

TELEVISION IN THE 1960'S.

IN TERMS OF TELEVISION the 1960's was an exceptional era for broadcasting innovation and excitement.

Since its inception in the late 1920's by American Philo Taylor Farnsworth aged 21 who was brought up in a home with no electricity until he was 14, the first electronic television began to grow in popularity across the English speaking world.

John Reith (1889 - 1971) was the founder of the BBC. He was the first general manager when it was set up as the British Broadcasting Company in 1922, and he was its first Director General when it became a public broadcasting corporation in 1927. A towering man in every sense of the word he fought off the politicians' attempts to influence the BBC whilst offering the British people programmes to “**EDUCATE, INFORM AND ENTERTAIN**”

By the early 1950's TELEVISION began its special role as a focus point for a shared nation culture - a national pride - and it all began with the Queen's Coronation. Elizabeth II was crowned in Westminster Abbey on June 2nd 1953. At that time fewer than 2 million homes had televisions, and these were mainly grouped around large conurbations, London, Birmingham, Manchester, Cardiff and Glasgow. In the build up to the day 526, 000 sets were sold as Coronation fever swept the country and although there was only 2.5 million sets in Britain, somehow 20 million people managed to watch the event.

My survey says that many families 58% acquired a TV for the Coronation, one of my contributors as a young boy helped his Dad construct a television for the occasion, and those houses without a telly were invited to friends or neighbours to watch.

Another must for the family to watch came on December 25th 1957 when Queen Elizabeth II makes the first televised royal Christmas broadcast. It was from her Norfolk estate at Sandringham in the Long Library..This was seen as a historic event as it was the first to be televised live into living rooms up and down the country. Previously to this it had been broadcast to the Commonwealth nations via the radio. This broadcast was also the 25th anniversary of the Christmas radio address begun by her father George V in 1932.

By the 1960's the message was televised from Buckingham Palace and the monarch used it as inclusive as possible to her subjects at home as well as the Commonwealth. In this era both her younger sons were born. Prince Andrew in 1960 and Prince Edward in 1964. Because of this the Christmas 1963 message was again by radio as she did not want us to see her heavily pregnant. In 1967 the message was in colour for the first time. Throughout the decade she related to world happenings such as the jailing of Nelson Mandela, man landing on the moon and the assassination of Martin Luther King. She also stressed the blossoming and important role played by women in modern society.

In 1969 there was no Christmas broadcast at all. This was year that Prince Charles was invested as Prince of Wales and Elizabeth felt that the Royal family had had enough coverage on the television that year. It was re-instated the following year 1970.

This report takes Television as a generic whole talking about programmes on both main stations, BBC & ITV networks. However, something must be said about the differences, the main one being adverts and Commercial TV which came to our screens on the 22nd Sept. 1955.

Advertising history was made at 9.01pm when Britain's first advert squeezed on to the air. It was made by AB - Pathe and it was a 70 second ad for Gibbs SR Toothpaste. Co - incidentally, this was the day that the BBC chose to kill off Grace Archer in its long running radio soap thus stealing the next days newspaper headlines.

Early commercials were rather different from those we are familiar with today. First they were in black and white but also much longer. The lighting was harsh and the acting in this new medium stilt-

ed. They employed white middle - class actors with R.P. accents. This was so the industry were concerned not to be too American.

Typical of the early adverts were a single frame that could be used with a written caption like a newspaper advert. They were so boring. The advertiser's approach was very much to tell the viewer why they should use that product. There was little car advertising (due to a secret cartel arrangement between the manufacturers- and the same went for advertising spirits. The car manufacturer Datsun arrived from Japan in the late 1960's and broke the cosy agreement between Ford, Vauxhall , Chrysler and British Leyland not to advertise. think about how many car adverts we have today.

Popular adverts in the 1960's were for Fairy Soap - " for hands that feel softer " and we watched Tony the Tiger with his antics to get hold of a packet of Frosties. Maxwell House instant coffee and Alka Selzer had a heavy presence also. Hi Karate after - shave for men and for women - those with long blonde hair running through a wheat field was Sunsilk Hairspray - " like the touch of a loving hand ". Cadburys chocolates, sweets and cakes appealed to children as well as adults and I remember a finger of fudge " was just enough to give a kid a treat " but this mostly fell on deaf ears.

The 1970's brought us the Smash martians, the Heineken lager campaign and the Hamlet cigars. Old favourite remained on the screen, often with a twist to liven up a familiar product. Thus, Katie was sent to America to tell her new neighbours about Oxo cubes.

After a dip in popularity around 2014 advertisements are on the rise again and are still forecast to grow. £5.2 billion was invested in TV advertising in 2016 and 0.2% higher than the year before.

So, to the 1960's. " No longer a box in the corner "

By this time it was becoming " big business " and in June 1960 BBC Television Centre was the first purpose built production centre to be opened in the world. Designed by Graham Dawbarn it was copied in numerous countries and the building itself became the iconic image of broadcasting. A film on Utube of the opening night shows David Nixon as the host and a young Lionel Blair dancing around the forecourt and corridors as only he can.

The Observer archive claims that by May 1960 there were 30 different brands of T.V. sets, but the most popular brands were :- Panasonic, Sharps, Sony and Samsung. There were also different models on sale or to rent.

- * Table model
- * Console Model - stands on floor These could all be with or without radio.
- * Portable

Screen size was standard 17"

The average price was £65.00 - £70.00 to buy

Reliability was most important than the quality of sound or picture.

On the 20th April 1964 BBC 2 having won the franchise planned to launch an evening of programmes beginning at 7.20 pm. However, 35 mins before it went on air a power failure spread through most of London affecting BBC Television centre where their control was based. All that was shown was a BBC 2 logo of a large number 2 with a caption " will start shortly ". It was abandoned until the following day and the first programme aired was Play School.

1st July 1967 - Full colour service on BBC2 then BBC1 in 1969.

The first Test Card appeared on the 2nd July 1967, the following day. The little girl shown was Miss. Carole Hersee, who was 8 years old and seen playing noughts & crosses on a blackboard with a toy clown. The Test Card was developed by her father George Hersee.

Throughout the 1960's the Licence fee for the monochrome television was £1.25 + £5.00 on top if you had colour. How did they check?

A television lasted about 5 - 7 years but broke down regularly.

Valves were guaranteed for 3 months

Tubes were guaranteed for 4 years.

RENTING a television cost £100. - £110.00 to rent for 5 years

With this you got free servicing - (13 shilling an hour for engineers time and callout fee)

Contract Maintenance scheme cost £8.00 a year.

Popular Renters were - Radio Rentals, Domestic Rentals, Electric Rentals.

As well as many iconic television programmes launched in the 1960's such as

Coronation Street	1960
That was the week that was	1963
Dr. Who	1963.
The News at Ten	1967

We were able to watch minute by minute accounts of world happenings such as the assassination of President J. F. Kennedy (1963) the funeral of Winston Churchill (1965) and Men on the Moon (1969).

In January 1967 A new Sunday night drama of 26 episodes for BBC1 was televised. It was called The Forsyte Saga and became so popular that people scheduled their lives around it, even to the point of moving the time of church's evening service.

There was no daytime television in fact it was only on air from tea-times to late evening, so evenings were obviously the most popular time for people to watch together as a family.

The Watershed was introduced in the 1964 Television Act based on research and the child report by Professor Hilde Himmelweit which recommended that television channels acted responsibly only showing programmes suitable for a general audience before children's " natural bedtime " of 9.00 pm. The Watershed was the pivotal point when general became adult viewing.

The Television we watched as a kid was a key part of the scheduling in respect of the " Reithian " mission . Parents home from work etc , cooking a meal found it a godsend to have something to hand to entertain kids at this key time in the day. Thus programmes for children came thick and fast in the 1960's and quickly became part of daily life. Who remembers the immortal words

" It's Friday, it's five to five
it's Crackerjack "

and the jewel in the crown of this programme was the fabulous " Double or Drop ".

Blue Peter began in 1958 and will present its 60 years anniversary on the 16th October this year. At its peak 8 million viewers watched its rolling line of presenters, its pets and its garden and longed to earn a badge (6 in all blue to gold).If you did not watch Blue Peter you probably watched Magpie on the other channel ITV. If your parents thought adverts were corrupting and encouraged BBC 1 little did they think they would have to put " sticky - backed plastic " on the shopping list and collect milk bottle tops and silver foil to help buy guide dogs for the blind.

Another classic in 1964 was Play School but we all had favourites. Here are some of them : - Sooty, Noggin the Nog, Animal Magic with the gentle, spontaneous Johnny Morris. Stingray, Pink & Perky, Jackanory, Thunder Birds, Magic Roundabout with Florence, Zebedee & Co. Camberwick Green, Trumpton, Joe 90, Magpie, the Clangers all appeared in this innovative decade. In the 1960's when I fit the demographic of children's television it was rigid and rationed. It began with Jackanory and ended with The Magic Roundabout before the News came on. It seems very old fashioned now these

programmes that featured wooden and woollen puppets and a world away from the digitally - driven era of today.

The 1960's music shows on television saw the transition from middle of the road, easy listening, to Beatlemania, The Rolling Stones and the emergence of the " pop " scene.

The first began in 1961 on ITV and became the Saturday night spot for music. It was **THANK YOUR LUCKY STARS** and had such presenters as Keith Fordyce, Jim Dale and the legendary Brian Matthews.

BBC 1's **JUKE BOX JURY** had preceded **TYLS** by two years in 1959 but was more of a family show with weird choices on the " jury " such as Thora Hird and Donald Pleasance ? A young " brummie " girl Janice Nicholls became famous for " Oi'll give it five " but the national catchphrase was for a merciful brief moment. It finished in 1966 after a struggle with the Musician's Union over artists miming , but it very popular opening tune , **Hit & Miss** by John Barry is still an ear worm today.

Keith Fordyce popped up again along with the chic Cathy McGowan in ITV's **Ready Steady Go** and this became the benchmark for pop music shows going forward. It too had an opening score still played today - Manfred Mann's **54321**.

On the 1st January 1964 the best music chart television programme came on air - **Top of the Pops** . Each weekly programme consisted of performances from that week's best selling, popular music artists and a rundown of the top ten singles chart. It was a permanent feature on Christmas Day and showed some of the best singles of the year. Long term presenters were Ed Stewart and John Peel. Some became infamous for grubbier reasons - Jimmy Saville, Gary Glitter and Dave Lee Travers but their programmes are not available to down-load. The first single played was the Rolling Stones - **I Wanna be your Man**. The magazine and **TOTP's** on BBC2 have both survived despite the shows axing in 2006.

In late 1968/69 BBC2 began a new pop show called **Colour me Pop** . In this programme bands or artists were given a 30 minute slot to perform their repertoire but this format only lasted for 1 year. It did however pave the way for the legendary **Old Grey Whistle Stop** with the chocolatey voice of Bob Harris and the opening sequence of a starry night sky dancing.

It would be difficult to discuss 1960's television without mentioning the influence of **AMERICAN** shows shown on our screens. Instead of kitchen sink family comedies or historical dramas we were taken a ride to the Old Wild West with **BONANZA, RAWHIDE, THE LONE RANGER MAVERICK, THE WAGON TRAIN** and **The High Chaparral**. The space race gave us countless shows with a touch of the super-natural such as **Bewitched, Star Trek, The Monsters, The Adams Family** . Instead of the friendly Dixon of **Dock Green** of the 1950's , 60's America gave us hard hitting detective shows such as **Dragnet, Hawaii - five - O, Mission : Impossible, The Man from Uncle**, and until 2003 the mac clad detective **Columbo** .

My research has uncovered many anecdotes. Julie says she loved Friday nights as she was allowed to stay up as there was no school the next day and watch her favourite programme **That Was The Week That Was**. She really liked David Frost and enjoyed the witty songs of Lance Percival and Millicent Martin.

Phil fondly remembers Brian Blessed as **Fancy Smith** in **Z Cars** and Marilyn lusted after **David McCallum - The Man from U.N.C.L.E.** Many cite **Top of the Pops** as a favourite and Wendy tells us " My father used to sit and shake his head in disgust and say things like , **Why should Russia tremble ?** It was obvious my generation did not come across well and who can blame him ? Men like my Dad had sacrificed their youth fighting a war and seeing the hedonism of the 60's did not sit easy with him. "

Irene and many others say they came from a very traditional family and it was Father who said what they watched and always had the final say.

Loads of you did not know the term The Watershed but 9.00pm seemed to be a natural bedtime especially for those in their early teens still attending school.

The 1960's televised the idea of the weekend Variety Show which became hugely popular, with 18 shows shown over the three networks Shows such as Sunday Night at the London Palladium , The Black & White Minstrel Show, and Val Parnell Show. They also launched the careers of Bruce Forsyth and Val Doonican.

Variety shows such as Morecambe and Wise and Tommy Cooper became national treasures and are still held fondly in our memory today.

Another great favourite with the public were Quizzes and Game Shows including Double your Money, Take your Pick, with Hughie Green and Micheal Miles.

Soaps of the era were Coronation Street, Crossroads, Compact, Emergency Ward 10, the Market in Honey Lane, and Weavers Green.

Dramas were popular many citing Armchair Theatre, T.V.Playhouse, Tales of the Unexpected as must watches. Right from its inception Dr. Who (originally aimed at children) became viewing for the whole family with its roll-on roll-off catalogue of actors in the star role and the innovative opening theme from the BBC Electronic workshop. However, 90% of people questioned - including me - say they were terrified or " hid behind the settee" at Quatermass and the Pit.

My survey has also shown that the list below were the most popular programmes with the most following of viewers in that era. :-

Monty Python .	1969
Z Cars	1961
Army Game & Bootsie & Snudge.	1962
Steptoe & Son	1963
Till Death us do Part	1965
The Dickie Henderson Show	1964
Dr. Finlay's Case Book	1960

Throughout the 1960's television went through some radical changes. Other than what is discussed above :-

1. It became a political force
2. It saw the rise of TV journalism - in the 50's it was far behind print journalism but became what people relied on for the news. - Tonight, World in Action
3. Reached a far broader audience
4. Began to tackle real world- wide events and serious issues.
5. Went literally from a black & white to a multi- coloured world.

Denise West.