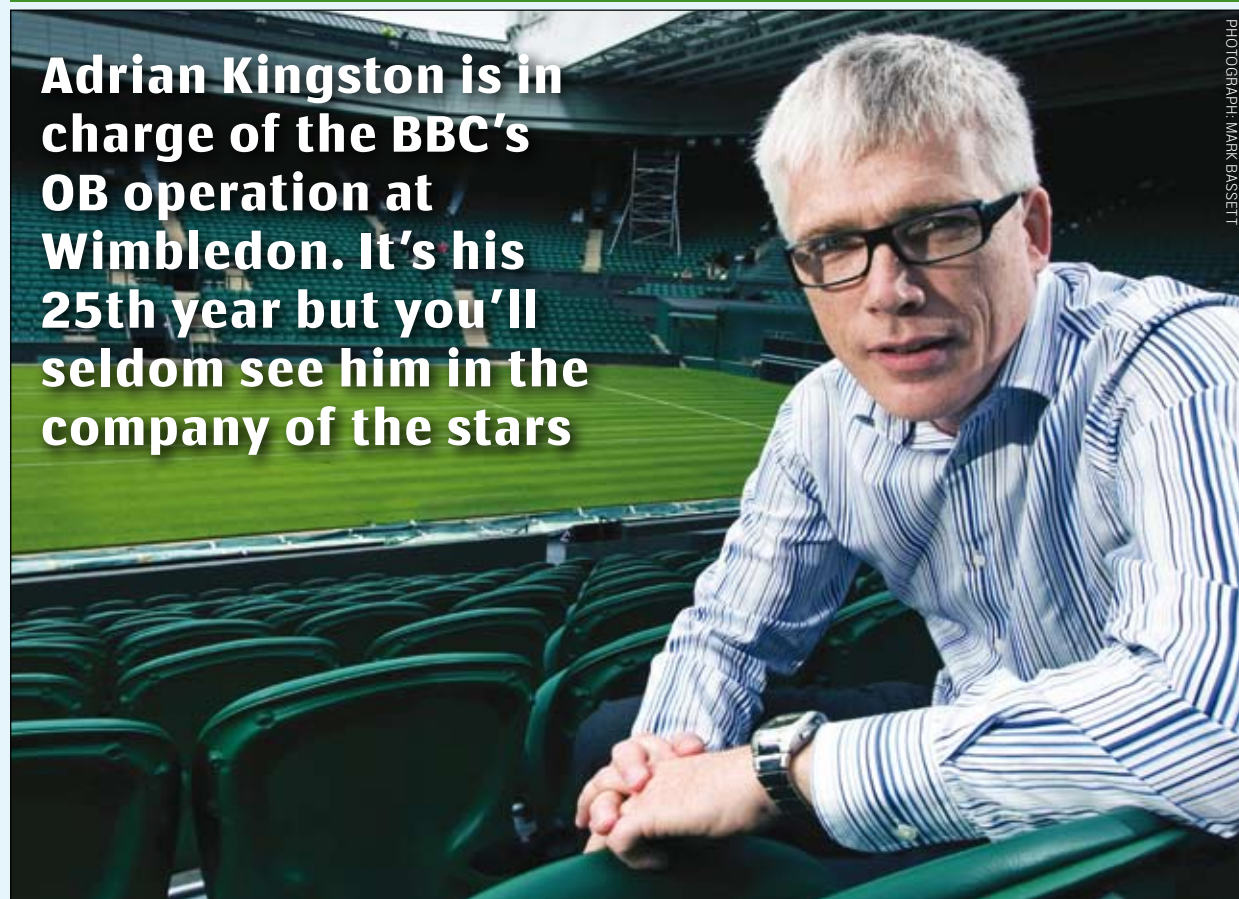
Then news reached him that the main transmission truck was on fire. 'I sprinted over to discover the acrid smell of smoke,' he recalls. 'Turned out the incoming mains wiring was burning, which posed a serious threat to our coverage of the final. Fortunately, we managed to engineer our way out of that one...'

He's engineered his way through a few challenges since then – the move to widescreen in 2001 and high definition trials in 2006 among them. But this year's decision to cover the action from all nine courts

# GREAT TENNIS

## ...AS SEEN FROM THE CAR PARK

**Adrian Kingston is in charge of the BBC's OB operation at Wimbledon. It's his 25th year but you'll seldom see him in the company of the stars**



PHOTOGRAPH: MARK BASSETT

in HD is likely to be the biggest yet. 'The technical infrastructure is radically different this time round,' he says. 'Everything we touch, from production trucks to cameras and vision mixers, has had to change.'

It's an advance in keeping with a tournament that Kingston has seen develop at pace. Massive investment has resulted in recent years in a new Court One, rebuilt Centre, impressive clubhouse and a broadcast centre that he reckons is unrivalled in the world. 'The club still strives for the English country garden feel, even though the infrastructure is thoroughly modern.'

This year a new court two – 'a fabulous, bowl arena' – will be unveiled and, momentarily, a roof on Centre Court. 'It takes around ten minutes to close, 30 minutes for the humidity to stabilise,' explains Kingston, 'so rain delays will be shorter and the BBC's standby material likely to be packaged for these half hour slots.'

The engineer, who will marshal 70 cameras, four OB scanners, 50 miles of signal cable, a 65 metre hoist and eight circuits routing the pictures to TVC, says he gets little time to watch the action on court. But he picks out last year's men's final as the highlight of his tenure.

'Federer and Nadal finishing the match in near darkness, lit by the flash photography from spectators in the stands, was televisually stunning and emotionally electrifying.'

**Wimbledon live on BBC One, Two, HD channel, 5 Live, Red Button and online**

# Forget musicals – I found a far bigger stage



**Myleene Klass did astrophysics, Lenny Henry English literature – for 40 years the Open University, in partnership with the BBC, has been broadening horizons. As BBC Four marks this month's anniversary, Ariel spoke to one woman whose career, courtesy of the OU, took a dramatic change**

**IF IT WAS** the smell of the greasepaint that lured Hild Myklebust to London from her Norwegian homeland, it's the hum of the radio transmitter that has kept her here for 15 years. Hild arrived in England with a performing arts degree and dreams of becoming a dancer, but it was another degree in engineering – studied over seven years via the Open University – that saw her plans take a wildly different turn.

'I was optimistic I'd make it big, although hardly anyone does,' says the senior broadcast systems specialist, responsible these days for keeping the World Service on air, as she reflects on her early West End ambitions. 'I remember my ballet teacher telling us that if we could think of anything other than dancing we'd like to do, we should do it.'

As it turned out, Hild wasn't quite what the casting directors were after. 'The problem wasn't my dancing, I was just the wrong shape – or rather I had a bit too much shape. The girls who got the

jobs weren't better dancers; they were skinnier.'

With paid work scarce, and after 'more Cats auditions than I care to count', she called it a day – a decision made simpler because she'd damaged her eyes through overuse of contact lenses. 'And dancing with glasses was not an option.'

A short secretarial course landed her a job as an admin assistant at Merlin Communications – the company made up of former World Service and BBC Transmission staff that had bought out the World Service's transmitter network.

'I was doing all the office stuff for ten engineers. They were overworked and I didn't have enough to do, so I asked if I could help...'

This appetite for learning led to promotion to technical operator, working shifts in the Bush House control room where programmes are routed to their far-flung destinations. After work, she'd 'hang around like a bad smell', gleaning knowledge from wiser colleagues, and sign up

for any training courses going. 'My brain wasn't getting quite enough exercise, though,' says Hild, who then discovered the Open University. She studied maths, then electronics, before embarking on an engineering degree. Seven and a half years later she graduated, having worked full-time throughout for VT Communications, which had bought out Merlin.

'Now I'm one of a very select band of people who can take the entire World Service off air,' she boasts. 'You're not a proper engineer until you've done that.'

She's even dancing again – purely for fun. 'I love what I do now,' she says. 'As a dancer, unless you're Darcy Bussell, you'll be skint and on the shelf by the age of 42.'

Claire Barrett

■ **Are you a graduate of the OU? Email Clare Bolt with your experiences.**

## A bit like real life, once they've got the message

**Anna Cassar of Radio 4 interactive finds an old format alive and well**

**LET'S FACE IT**, messageboards are pretty old-hat. The smart people have moved on to Twitter, and blogs, and of course we've all got loads of friends on Facebook.

And yet here at Radio 4, our audience is still keen to participate on our messageboards: the technology is simple to master and once they're registered they're on their way. They love meeting one another and talking about our programmes, but what gets them really excited is when programme makers engage with them on the boards.

The qualities you need as a messageboard host – besides being a fan of the programmes you're representing, and learning the editorial guidelines – are really the same that you need as a host in real-life. You greet people, introduce them to each other, keep the conversation going, steer them away from dodgy topics and chuck them out if they're offensive.

I've been a host on the Radio 4 boards since they started and I must admit that at first we were opening topics without much thought; some worked, others didn't. We're a lot more scientific about the way we do things now.

We can still react quickly when needs arise. For instance, we used a board for a live webchat about the property market with Evan Davis – that took one person (me) a couple of hours of liaison and then working with Evan for an hour or so when the audience were able to put their questions to him and he was able to answer them (via my speedy typing).

Our messageboards run the whole time but we've also opened topics for special projects: last year we had campaigns for breast cancer (with *Woman's Hour*) and for care in the UK (with *You and Yours*). For projects like these, the Radio 4 interactive team works

with the production team, drawing up clear objectives and procedures, liaising with editorial policy, getting subject experts registered so they can participate and feeding the resulting postings back to the on-air programmes.

We're in the middle of a three-week prostate cancer project with *You and Yours* and *The Food Programme* so you can see how it works in real time: [bbc.co.uk/dna/mbradio4/F13847018](http://bbc.co.uk/dna/mbradio4/F13847018)

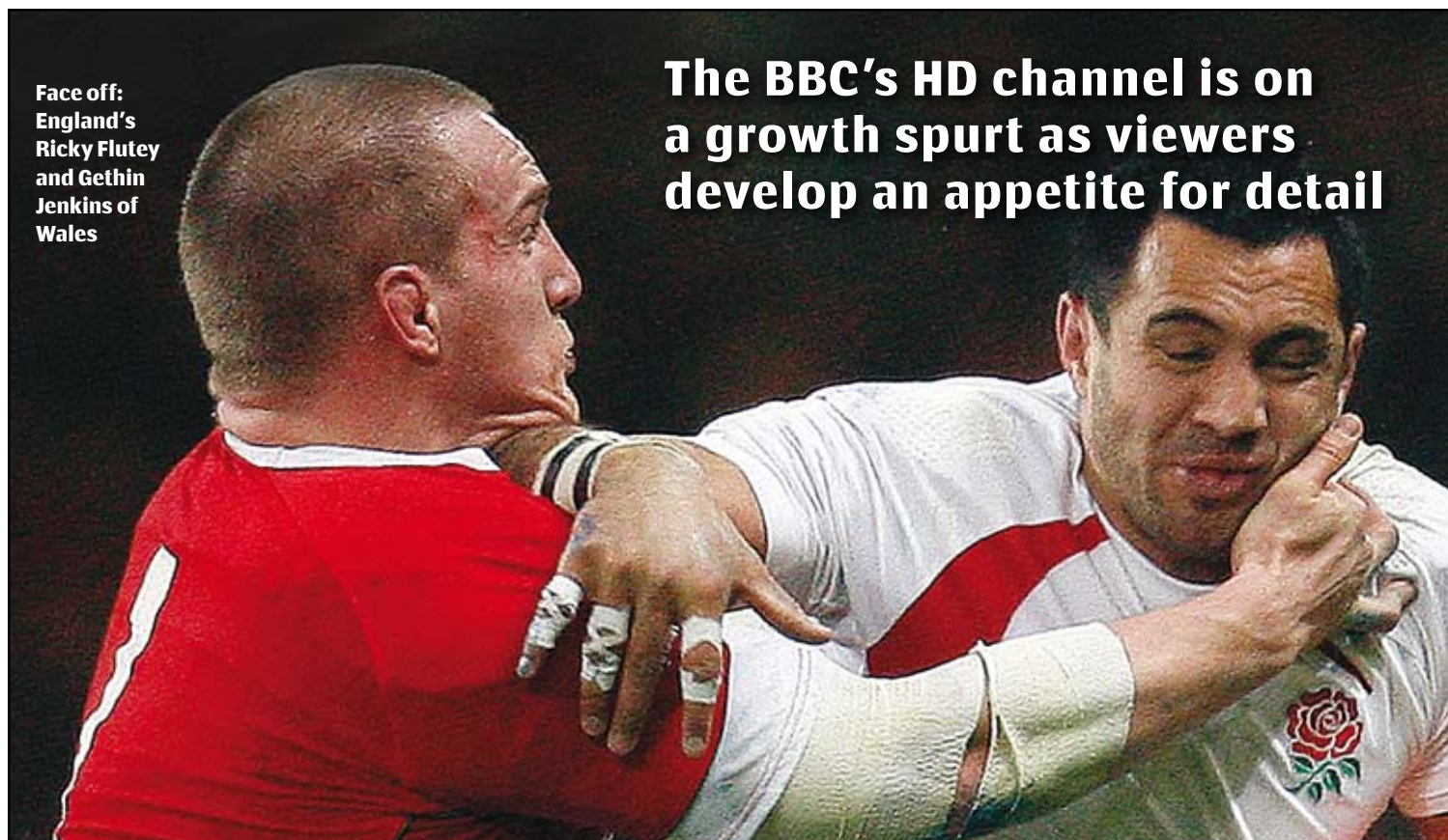
*Word of Mouth* presenter Michael Rosen admirably hosts his own topic on our boards: [bbc.co.uk/dna/mbradio4/F2766781](http://bbc.co.uk/dna/mbradio4/F2766781) which is a place where our audience meets to talk about the English language, usually with a great sense of fun.

For the ultimate in fun, you need to go to our Mornington Crescent topic at [bbc.co.uk/dna/mbradio4/F2766775](http://bbc.co.uk/dna/mbradio4/F2766775). This is one of the earliest we started – and the best example of trying something on a whim and seeing it succeed.

Hold on a minute, someone's just called to say they need a messageboard topic for a visualisation of radio project – looks like messageboards are set to be the thing to have again.

Anna Cassar is assistant content producer, audio and music interactive

# The strain shows as HD sharpens up the action



Face off: England's Ricky Flutey and Gethin Jenkins of Wales

The BBC's HD channel is on a growth spurt as viewers develop an appetite for detail

**THE BEADS OF PERSPIRATION**, the furrowed lines of concentration, the explosion of joy at the winning shot. Wimbledon's gladiators will be captured in vivid, all-revealing detail over the next fortnight, when the tennis championships are fully covered in high definition for the first time on the BBC HD channel.

It will be much the same at Glastonbury and the Proms, as the channel extends its live events coverage and widens its schedule to include comedy, factual and culture.

Eighteen months after its launch, high definition is 'on the verge of entering the mainstream', says HD channel controller Danielle Nagler. Like breakthrough technologies

before it, HD has moved from something extraordinary to a service that those who have it take for granted. Not only that, HD is proving to be a recession-proof consumer product. Prices are coming down, with HD-ready tv sets selling for less than £200. Sky has been driving its customers towards its 33 HD channels while Freesat has sold most of its set top boxes with HD capability. By the World Cup next summer Freeview will be offering high definition in a number of urban areas.

'People like big picture television and they like HD,' says Nagler. 'It takes away the barrier of watching a screen and it's especially effective with sports such as tennis and golf, where

you can see all the effort on the players' faces.'

The channel started life as what Nagler calls 'coffee table tv', a showcase for expensive dramas and factual programmes like *Planet Earth*. Now the BBC is leading the way in the UK as the country's biggest producer and commissioner of HD content. At present, this is shown only on the HD channel but Nagler predicts that by the time of the 2012 Olympics it will be possible to watch all of BBC One in HD. By then, it is likely that the BBC will be making 70 percent of inhouse content in HD with at least half UK households able to receive the signals.

The costs of filming in HD are coming down and within the next five years it is likely

that making a programme in high definition will be no more expensive than today's standard definition. And by that time high definition will in effect have become the standard.

**THE STORY SO FAR**  
**BBC HD Channel launched:** December 2007  
**Broadcasts:** 4pm-1am daily  
**Most viewed programmes:** Eurovision Song contest; Doctor Who Easter Special  
**Best viewing figure:** Doctor Who Special  
**240,000 (10.5 percent share in HD homes)**  
**Best sport:** Wales v England Six Nations 2009  
**185,000 (7.5 percent share)**

## R&D comes up with a way to save the archive

**FOR 15 YEARS** a dedicated cadre of engineers and managers from R&D has been working to develop tools which will preserve the BBC's vast archive into the future.

The latest product of their efforts is the ASTOR demonstrator – (aka 'the world's heaviest laptop') which is currently being tested by the archive and network media research engineers.

It's big, runs pretty hot, weighs close to half a ton, and can store dozens of hours of HD content, but perhaps most amazingly is that in its brief few months of existence, it's clocked up more than 10,000 miles. That's because in April, Rajitha Weerakkody and I took the prototype box along to NAB (the world's largest broadcast technology conference and exhibition) in Las Vegas.

The story began three years ago, when R&D started looking at the best ways to store large amounts of AV content in digital form. We produced a huge amount of data as well as recommendations and proposals, but it was clear that the digital storage industry couldn't match the needs of our archive, nor the needs of the thousands of other broadcasters who faced the same challenge.

Led by the technologist Richard Wright, R&D joined forces with academic researchers and industry experts to develop a new system which could manage the vast volumes of digital data. This became known as the 'Avatar-M' research project, and we revealed the first technical prototypes at the NAB. We're hoping to thoroughly test the kit at Kingswood over the summer, before

enhancing the platform and possibly incorporating elements of the Dirac video codec (also produced in R&D).

In September the kit, plus its trusty band of demonstrators, will take to the road once more – this time to Amsterdam for the European forum for broadcast tech, IBC. **Ant Miller, technologist, research and development**

For more details on the Avatar project or to take a look at the demonstrator and to see if it could help solve issues around storage for you, contact John Zubrzycki or Rajitha Weerakkody in R&D



Wonder what I'm doing in a room like this? John Maxwell Hobbs at Pacific Quay

John Maxwell Hobbs is head of technology at Pacific Quay, a role that's in harmony with his electronic music making

# MASTER OF THE AMBIENT

by Reece De Ville

WHILE GARY NUMAN wondered if friends were electric, Phil Oakey promised we'd always be together in electric dreams. With the current resurgence in electronica proving popular commercially and a number of BBC staff creating their own music without producer or record company, Numan and Oakey may have had a point...

'I'm not exactly the typical boffin or technologist in the BBC,' smiles BBC Scotland's head of technology, John Maxwell Hobbs. 'I'm fortunate to have an extremely interesting day job to support my sort of more non-commercial ventures,' he says, from Glasgow's shining centre of broadcasting, Pacific Quay. 'The choice was to build the last 20th

century broadcasting facility or the first 21st century one. It is a very special place and technology-wise, it's leading the way,' he says.

Maxwell Hobbs is used to being at the forefront. He's spent 20 years at the cutting edge of art and technology, and is in the curious position of auteur artist working for a major corporation. Turning complex mobile strategies and technical topics into palatable universal language has often been at odds with his personal approach to music. In creating soundscapes that don't always unfold in obvious ways, his work asks us to construct our own story, our own explanations, our own language. Minimalist but engaging.

As a self taught musician, he's worked with John Lee Hooker

and Philip Glass, produced DJ Spooky, played with funk bands across New York, sat on the board of several arts committees and awards schemes and produced a vast body of electronica work currently residing on his Cinema Volta site. His tracks, he says, 'aren't about a beginning or an end or a progression, but an instant'. For his Daily Ambience series he released a new ambient track online every day from 2005 to 2006. 'I don't make very commercial music, so this was for a selective audience,' he explains. 'Reaching 30,000 people without a push from a record label on my own was quite a remarkable thing.'

He's also in the process of scoring several film projects (the latest being an upcoming Brazilian short film), and tracks such as Columbus Circle



Soundscapes: Hobb's Cinema Volta

**I thought reaching 30,000 people without a push from a record label was remarkable**

and Prisoners of Grace evoke certain cinematic settings and vistas.

It's telling that a huge influence is Steve Reich – a Pulitzer Prize winning New York minimalist composer – but who inspires him among the current crop of electronica revivalists?

'One band that I find incredible is Sigur Ros – they can bring tears to my eyes. And internet music sites like *lastfm* which throw things your way that you didn't ask for, are powerful. They lead you down unexpected paths...'

Watch the full interview on the FM&T intranet via Gateway.

John Maxwell Hobbs Cinema Volta albums are available on iTunes and via [cinemavolta.com/](http://cinemavolta.com/), where anyone can create compositions online.

## On the road, who are you going to call... ghost writers

THERE'S A GHOST IN YOUR CAR called Thomas Grace, and he wants to inform, educate and entertain your children. Don't worry, he has plenty of experience; in life he was a Norman tour guide who took pilgrims around the country. Problem is, he didn't do a very good job, and has been sent back until he gets it right...

Grace is the fictional creation of learning development, who are looking to use sat-nav systems to add interesting anecdotes about places you are passing in your car, much to the amusement of any youngsters who would otherwise be slumped bored in the backseat.

'From a family perspective it's quite stressful to take kids on long journeys,' says producer Jo

Claessens. 'People use audio books, but this has the advantage that it knows where you are. We're able to give you a sense that Thomas is coming along on your journey.'

The initial trial covers a route from London to Salford, one that Claessens acknowledges 'a lot of people are doing at the moment'. It will be freely downloadable from the learning development website from early July, ready to be installed on practically any in car navigation system.

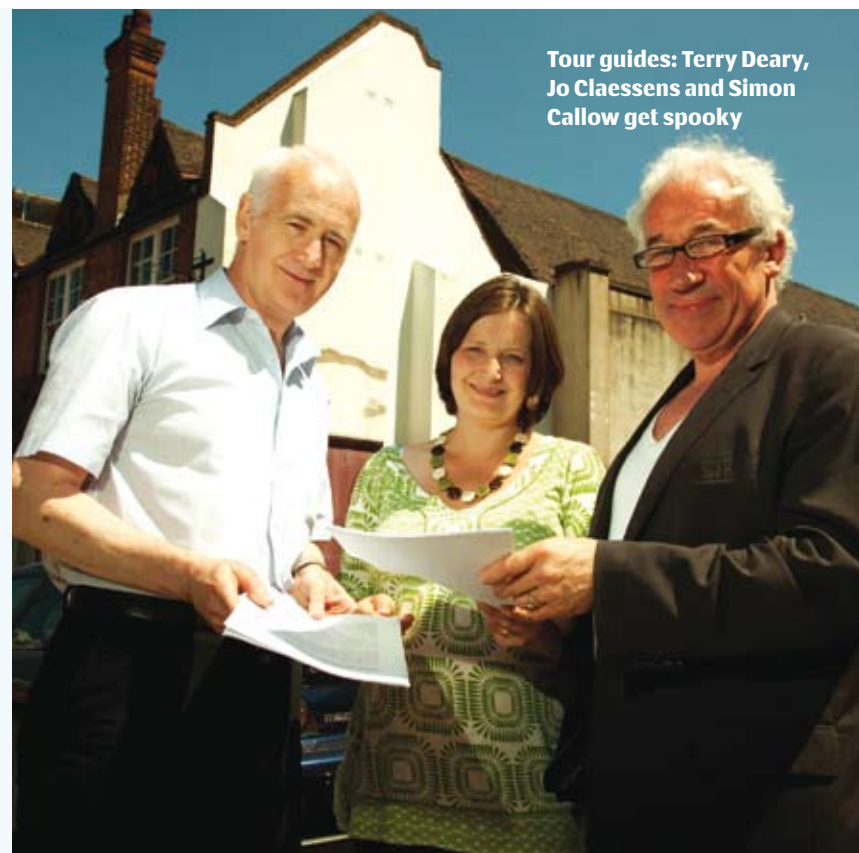
Partly funded through the BBC's learning campaigns, the project has been scripted by author Terry Deary, whose Horrible Histories brand is hugely popular with children,

while Thomas himself has been brought to booming life by actor Simon Callow.

The technology behind the ghostly guide is relatively straightforward, with the sat-nav triggering specific audio whenever a place is passed that has been marked as part of the tour. There's no need to worry about Thomas cutting in with a quirky fact when you're desperately trying to negotiate a route out of London. The team have been careful to place his chats at less hectic parts of the journey, and the sat-nav guidance takes precedent at all times.

Adam Bambury

[tinyurl.com/cartours](http://tinyurl.com/cartours)



Tour guides: Terry Deary, Jo Claessens and Simon Callow get spooky





## arielview



ANDREW HARVEY

## Green light for commercial BBC

**DIGITAL BRITAIN** is claimed by its chief author Stephen Carter to be an important document that sets the direction for the UK's future as a world leader in communications technology. In that, the broadcasting minister may be right.

Since its publication last week he has also said the report is 'resoundingly good news' for the BBC. That is, like his proposed funding mechanism for local and regional news, contestable. We discuss on this page some of the arguments around top slicing the licence fee and there is hardly universal glee at the plan to switch off the analogue radio signal by 2015, even though the BBC has been a pioneer and champion of DAB.

Aside from these two big policy proposals, Carter's observations about the future direction of BBC Worldwide are intriguing. A year ago criticism of the company was on the boil. It was being attacked for being too expansionist and too careless about its impact on the market. The Lonely Planet acquisition attracted particular irritation and parliament's media committee concluded that Worldwide needed reining in. A review by the BBC Trust is still going on but in a preliminary comment it said the company's remit needed to be more tightly drawn.

Now, along comes Carter with an altogether different approach. Although he says his views are unlikely to clash with those of the trust, he's promoting the idea of Worldwide as an expanded global rights business making a greater contribution to help fund public service content (another way of saying the more Worldwide makes the less the public would need to contribute through the licence fee). Loosen the bonds with the BBC, think big and bring in as much profit as it can is the new message.

Carter emphasises that there should be clearer commercial separation between the BBC and its commercial activities but he doesn't offer clarity on how that might best be achieved. He's still keen on a joint venture between Worldwide and Channel 4 to help ease the broadcaster's likely money problems, though in Digital Britain he doesn't give the proposal a huge push. The best he can offer is to raise the borrowing limits for the BBC and C4 if that would help secure a deal. But first the parties must work out the details themselves – a process that's taken most of this year and is still far from resolved.

On the two key points relevant to Worldwide the government is saying encouraging things without mapping out a route. Carter has not offered an answer to the conundrum of how Worldwide can be given greater freedom to build its business without having a correspondingly heavier imprint on the market. But the fact that he is backing global growth where others have urged restraint will probably bring a smile to the faces of the executives in the Media Centre, W12.

Andrew Harvey is editor of Ariel

## Is the BBC right to put up a fight over the licence fee?

The government proposes to use money raised through the licence fee to subsidise independently funded regional news providers. Michael Lyons, chairman of the BBC Trust, is strongly opposed to the idea and we asked two commentators to argue the case for and against this version of top slicing

## YES: a mistaken idea

by Ray Connolly

**SO, THE GOVERNMENT** wants to find funds to subsidise commercial public service broadcasting, mainly regional news coverage, probably to be aired on ITV or other digital channels. Good. The more news coverage the better, and it can't be healthy for the BBC to have a monopoly on these services. Nothing sharpens the wits quite like competition.

That being said, it seems to me it would be a massive mistake for any part of the licence fee to be sliced off the top to provide these funds. Let the government find the new money elsewhere if that's what it wants. Keep the BBC and the licence fee quite separate.

It isn't just that top slicing is the thin end of the wedge, a tool which, in years to come, might very well be used by later governments to prise away more money to pay for non-BBC services. It's more immediate than that. It would, I believe, rupture at a stroke the compact we, the public, have with the BBC – our BBC, diluting as it would the purpose of the licence fee in the nation's consciousness.

We never think about ITV or Sky or any newspapers as 'ours' in the way we do the BBC. Because they're palpably not ours. They're there, first and foremost, to make money for their owners and shareholders. Indeed in better times some of them liked to boast, albeit jokily, that they were a licence to print money.

## Monkeying around

The BBC isn't like that. Independent politically and unrestrained by commercial links, it exists simply to serve. It has no other purpose. At the same time the licence fee is the only tax we pay with full knowledge of what it is funding. Monkey around with that and, in next to no time, it will be seen as just another form of hated taxation, like the poll tax. From there it would be but a few steps to the beginning of the disintegration of the corporation.

We may not always like what our licence money buys, we may despair when we see naïve executives gulled by clever agents into paying silly money salaries to glitzy presenters; and we may scratch our heads and wonder why the planners so abhor a digital vacuum that they cannot resist creating new channels, stations, platforms – call them what you will – as soon as new technology makes them possible, whether or not they are needed.

But for £142.50 a year (and if there ever is any surplus, rather than hand it back to the public, as has been suggested, please can it be channelled to underfunded radio drama where stoic staff and writers work for a pittance) we must get the best value in the world. Don't let the top-slicers screw it up.



Ray Connolly is a commentator and writer. His next play for Radio 4 is *God Bless Our Love*

## NO: give news a share

by Peter Bazalgette

**IN ALL OF THIS**, the first thing to secure is the BBC as the cornerstone of public service broadcasting, producer of trusted, reliable news and information, an organisation central to our culture, democracy and economy. I would never argue in favour of damaging the BBC.

The biggest fear raised by Digital Britain's 'contained contestable element' of the licence fee is that it is the thin end of the wedge. If you can call for £130m now, then you can come back for more later. That is a danger, and the way of guarding against it is to make the BBC trustees guardians of how the contestable element is spent. Then you need to enshrine it at exactly the £130m level – roughly 3.5 percent of the licence fee. That's not a sum that will harm the BBC but it could make a huge difference to other providers of public content.

And here's the broader argument. It is absurd to say today that the BBC, or the BBC and Channel 4, are the only contributors to public service content. Ofcom makes great play on plurality but two suppliers is nothing like plurality.

Even the term psc is somewhat redundant because we should talk about psc – public service content. It's being produced by cultural and arts organisations – from Tate Media and the Royal Opera House transmitting opera to cinemas, to the podcast called Philosophy Bites, which gets millions of downloads.

## Money goes outside

The question of how big or small the BBC should be can be left for another day, but it is time to take a fresh view of the public service terrain. Look at partnerships. The BBC has any number of partnerships already – brilliant, worthwhile partnerships with indies, cultural bodies and training organisations. What is the difference between that kind of spending outside and what Michael Lyons objects to so strongly? He and BBC management are rightly happy that money goes outside for, say, training but they resent handing over £130m for regional/local tv news.

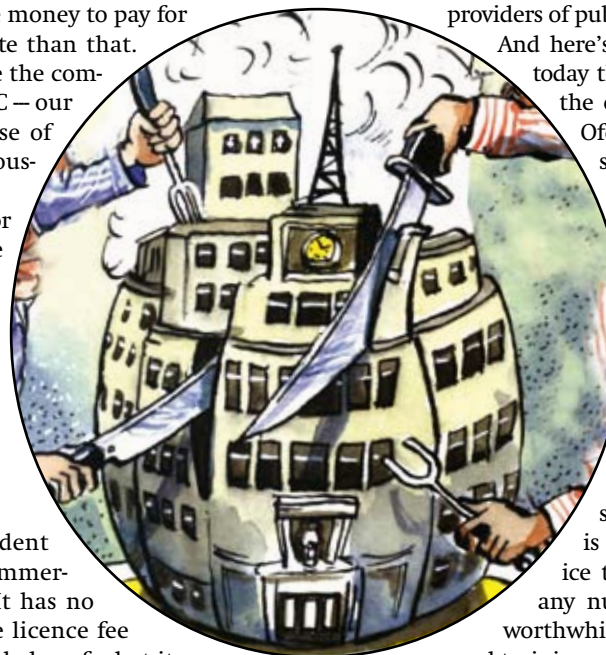
The only difference is that the second example is outside the BBC's control and it makes them nervous. So the answer is to leave the dispensation for news in the control of the trustees. Let them continue to be the guardians of the licence fee and let the news providers be accountable to them.

A sum of £130m is perfectly reasonable, and the precedent is there, contained in the 2006 licence fee settlement. I don't see this as any kind of attack on the BBC, on its integrity or on BBC jobs. This money is going outside already. I understand concerns about opening the floodgates. If this set portion of the licence fee was not under government control, but under the control of the BBC trustees, they could, by law, ensure that the 3.5 percent figure was not exceeded.

It could be a way forward that works for everyone.



Peter Bazalgette, a media consultant and digital investor, was in conversation with Cathy Loughran



CHRIS DUGGAN

This is the page that everybody reads. Please email [claire.barrett@bbc.co.uk](mailto:claire.barrett@bbc.co.uk)  
You can also contribute to the mail page directly from the Ariel Online home page

## Different perspective

Interesting to read two different versions of how successful or otherwise the BBC is seen to be at reflecting diversity (Ariel, June 16).

I got an insight into external views on this when I represented the BBC at a recent Council of Europe diversity conference in Seville.

I was there with 40 other European media professionals and representatives of cross-cultural organisations to share best practices on reporting diversity and discrimination, examining media treatment – locally in Andalusia and across Europe.

It was clear that other delegates viewed the BBC as taking a leading role. They were intrigued by the way, at Radio Leicester, we create a sense of community by taking an interest in, and reporting on, various religious and cultural events. The use of individuals from diverse backgrounds as experts, within a range of professional fields, was also seen as innovative.

By contrast, the Spanish experience was stark. Spanish regional tv and radio devotes three percent of airtime to coverage of minority communities – predominantly negative reporting.

The BBC hasn't got everything right in reflecting diversity and should in no way be complacent, but it seems it has something to offer Europe in terms of guidance on practical approaches that reap benefits.

**Hasan Patel**

*broadcast journalist, Radio Leicester*

## Taking teens seriously

Reading last week's letter, 'No News Is Bad News for Today's Teenagers' I feel a reply is in order. Far from news for young people on the BBC being in 'a dire state', I think the opposite is demonstrably true.

Many of the techniques the correspondent suggests are, or have been, used across our range of output:

## Tories sweet on Boris but don't want Sugar

The Conservatives have been quick to complain about Alan Sugar not being dropped from *The Apprentice* in light of his new role within the government. However they seemed less concerned on the various occasions *Have I Got News For You* was hosted by Boris Johnson when he was a prominent Tory MP and at one point a member of their front bench team – a position far more senior within that party's structure than Alan



not for the use, once again, of intrusive background music. In some parts of the programme it drowned out the voice of the narrator and interviewees which, believe it or not, is what we actually want to hear.

From *Newsround* to *Revealed* on BBC Switch, *Newsbeat* on Radio 1, and its accompanying online site and *1Xtra News* and BBC Three's *60 Seconds*.

*Newsbeat*'s recent Drugs Week was a good recent example of credible, accessible news coverage for teenagers and early 20-somethings. *Revealed* – which goes out on BBC Two on Saturday afternoons – has notched up some fantastic pieces of journalism aimed at younger teenagers from how to beat spots to young entrepreneurs, teen poverty and the impact of the recession on jobs for teenagers.

We are constantly reviewing and improving our offering for young audiences and our improving audience insights are helping that, too.

This is work in progress and we want to do more – so suggestions are always welcome.

**Rod McKenzie**

*editor, Radio 1 Newsbeat*

## Hijacked by pirates

BBC Four is running what would be an excellent and well researched series on the Pre-Raphaelites. At least, it would be excellent were it



But of course it's only the BBC that has double standards, isn't it?

**James Clarke**

*sbj, BBC news interactive, Birmingham*

Sugar's role is within Labour's.

And presumably *Have I Got News For You* would have been a programme with more scope for making partisan political comment on screen than *The Apprentice* ever would be.

(green room, June 16), but I'm afraid I have to stake a prior claim to your suggestion of I'm Sorry I Haven't a Cue, which I coined about ten years ago while struggling to keep the World Service news on the air in the fraught early days of ENPS.

Meanwhile I hope Kathy won't mind if I adapt her idea for local use as Radio3minus2letters; Rough the Night with John Shea, anyone?

**John Shea**

*presenter, Radio 3 Through the Night*

## Our friend in Carlisle

I was shocked to hear of the sudden death of Carlisle United's legendary commentator, Derek Lacey (see below). I used to see him several times a season while covering Southend United.

He was a warm and friendly man who used to welcome you as a long-lost friend when visiting commentators made the trip up to Carlisle. It is always a fixture I looked forward to, due to its extraordinary length and the company of Derek.

It showed just how the club viewed him as, after the matches,

## She's taken my cue

Hats off to Kathy Clugston for the alternative programme titles of her Radio4minus1letter game on twitter

den and untimely passing.

To get a flavour of his character, the Day in the Life of Degsy video diary on our BBC Cumbria website captures him as well as anything. Or listen again to his defining moment – when goalkeeper Jimmy Glass scored the last minute goal to save Carlisle from being relegated out of the Football League.

Everyone felt they knew Derek. And to those who were privileged to know him as a friend and colleague, we can be certain Derek would not want us to be sad, but to have our glasses half full, as he always did – in every sense.

But above being a commentator, he was very much a man who put his family first. Derek the proud grandad. Our thoughts are with his partner Hilary and his family. We share your loss.

*Graham Moss*

the Carlisle players would queue up to be interviewed by Derek. It's a huge loss to his family, Carlisle and to local radio.

**Nick Alliker** *Southend United commentator, BBC Essex*

■ I met Derek a number of times and stories of him have entered local radio legend.

Last season he came down to Grays for an FA Cup tie in midweek. A long journey was made worse by the floodlights going out and him having to come back down for a second time for the replayed match. But he didn't moan or groan and saw the funny side of it all.

He will be missed on the circuit.

**Glenn Speller**

*sports producer, BBC Essex*

## Object lesson in safety

'While there was a hot spell, a mysterious heavy metal object with holes in it, was used to prop open some fire doors' (green room, June 16).

Was that safety no-no written without a trace of irony?

At least that mysterious heavy metal object wasn't a fire extinguisher.

**Matthew Marks**

*Kingswood Warren*

## Missing Symphony

The BBC Symphony Orchestra will be celebrating its 80th birthday next year. We're pulling together archive footage of all of the chief conductors to date, but we're missing one: Can you help?

We would like to hear from any colleagues who might know the whereabouts of footage of the orchestra with Antal Dorati (chief conductor 1963-66).

If you can help us please email [alison.dancer@bbc.co.uk](mailto:alison.dancer@bbc.co.uk)

**Alison Dancer** *marketing assistant, BBC Symphony Orchestra*

## OBITUARY

### DEREK LACEY

To follow England's furthest flung football league club, Carlisle United, home and away for more than a decade, commentating on more than 500 matches, and absolutely, genuinely, thoroughly loving it – well, most of it – takes a special person. And Derek Lacey was a legend.

This has to be true, because a local business paid good money to have the phrase 'Lacey is a Legend' displayed on their prominent advertising board behind one goalmouth at Carlisle's ground, Brunton Park. When Carlisle made it to a cup final at the Millennium stadium, his name was on supporters' flags – it was even chanted on occasion from the terraces. I can't think of another football commentator who oc-

cupied such a special place in the hearts of supporters.

He most certainly was not an orthodox commentator. The heart was sometimes engaged before the head, but you knew he cared. If Carlisle lost, as often they did, his pain was your pain. Which made the good times – the finals, the promotions – even more special.

Which other commentator could claim to keep in regular contact with a succession of ex-players and managers, who queued to pay tribute following his death, the day after suffering a stroke? If you're not a Carlisle United supporter or not from Cumbria it's hard to convey the sense of loss we feel for Derek's sud-



## FROM THE VAULT

### June, 1992

The BBC is usually over enthusiastic about its own anniversaries, so it is surprising that no one has mentioned the fact that it is now 25 years since the first colour pictures were transmitted on BBC Two. These came from Wimbledon 1967, where CMRC1 with four cameras stood alongside the black and white cameras which carried the main coverage. The Wimbledon coverage was pioneering in every way. It was a testing environment for the new colour cameras which used plumbicon tubes for the first time (a standard for colour cameras which has only recently been superseded). The white lines on green grass showed up every hint of misregistration between the red, green and blue tubes, and the contrast between the white clothes and the dark corners of the stands was huge.

The change of colour balance when the sun went in and out was noticed for the first time, and people had difficulty judging what colour the grass should be. At one stage, in desperation, the vision supervisor dug up some turf (presumably not from the Centre Court) and set it up by the monitor, saying, 'It's got to look like that!'

*Geoff Dawe, OU production centre*

## PROGRAMME MAKING

**Radio Content Producer, Coinneach**

Stornoway, Isle of Lewis  
7D/Ref: 12538609  
E 28-Jun-09

**Content Producer, Speech**

Aberdeen  
7D/Ref: 11242609  
E 28-Jun-09 A 09 months

**Multi-Platform****Researcher, Newsround**

London  
White City  
5D/Ref: 12728709  
E 30-Jun-09 A 06 months

## JOURNALISM

**SBJ – Africa Business Report**

London  
8/9S/Ref: 13121709  
E 05-Jul-09 A 09 months

**SBJ/Reporter, West Bank and Gaza**

Multi Location - Non UK  
8/9S/Ref: 12611309  
E 02-Jul-09 A 2 years

**Multimedia SBJ, Technology Index**

London  
8/9D/Ref: 12801109  
E 01-Jul-09 A Continuing

**Senior Broadcast Journalist/Europe Correspondent**

Brussels Office  
8D/Ref: 13072109  
E 05-Jul-09 A 2 years

**Producer, Dari, Afghan Stream**

London  
Bush House  
7D/Ref: 12872709  
E 28-Jun-09 A 06 months

**Monitoring Journalist (Persian)**

Reading  
6D/Ref: 1286209  
E 25-Jun-09

**Broadcast Journalist, Hereford & Worcester**

Hereford  
5/7D/Ref: 4108309  
E 03-Jul-09

**Weather Presenter (Broadcast Journalist)**

Southampton  
5/7D/Ref: 12330209  
E 06-Jul-09 A 09 months

## BUSINESS SUPPORT AND MANAGEMENT

**Director of Procurement & Revenue Management**

London  
White City  
SM1/Ref: 13169109  
E 05-Jul-09 A 06 months

**Senior Finance Contract Manager**

Multi Location  
11D/Ref: 13169609  
E 28-Jun-09

**Library Partnership Manager**

London  
9D/Ref: 4108609  
E 28-Jun-09 A 2 years

**Taxonomy Manager, Information & Archives**

London  
Broadcast Centre Media Village  
9D/Ref: 12993209  
E 02-Jul-09 A 12 months

**Partnerships & Off-Air Project Manager**

London  
White City  
8D/Ref: 12842409  
E 06-Jul-09 A 11 months

**Resource Manager, News Production Facilities**

London  
8D/Ref: 12729409  
E 28-Jun-09 A 06 months

**Production Managers**

Belfast - Broadcasting House  
8D/Ref: 12728409  
E 30-Jun-09

**Uwch Swyddog Ymchwil**

Cardiff  
7D/Ref: 4109809  
E 05-Jul-09

**Brand Executive, English Regions**

London  
White City  
7D/Ref: 13068209  
E 29-Jun-09

**Publicist, BBC Sport (Jobshare)**

London  
TV Centre  
7D/Ref: 12728509  
E 24-Jun-09

**Business Development Associate**

London  
Bush House  
7D/Ref: 12304509  
E 30-Jun-09

**Regional Officer, BBC Children in Need**

Nottingham  
5D/Ref: 12911109  
E 13-Jul-09

**Local Radio Administrator, BBC Lincolnshire**

Lincoln  
5D/Ref: 11710609  
E 26-Jun-09 A 06 months

**PA to Head of Brand & Planning**

London  
White City  
4D/Ref: 13075709  
E 01-Jul-09 A 12 months

**Communications Co-ordinator, BBC North**

Manchester  
4D/Ref: 13027209  
E 29-Jun-09 A 12 months

**Team Administrator, BBC Children in Need**

London  
White City  
3D/Ref: 13118409  
E 29-Jun-09 A 06 months

**Team Assistant, BBC World Service**

London  
Bush House  
3D/Ref: 12865709  
E 29-Jun-09 A 06 months

**Broadcast Appeal Manager, BBC Wildlife Fund**

London  
White City  
Under Review/Ref: 12929009  
E 06-Jul-09 A 11 months

## NEW MEDIA

**Client Side Developer (Web Developer)**

London  
Broadcast Centre Media Village  
7D/Ref: 11782609  
E 27-Jun-09

**Web Researcher**

London  
Media Centre  
5D/Ref: 4108909  
E 28-Jun-09 A 06 months

## TECHNOLOGY

**Senior Designer**

London  
Henry Wood House  
9D/Ref: 4110309  
E 27-Jun-09

**Project Manager, BBC World Service**

London  
Bush House  
8D/Ref: 8924809  
E 24-Jun-09 A 12 months

**Technical Project Manager, BBC World Service**

London, Bush House  
8D/Ref: 8696509  
E 24-Jun-09 A 12 months

**Project Manager**

Manchester  
8D/Ref: 13105509  
E 05-Jul-09

**Business Analyst**

London  
Broadcast Centre Media Village  
8D/Ref: 13104509  
E 05-Jul-09 A 2 years

**Senior Broadcast Systems Specialist**

London, Bush House  
8D/Ref: 12585709  
E 02-Jul-09

**Junior Project Manager**

Manchester  
7D/Ref: 13104809  
E 05-Jul-09 A 08 months

**Head of Platforms**

London  
Broadcast Centre Media Village  
Under Review/Ref: 4109509  
E 30-Jun-09

**Network Engineer**

London  
Broadcast Centre Media Village  
Under Review/Ref: 4109309  
E 30-Jun-09

**Technical Architect**

London  
Broadcast Centre Media Village  
Under Review/Ref: 4109209  
E 30-Jun-09

## BBC WORLDWIDE

**Lead Technical Design Architect**

London  
Media Centre  
SENEX/Ref: 12993309  
E 28-Jun-09

**Head of Product & Marketing, UK**

London  
Media Centre  
SENEX/Ref: 12921409  
E 23-Jun-09 Continuing 06 months

## See Attachment

## In at the deep end

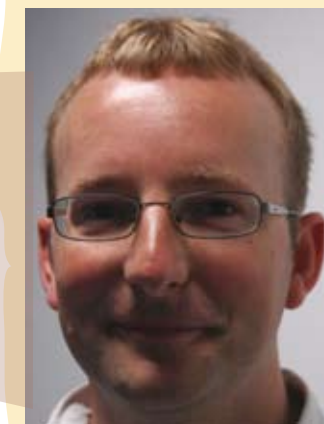
## Bj Peter Maude swapped Bush House for the TVC newsroom

**ON THE DAY THE SPEAKER** of the House of Commons resigned, I was (allegedly) in charge of the recordings operation for Mediawire. It was my first day on attachment from the World Service newsroom and I'd been hoping for a soft landing.

Instead I found myself responsible for all the new picture feeds of MPs reacting to the news. There was a mass of new material coming in from outside the Houses of Parliament and the phones were going crazy as new material arrived from Millbank and the regions, where MPs had been speaking to local film crews. The pictures were run on the News Channel, and the *One, Six and Ten* o'clock bulletins as well as BBC World.

There's nothing quite like being thrown in at the deep end on your first day in a new role.

The next few weeks brought the MPs' expenses scandal and the flurry of cabinet resignations and reshuffles and it's not stopped since then. Not that I'm complaining - it's always exciting to be working as major news stories are unfolding.



I got the attachment via the newsroom swap scheme. I've always felt proud to be working for the World Service, but I'll admit I was a bit of a radio dinosaur before joining the Mediawire team. For a while it was a culture shock to find myself working in the hustle of the newsroom at Television Centre.

As a bj in the Bush House newsroom, I write stories and produce hourly news bulletins and programmes like *World Briefing*, as well as working on *Global Newswire*. While I'm confident in my writing skills and editorial judgement, the attachment has really opened my eyes to a whole new world of pictures. Mediawire's remit includes cutting the latest agency pictures for the News Channel and BBC World, as well as taking in material for the national television bulletins by liaising with satellite trucks in the regions and foreign correspondents on location.

I've not only had to grapple with new technology but also learn all the jargon and copyright issues associated with television. It's almost been like learning another language with people talking about SOTs and OOVs and spotting aspect ratio problems relating to the height and width of images.

There's been a lot to take on board, but I now feel much better qualified for working in a multimedia newsroom environment. All this will undoubtedly help in the coming years as BBC News prepares for the forthcoming move to W1.

**Been anywhere nice? Send your attachment stories to Clare Bolt**

## FULL DETAILS AND HOW TO APPLY

Full details and how to apply are on Gateway at:  
[https://jobs.bbc.co.uk/fe/tpl\\_bbc02.asp](https://jobs.bbc.co.uk/fe/tpl_bbc02.asp)

For assistance contact BBC Recruitment's Response Team on: 0800 082 8080 or 0370 333 1330

## EXTERNAL APPLICATIONS

Vacancies published on this page are open to BBC Staff.

Where indicated (E), external applicants may also be considered. Please contact (quoting the appropriate ref.no.): Recruitment BBC HR Direct, PO Box 1133, Belfast BT1 9GP Tel: 0370 333 1330. Textphone: 028 9032 8478

# VERNON GRECH

**CALL CENTRE CHAMPION BBC WORKPLACE**

**He trained as a musician and was in a band, but now Vernon Grech works for the 047 call centre – and rides a cool Vespa**

PHOTOGRAPH: ROB WILKINSON



## CV VERNON GRECH

**Born:** 1977 in Portsmouth  
**Education:** London College of Music  
**Career landmarks:** becoming call centre champion for the BBC; getting one of his bands gossiped about in the Daily Sport  
**First job:** private music tuition while still at school  
**Family:** married to Rachel with 19-month-old daughter Poppy, who keeps them both busy and entertained

**Hello Vernon... your name can cause problems**  
 People often mishear my name on the phone. I say 'Hello, you're through to Vernon', and they say 'Hello Glen' or 'Dan'...

**What do you do?**  
 We keep people at their desks, so they don't have to worry about the number for the electrician or the guy who will fix the leak or the broken window, or the cleaning and porterage, or booking a room. It's easy to just sit at your desk and think, 'Something needs doing, I'll call 047'. That's us.

**How many of you are there?**  
 We're a team of 12, dealing with the London and Scotland buildings primarily, though we do a limited service for the nations and regions as well. We take a job, log it and put it in the hands of the right person. The call centre is in Waterlooville, near Portsmouth, and it's open 24/7, 365 days a year. The BBC doesn't stop, so we don't switch off.

Our main concern is that the BBC doesn't go off air; we prioritise broadcast-critical situations, like when a comms room gets too hot and the equipment has the potential to fail.

**What's your most common complaint?**  
 Keeping people comfortable in the building – the hot and colds. Someone will complain about being too hot and they'll be sat next to a colleague who's too cold. It's very difficult to keep everyone happy.

I always read the letters page in Ariel. If someone has written in with a problem, you might be a bit more sympathetic if they call. You can do more to help them and bring it to the attention of the building manager.

**How long is a typical call?**  
 We can take a call in under two minutes. If it's something simple and we've got the caller's details on our system already, then they're away in 60 seconds. Often by the time people say, 'Why do you need to take my name and number, why do you need all these details?' we could have logged the job.

We need this because there's always the chance that something may have

been done in error, and we rely on information from the people calling through, particularly room numbers and locations. We always like to take a phone number in case there's been any misunderstanding.

**Do you get to know regular callers?**  
 There's a lady in Media Village whose voice I recognise as soon as she starts speaking. We know which departments are going to be busier than others. The news team might not have as much time to log a job, but the CBeebies people are really good fun – they'll always stop and have a chat – and you get your regular callers who like to speak to us.

**Any memorable calls?**  
 Well, I wouldn't really like to say. Some of the bad ones, yes. People can be quite rude over the phone. Usually when someone goes to see them face to face they're a lot calmer. You do get called names from time to time. People don't always see the call centre as being separate from the actual bloke who does the job. If it's not gone absolutely perfectly, then we will often get the first attack.

**Oh dear... What about unusual calls?**  
 Sometimes they can be very specific. Last week someone got asked to source a pile of vegetable peelings.

They were making *Maestro* last year and a lady would ring up perhaps requesting a room with white sash windows that didn't look like an office. She was very exacting. We didn't know what we were booking the rooms for, so when it came on the telly we tuned in to see what it had all been about.

**Away from the job, you were in a band?**  
 I previously worked in an independent record company, and we ran our own band called The Lovelies. When I started my current job I'd already been to some of the BBC buildings to record stuff.

This is going back a bit, but we did a digital *Top of the Pops* spin-off that barely anyone would have seen. We also did 5 Live, and I remember being really disappointed that they recorded it and put it out the next day – it's meant to be live!

**Do you still play?**  
 I'm in a new band now, but it's for fun these days. We do original songs and a couple of Bonzo Dog Band covers and get the ukulele out. People generally laugh in the right places.

In the past I've taught music at colleges. It went hand in hand with being in a band because it kept money coming in and allowed you to be flexible with your time, which was good for touring. Now that the band's not so serious there's no need to go on tour. Also, I've got married and have a baby, so I think the musical lifestyle would be very difficult to get back into.

**Nice scooter, by the way...**  
 The Vespa's brilliant. Someone owed me some money, but I let them give me a rusty old wreck of a Vespa instead. I restored it in my garage bit by bit, rebuilt the engine. Now I like to think I'm driving a recycled vehicle. Tax is free, insurance is £100 for the year, I spend less than a fiver a week on petrol and I can fix it myself if I need to.

Interview by Adam Bambury

# foreign report



**AGNIESZKA PIOTROWSKA**

PRODUCER/DIRECTOR GETS LUCKY IN QUEENSLAND

**I WOKE UP IN WHAT FELT LIKE** the middle of the night. I looked at my watch and it was 3.30am. I looked around and felt disoriented. Where was I? This was definitely not my bedroom in west London. Then I remembered: I was in Brisbane, Australia, having arrived the night before following Ben Southall, the UK finalist for the Best Job in the World. This was the competition to find a caretaker for a beautiful Barrier Reef island. The job promised sunshine, sandy beaches, free accommodation and a £70k salary for six months' work.

I was jet lagged and couldn't sleep. I tossed and turned, texted my production co-ordinator, Helen Baird in Cardiff, for company and tried to sleep again. No good. My mobile beeped with a text. This time it was not Helen, but Ben, who wrote: 'Are you asleep?' I texted: 'Nope. What are you up to?' Ben responded: 'Writing my blog, and you?' 'Working! Breakfast at 6am?'

With hours still before our breakfast date, I got out my notes and looked at Ben's competitors: 15 candidates, the youngest being 20 (Hayley from Australia) and the oldest 40 (Eric from Vancouver).

So who had the best chance? Ben, of course, but I had to have a safety net. If he did not win, who should I feature too? 'You have 16 brilliant people, one crew, one Z1 camera and an AP – good luck!' said my London friends.

But as the job application process set up by Tourism Queensland delivered a clever marketing campaign for the islands of the Great Barrier Reef, they

would certainly consider the markets they were targeting. With six of the 16 finalists from Asia, it meant one of those had to be a serious contender.

But who would it be? Perhaps the lovely Miko from Japan, or the delightful and clever Anjan, a dj extraordinaire from India. Perhaps wild card candidate Clare, from Taiwan, who secured more than 150,000 votes online (about four times as many as the runner up), and spoke Mandarin as well as perfect English? Or maybe Juewon, the Korean educated in Texas, who was both extraordinarily charming and clever at the same time?

At breakfast, Ben and I met the competition. It was exciting and scary. I filmed them as they changed into their Best Job in the World outfits. I was rushing around with my Z1, filming more for myself as a research tool rather than thinking it would find its way into the film (it has).

And then – I had to pinch myself – how lucky is this? Here I was in Australia, chatting to some of the most exciting young people on the planet, about to fly to one of the islands of the Great Barrier Reef. What an amazing privilege. During 20 years of making films, I have camped in the Kalahari desert, got arrested in Madagascar and visited Angkor Wat, and now this. As for the winner of The Best Job in the World campaign – well, you might think you know who it is, but, hey, wait until you see my film.

The Best Job in the World, BBC One, July 2

# green room

## THE ARIELATOR

A weekly take on life at the BBC: who's up, who's down, who's off



**Karen Buchanan and Graham Barnard of BBC Norfolk**

**UPSIDE** Elton John left his 'castle' in London for a concert to which **BBC Norfolk** got exclusive access. The piano man was at Holkham Hall, entertaining a crowd of 14,000 a week ago on Sunday, and the station was given exclusive access to the audio and post-concert highlights. They were also allowed to broadcast extensively from backstage. 'It was all a rather super achievement for us,' said assistant editor Martyn Weston.

Our congratulations go to **Jonathan Izard** who ran the Bupa London 10k race, to raise money for the Alzheimer's Society. The fifty-something World Service announcer completed the race in an impressive 51 minutes, which is better than many people half his age. Jonathan hopes to raise more awareness of dementia, which affects one in three people over 65, including his late father. 'I've seen how devastating this condition can be, not only for the person with the illness, but also for their family and friends,' he said.

**DOWNSIDE** Radio Derby's **Shane O'Connor** came up against Nelson, a police dog who took the job a bit too seriously. During a tour of Derbyshire's police headquarters, the breakfast presenter was asked to don a special padded sleeve while the police gave the order for Nelson to attack. 'He didn't seem very keen to let go of my arm,' panted Shane. Breakfast producer Aftab Gulzar was astounded by the number of police officers turning up to see a 'BBC local radio presenter attacked by one of their own'. Or maybe they are just resentful of the licence fee.



## EARWIGGING OVERHEARD AT THE BBC

...and don't forget mate, if there's any problems, no problem...

... don't go home without my husband, will you?...

...they've got a dog that responds when you wave a pink thing in front of it...

...is your hard drive still humming?...

...in the lingo of your world, I leveraged my contacts...

...do you smell cat wee?...



## THE TRUTH IS OUT THERE



The Stig is finally 'revealed' as Michael Schumacher....

### LITTLE DID GREEN ROOM REALISE

when we were ushered into the new World of Top Gear Exhibition at the National Motor Museum in Beaulieu, that as well as meeting the mysterious Stig, we would also be meeting F1 superstar Michael Schumacher—both one and the same according to a shock 'unveiling' on Sunday night's show.

Unlike his fellow *Top Gear* presenters, the silent Stig appeared to be there in the flesh. But when the tour moved inside, the press posse was suddenly banned from taking any further pictures of the man more elusive than Michael Jackson after a nose job.

The Stig's handlers have grown wary of professional camera-wielders ever since a motoring magazine caught a glimpse of his face using a well-placed indoor flashbulb. Though the snap didn't reveal much more than the fact the Stig is human and not some kind of robot/animal hybrid, future photos could reveal whether he is one man, many men, or Michael Schumacher.

So the question remains, did *Top Gear* fork out to get a seven times F1 champion and German multimillionaire to stand in the New Forest for two hours? And is he even the real Stig? It's like the *XFiles*. Green room is no closer to the truth.

## Through the worst

**ONLY A FEW WEEKS** into the job, and *Look North's* new anchor in Newcastle has commented on the most bizarre 'sports' event he's ever been to. Jeff Brown (covering for Carol Malia, who's on maternity leave) found himself grasping for words during a world record attempt for the longest tunnel of human legs a dog can run through without stopping. Luckily, he had the support of sports presenter Dawn Thewlis, who provided some extra commentary.

The North North-umberland Dog Training Club did break the current record of 935 pairs of legs, held



Dog days: Jeff Brown and Dawn Thewlis



by a team in South Africa. The new record stands at 1019 and it will appear in the Guinness World Records. Scarred by his experiences, Jeff naively thought the whole thing would be over in two minutes. 'For me and Dawn, our new record was filling for about an hour and a quarter. Never again will I complain about *Look North* being 30 seconds light at the end of the programme.' Perhaps he can give some timely tips to Sue Barker at Wimbledon. She also has to do filling during the rain delays.

## WE HEAR THAT...

**WHILE THE** colour palette of the BBC homepage wouldn't normally set off a chorus of tweets, there was some heavy duty twittering when the backdrop changed to green during the Iranian protests last week. Was the BBC showing solidarity for the Iranian protestors? Nope – just 'pure coincidence', says ed Ashley Stewart-Noble, who tells us the colour is tied to the colour of the default picture in the highlights box and isn't made to reflect the news agenda. Green room notes that although the home page reverted to a green palette this week, it was probably more about matching Court One than Tehran.

**5 LIVE** pundit Michael Stich has said that the grunting of female tennis players detracted from their 'sex appeal'. 'Just play it back to the women,' he said. 'It sounds disgusting, ugly, unsexy.' Hnnngggrrrrmmph is all we say.

**LAST WEEK'S** Big Debate caused a stir with those watching via subtitles. 'Anyone watching on wine can email now,' announced host Nicky Campbell, evidently looking for people with lowered inhibitions to ignite the proceedings. Later on, Greg Dyke's infamous 'hideously white' comment was rendered 'hideously wide', evoking management prejudice of a different kind...

### RADIO LEEDS'

mid-morning presenter Graham Liver experienced what it's like to get a spray tan, all in the name of work. Producer Johnathan I'anson says the sprayer wanted to give Graham 'a right good going over'. 'We think it's a beautician's technical term,' he whispers. We can tell you it beats a bit of waxing.



**BEIJING CORRESPONDENT** James Reynolds has to justify his existence daily. 'A number of extremely well-edited videos kindly pointing out my many alleged failings as a reporter have been posted on various websites,' he laments. The latest video, shown on the Chinese version of YouTube, shows James grappling with umbrella-wielding security forces in Tiananmen Square on the anniversary of the massacre – watch him at [tinyurl.com/umbrellaman](http://tinyurl.com/umbrellaman)

## Win a subscription to Waybuloo

*Waybuloo*, the new pre-school series on CBeebies, has been launched as a BBC magazine that helps children learn about feelings and understand emotions. Through their engagement with the Piplings in the land of Nara, *Waybuloo Magazine* aims to encourage happier, confident children. Available fortnightly, the title launches on June 24 (priced £2.35). To win one of **two** six-month subscriptions to the new title, tell us the names of the four Pipling (*Waybuloo*) characters. Email [ariel@bbc.com](mailto:ariel@bbc.com) competitions by June 30.

