



The Seventies continued the theme of change and evolution in broadcasting. There was much innovation and initiative, accompanied by an increasing criticism of television in particular (part of the cyclical tension around the role of broadcasting in public and political life).

*And now for something completely different: a man with a tape recorder up his brother's nose.*  
Announcer, Monty Python's Flying Circus

### Groundbreaking drama and comedy



Elizabeth R, The Six Wives of Henry VIII, I Claudius, Pennies from Heaven, Last of the Summer Wine, The Glittering Prizes and Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy reflected the high standards and variety of television drama. It earned the description of "The Theatre in the Living Room" when the televising of all of Shakespeare's plays began in 1978 with Romeo and Juliet.

This was also a vintage period for outstanding new comedy with The Two Ronnies (1971), Are You Being Served? (1973), It Ain't Half Hot Mum and Porridge (1974) and The Good Life. The largest TV audience during Christmas 1973 was for The Queen's Broadcast, followed by the Morecambe and Wise Show, which hit a high of 25 million viewers. And breaking new ground was The Fall and Rise of Reginald Perrin (1976), Not the Nine O'Clock News (1979), Fawlty Towers (1975), and particularly Monty Python's Flying Circus with its irreverent and anarchic take on TV comedy.

Mastermind, The Generation Game, That's Life, Jim'll Fix It also all started in the early Seventies and later in the decade came Antiques Roadshow, Young Musician of the Year, Top Gear, One Man and His Dog and Question Time.



### Documentary innovation

Documentary highlights included The British Empire, Dr. Jacob Bronowski's The Ascent of Man, Sir David Attenborough's Life On Earth and Alistair Cooke's America. The Family, a powerful fly-on-the-wall series in 1974, could claim to be the first "reality TV" programme that pre-dated later examples of the genre by years, and was extensively copied by other broadcasters. On the educational front, the BBC joined with the new Open University creating 'a university for all' via its raft of TV and radio programmes (1971).

The Seventies was also marked by controversies with politicians criticising programmes, especially Yesterday's Men (1971) and The Question of Ulster (1972). Labour was angered by the first and the Conservative government was equally angered by the second and tried unsuccessfully to persuade the BBC to scrap the programme.

In 1974 CEEFAX teletext was introduced and ingeniously used the television screen to offer viewers up-to-the-minute news and information. Subtitling of programmes on CEEFAX began in 1979.

### Radio competition and development

BBC Radio faced competition for the first time in this decade, when the first commercial stations, LBC and Capital, opened in London in 1973. New BBC radio programmes included PM, The World Tonight, Week Ending, I'm Sorry I Haven't A Clue, Kaleidoscope, Science Now, Quote ... Unquote, The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy, The News Quiz, The Food Programme, The News Huddlines and Just A Minute.

The introduction of phone-in programmes had a mixed reception, but many listeners welcomed the opportunity to put questions directly to politicians and celebrities in live programmes such as Radio 4's It's Your Line. The Long March of Everyman (1971) was one of the most ambitious series of radio features ever broadcast.

### THE ANNAN COMMITTEE

Following on from the Beveridge and Pilkington, the Annan Committee Report, published in 1977, opened up discussion on a broad range of topics. While reaffirming the BBC's licence fee and editorial independence from the Government, it criticised the BBC for 'loss of nerve' and 'organisational fog'. More significantly, it proposed the establishment of a fourth channel, and an Independent Broadcasting Complaints Commission.

### BBC ENTERPRISES LTD

BBC Enterprises become a limited company in 1979, in response to an increasingly market-oriented culture. Needing a greater source of commercial income to supplement the licence fee, the BBC looked to programme sales, records and tapes, merchandising, home video, education and training, and exhibitions. Now renamed as BBC Worldwide, turnover has increased from £234,000 in 1960 to over £330 million in the current decade.

### OBITUARIES

#### JOHN REITH First Director General of the BBC 1889-1971

An engineer with a talent for business management, Reith joined the BBC as General Manager in 1922. He established it as a national unifying force, overseeing the development of radio and the inauguration of British television. Bored with the BBC, he left in 1938 to become Chairman of Imperial Airways - a 'stupendous folly' which soured the rest of his life. The BBC remains his lasting memorial.



#### WILFRED PICKLES Actor and Presenter 1904-1978

Infectious Yorkshireman whose native accent broke the 'BBC English' mould when he read the news in the 1940s. After the war, his radio quiz show, Have A Go, 'brought the people to the people'. Twenty million heard him ask: "Ow do, 'ow are yer?". His television show, Ask Pickles - a forerunner to Jim'll Fix It - confirmed Pickles as one of the BBC's first superstars.

#### JOYCE GRENFELL Actress and Broadcaster 1910-1979

Started as The Observer's radio critic, and became one of radio's brightest stars. Grenfell's gentle wit and mimicry illuminated the legendary How To... radio series, and the discussion programme We Beg to Differ. Immense popularity brought film success, but the famous toothy grin was also a regular television fixture - through her own series, and as a panellist on Face the Music.



### CEEFAX

A BBC videotext or teledata system giving viewers the choice of extra push-button information on their screens - enabling them to 'see facts'. Early work on the teletext system began in 1972. Like many new developments, it depended on the increased use of digitalisation, a new way of dealing with electrical information.

### STEREO

The BBC had experimented with stereo transmissions for a number of years. It was not until the 1970s, however, that it was extended to all networks, bringing with it a greater quality of sound. Initially, the BBC had seen stereo as a transitory gimmick, but it became heavily involved in its development. Some producers believed stereo did for radio what colour did for television.

**1970**

- 1 January - *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* (TV).
- 9 February - *Doomwatch* (TV).
- 4 March - *Week Ending* (Radio).
- 23 March - *Up Pompeii!* (TV).
- 4 April - Radio networks reorganised to introduce more generic broadcasting.
- 6 April - *Start the Week* (Radio).
- 6 April - *PM* (Radio).
- 6 April - *The World Tonight* (Radio).
- 19 April - *Analysis* (Radio).
- 5 October - *You and Yours* (Radio).

**1971**

- 3 January - Open University programmes began on radio and television.
- 1 February - Radio-only licence fee abolished.
- 15 February - *Elizabeth R* (TV).
- 10 April - *The Two Ronnies* (TV).
- 17 June - *Yesterday's Men* (TV).
- 19 June - *Parkinson* (TV).
- 21 September - *The Old Grey Whistle Test* (TV).
- 2 October - *Bruce Forsyth and The Generation Game* (TV).
- 3 October - The BBC Complaints Commission was established and lasted for ten years until the Government-backed Broadcasting Complaints Commission began.
- 15 October - *The Onedin Line* (TV).

**1972**

- 5 January - *The Question of Ulster* (TV).
- 11 January - *The British Empire* (TV).
- 19 January - Government restrictions on broadcasting hours ended.
- 4 April - *John Craven's Newsround*, later *Newsround* (TV).
- 11 April - *I'm Sorry I Haven't a Clue* (Radio).
- 4 July - *Andre Previn's Music Night* (TV).
- 11 September - *Mastermind* (TV).
- 28 September - *War and Peace* (TV).
- 5 October - *The Last Goon Show of All* (Radio).
- 19 October - *Colditz* (TV).
- 12 November - *America* (Alistair Cooke) (TV).

**1973**

- 4 January - *Last Of The Summer Wine* (TV).
- 5 February - *The Wombles* (TV).
- 14 March - *Are You Being Served?* (TV).
- 2 April - *Kaleidoscope* (Radio).
- 5 May - *The Ascent Of Man* (TV).
- 20 May - *M.A.S.H.* (TV).
- 26 May - *That's Life!* (TV).
- 6 July - *Checkpoint* (TV).
- 23 July - The Radio One Roadshow (Radio).
- 10 September - *Newsbeat* (Radio).
- 14 November - The marriage of Princess Anne and Captain Mark Phillips televised.

#### 1974

- 3 January - *It Ain't Half Hot Mum* (TV).
- 19 January - *The Pallisers* (TV).
- 11 May - *Science Now* (Radio).
- 30 April - *The Family* (TV).
- 5 September - *Porridge* (TV).
- 23 September - Regular CEEFAX teletext service (right) began.
- 28 September - *Stop the Week* (Radio).
- 30 December - *Churchill's People* (TV).

#### 1975

- 4 April - *The Good Life* (TV).
- 31 May - *Jim'll Fix It* (TV).
- 9 June - 4 July - First experimental radio broadcasting of House of Commons proceedings.
- 19 September - *Fawlty Towers* (TV).
- 1 October - *Arena* (TV).
- 5 October - *Poldark* (TV).
- 12 October - *On the Move*, the pioneering adult literacy series, (TV).

#### 1976

- 4 January - *Quote...Unquote* (Radio).
- 8 January - *When the Boat Comes In* (TV).
- 21 January - *The Glittering Prizes* (TV).
- 17 February - *One Man and His Dog* (TV).
- 20 February - *Open All Hours* (TV).
- 5 August - *Sailor* (TV).
- 3 September - *A Good Read* (Radio).
- 4 September - *The Duchess of Duke Street* (TV).
- 8 September - *The Fall and Rise of Regional Perrin* (TV).
- 20 September - *I, Claudius* (TV).
- 3 November - *The News Huddlines* (Radio).

#### 1977

- 10 April - *Everyman* (TV).
- 21 April - *Royal Heritage* (TV).
- 8 July - *Going Places* (Radio).
- 6 September - *The News Quiz* (Radio).
- 1 October - *Does He Take Sugar?* (Radio).
- 2 October - *Money Box* (Radio).
- 26 October - *File on Four* (Radio).

#### 1978

- 8 January - *All Creatures Great and Small* (TV).
- 7 February - *Young Musician of the Year* (TV).
- 8 February - *Grange Hill* (TV).
- 7 March - *Pennies from Heaven* (TV).
- 8 March - *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* (Radio).
- 3 April - Start of regular radio broadcasts from Parliament.
- 31 October - *The Voyage of Charles Darwin* (TV).
- 10 November - *Butterflies* (TV).
- 23 November - Radio 2 became the first UK network to broadcast regularly throughout the night.
- 3 December - Start of BBC Shakespeare project with *Romeo and Juliet* (TV).

## 1979

- 17 January - *Telford's Change* (TV).
- 16 January - Sir David Attenborough's *Life On Earth* (TV).
- 18 February - *Antiques Roadshow* (TV).
- 21 March - Publication of BBC Working Party Report on Violence in Television.
- 1 April - *Feedback* (Radio).
- 22 April - *Heart of the Matter* (TV).
- 2 September - First CEEFAX Teletext subtitled programme.
- 10 September - *Tinker, Tailor, Soldier, Spy* (TV).
- 25 September - *Question Time* (TV).
- 29 September - *Breakaway* (Radio).
- 30 September - *The Food Programme* (Radio).
- 30 September - *To the Manor Born* (TV).
- 30 September - *Shoestring* (TV).
- 16 October - *Not the Nine O'clock News* (TV).
- 4 November - *Testament of Youth* (TV).
- 5 November - *The Magic of Dance* (TV).