

The Connected Histories of the BBC

Provenance:	<p>The file reproduced here was provided by the BBC to be made publicly accessible through the Connected Histories of the BBC catalogue hosted by the University of Sussex. It was selected in 2021 from one of five collections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • BBC Oral History • BBC History of North Regional Broadcasting • BBC Horizon at 50 • BBC World Service Moving Houses Project • Alexandra Palace Television Society Oral History
Clearance:	Interviews have been reviewed and edited to comply with GDPR and other requirements.
Copyright:	<p>© BBC</p> <p>© Alexandra Palace Television Society</p>
Conditions of use:	<p>This interview is available for private research. If you wish to use any of the interview in a published work or for a commercial purpose, permission must be requested from the BBC at</p> <p>historyteam@bbc.co.uk</p> <p>apts@apts.org.uk (for Alexandra Palace material)</p>
Partner:	The Connected Histories of the BBC research project was led by the University of Sussex, 2017-2022, funded by the AHRC.
More information:	The project's public resource including more information on terms and conditions of use are available at: https://chbbc.sussex.ac.uk/

Television OB Commentators Files 1 2 and 3 Notes

Television Outside Broadcast commentators recalling their early experiences and developments of style

Raymond Baxter, Michael Henderson, Robert Hudson, Brian Johnston

Recorded on 20th November 1992 by Ron Chown

Tape 1 Side 1 22'25

How Brian Johnston joined the BBC, 1946, Ian Orr-Ewing, commentating at Lords, R C Robertson-Glasgow AKA Crusoe, W B Franklin, Percy Fender (1'25)

door bell rings, Crusoe (2'40)

SNF 'staff no fee' (3'18)

How Robert Hudson joins the BBC, Ian Orr-Ewing (3'35)

Raymond Baxter arrives (4'33)

Michael Henderson introduces himself, Hudson's impersonations, joining the BBC, Ian Orr-Ewing, becoming a rugby commentator, Ken Best (5'28)

Raymond Baxter tells how he joins the BBC (10'10)

Early BBC career, Wynford Vaughn Thomas (12'40)

Lobby teaching how to commentate, Lobby being head of radio and television OBs, speedway, national grid OB Streatham, 1951, Alan Chivers (14'00)

Differences between radio and television commentary, comparing OB styles (16'20)

Difficulties of the Lord Mayor's Show, Richard Dimbleby's guidance on OB commentary, judgement when to speak, Henry Longhurst, Richie Benaud (19'20)

Watching television with the radio commentary (21'13)

Tape 1 Side 2 21'36

Discussion continues Ex-players joining the commentary team, regional commentary, Richard Dimbleby commentary style (2'06)

Anecdotes about working 'live', Keith Rogers, 1954, Dimbleby, Berkeley Smith (2'50)

Peter Webber, 'Now' (7'10)

Cricket (9'20)

Television Outside Broadcast Exhibition, Peter Dimmock (12'25)

Commentary positions, Swanton, Roy Webber, Henry Longhurst (13'55)

Impact of video tape, flashbacks, Farnborough (15'23)

Impact of working 'live', Lobby, telling the audience what is 'live' (17'07)

The Stooges, Terry Thomas, 'live', 'Z cars' (19'40)

Programmes at A.P. studios (21'00)

Tape 2 Side 1 31'35

Commentary for Newsreel, Paul Fox making the fx noises with a bat and ball ,
racing commentary, Philip Dorte, 'Here and There', pavilion roof (2'48)

John Woodcock, Swanton, thermos anecdote, 'Pope' anecdote, Swanton wartime
recollections (3'10)

Royal family recollections, anecdotes (7'15)

Phone-calls from the Palace (16'28)

Festival of Remembrance, Royal Variety Performance (17'30)

Persuading people to go on television, London sewers, politeness with
interviewees (20'33)

Overruns, Tomorrow's World 'live', viewers enjoying things going wrong (22'35)

'Now', (25'10)

Holme Moss, cricket (26'40)

Transmitting from a submarine, Bill Wright (27'35)

Songs of Praise, Field Marshall Montgomery (29'00)

Varying coverage each year, research, Festival of Remembrance, Chelsea
Pensioners anecdote (30'50)

Big audience figures for 'live' programmes, Palace of Arts, planning for disasters,
covering accidents, Bertram Mills, circus, Peter Dimmock, Farnborough, 'hold the
shot' (33'20)

groups break for lunch

File: fi85dad0 -- APTS_Television_OB_Commentators Files 1 to 3 81 mins
Duration: 1:21:00
Date: 24/03/2021
Typist: 673

START AUDIO

[APTS_Television_OB_Commentators_1 – Start]

Mike Henderson: You like to go Brian?

Brian Johnston: Yes, well, I'm Brian Johnston. I was very, very lucky because when I was at Oxford I used to play cricket with someone called Ian Orr Ewing and we used to play a lot together before the war. And when the war finished I didn't know what I was going to do and I luckily got into the radio side of BBC through Stewart MacPherson and Wynford Vaughan-Thomas because I'd met them during the war and then they made me do a test in Oxford Street. I had to ask people what they thought about the butter ration. If you ask silly questions you got silly answers. They said, "It wasn't very good but at least you kept talking."

So I joined under the Great [___ 00:00:31] in middle of January 1946 and I started in radio. And about March 1946 the telephone rang and it said, "Ian here, Ian Orr Ewing, just out of the Royal Airforce..." whatever he was, "... In charge of sport on television, we got two test matches against the Indians." because you couldn't do more than two in those days because of the transmitter, "At Lords and the Oval, will you be the

commentator?" I had an open talk of it and know a bit about cricket.

So on that little bit of luck I did the first commentary and my very first television, so far as I can remember, was the Lords test match against India where Alec Bedser took I think 11 wickets and Hardstaff made a double 100.

I had with me then people like R C Robertson-Glasgow, W B Franklin, Percy Fender. The marvellous thing with Percy Fender with this nose, that his nose was even bigger than mine and he didn't talk very loudly. Interestingly I said to him, "Would you hold the microphone a bit closer, Mr Fender?" And he did and they said, "We still can't hear, will you do it so it's touching your nose." He said, "It is," because he was miles away from his mouth. This was the lip mic so he should have held it right up to his mouth.

He used to get very ratty. I remember he was talking about Hayward of Surrey in the 1900s early, how he used to wear a Panama hat. This was very nearly in the middle of a hat trick, not quite, but that sort of thing. The producer said, "Stick to the cricket, Percy, stick to the cricket." And he put his microphone down and said, "If he's so bloody clever, let him come and do it himself." He was very ratty.

In the same time Robertson-Glasgow - (bell rings), that will be Raymond I think - Robertson-Glasgow used to do the old one, when the producer said, "Give the score, Raymond." "For those who weren't running two balls before the score now is-

So we had a bit of fun and that was very definitely the first one. I imagine we had three cameras. I really doubt it-

00:02:35

Mike Henderson: He was always Crusoe, wasn't he?

Brian Johnston: Crusoe, yes.

Mike Henderson: Very good value in the lunch break, I always thought, Crusoe was.

Brian Johnston: Yes, the trouble was he had a rather lugubrious voice because he was a great whit and he was better probably off the mic.

Raymond Baxter: He was a jolly good writer.

Brian Johnston: Brilliant, absolutely brilliant, but I don't know how many cameras we had then. I would have thought we were lucky if we had three.

Mike Henderson: Three, yes.

Brian Johnston: But there have been occasions early on, I was talking in fact with Will Fuller this morning, he was 80 and congratulate him. And when we were once down at Swansea, we had one camera. So sometimes we had one and sometimes two.

00:03:12

Mike Henderson: In those days you might have one breaking down of course, too.

Brian Johnston: Yes, it was all very experimental.

00:03:18

Mike Henderson: So we can't ask you what you got paid for your first broadcast because you were staff no fee.

Brian Johnston: SNF, staff no fee.

Robert Hudson: I got paid four guineas.

Brian Johnston: Why did you get paid and I didn't.

Mike Henderson: He wasn't staff.

Robert Hudson: I wasn't staff.

Brian Johnston: They weren't the staff.

Mike Henderson: This is Robert, come on.

Robert Hudson: It's Robert Hudson here. Ian Orr Ewing comes into my first television OB because he was a producer of England v The Rest, Rugby, Twickenham on December 20th 1947 and you, Michael, Michael Henderson had asked me to come along and

do an audition in the second half. And the funny thing was that you couldn't televise the second half because the light faded and the whole thing packed up at half time which wasn't much fun for the viewers, I wouldn't have thought.

I, in fact, did an audition live on the air. Ian Orr Ewing suddenly said to Michael, "Put Robert on live for 10 minutes." And so Michael handed over to me. It was a marvellous way of doing it because literally thrown in the deep end and I seem to get away with that alright. I got paid four guineas for it. So all my thanks to Ian Orr Ewing and to Michael. That was my first television.

Brian Johnston: As the late Mr Baxter has just come in.

Mike Henderson: Late again.

Raymond Baxter: Space to park.

Brian Johnston: Have you found one?

Raymond Baxter: Not really, no. It's parked on the corner by the road down to the school but half of it's sticking out.

Brian Johnston: As the girl said to the soldier.

Mike Henderson: We're on tape. Take your coat off. Did Kelly offer you a cup of coffee?

Raymond Baxter: Yes, it's coming.

Robert Hudson: Are we still running?

Mike Henderson: Yes, we're still running. What we're doing at the moment is they've both introduced themselves, I'm just about to introduce myself and so you can slip in after me, if that's alright.

Raymond Baxter: What's it for?

Robert Hudson: It's the pottery.

Brian Johnston: History, we're called Living History for Oxford University.

Raymond Baxter: I don't think I'd like to be called living history.

Brian Johnston: Well, you are living, aren't you?

Raymond Baxter: I'm not sure after this morning to be perfectly honest.

Mike Henderson: Anyway-

Brian Johnston: You haven't seen my obituary, have you?

Mike Henderson: Mike Henderson, Robert's just mentioned that I was involved- I was already on the staff just when you did your first commentary. But I remember Robert during the war because we were in the same regiment and on Mess Nights Robert used to, as his party piece, like you had to do, everybody had to do a party piece on Mess Nights, Robert's party piece was to mimic the commentators at the time who were such as Robert.

Robert Hudson: Howard Marshall.

Brian Johnston: On with the Kimbo.

Mike Henderson: And Teddy Wakeland.

Robert Hudson: And Teddy Wakeland, yes.

Mike Henderson: Let's hear your Teddy Wakeland.

Robert Hudson: I don't think I can do it now. I can't do it now.

Brian Johnston: Very excitable, George [Annison 00:06:12].

Robert Hudson: Teddy Wakeland was very saccade, wasn't he? "You got the ball, you got the ball, right in the centre, pass the ball, [____ 00:06:22]."

Mike Henderson: Square one.

Robert Hudson: Square one. [Crosstalk 00:06:26] Somebody else saying square one. But of course that was over the radio.

Mike Henderson: Then of course did you have a go at Tommy Woodruff when the fleet split up, did you ever try that one? I forget.

Robert Hudson: I don't think I tried to mimic his voice but I know all about what happened.

Mike Henderson: Anyway, Mike Henderson, again, I came out of the army after my first six years of adult life learning how to kill people which was rather unproductive. For some reason I wanted to get into television which was new. I had seen the 1937 coronation on television and that had made quite an impact on me. It was the very first outside broadcast ever on television. Somehow during the war this was the thing I felt I wanted to get into.

So I wrote on my demob leave and got a letter from Ian Orr Ewing saying, "Sorry, you sound the sort of person we might like but there is no vacancy. Keep in touch."

I was advised by people in the BBC to get into the BBC anywhere. So I answered an advert and got a job as studio manager at European Service, became a news reader within three months. And it was during that period and I was playing [___ 00:07:43] myself for Rosslyn Park and having played for the university as well. I was unable to play that day as I ripped an ankle. I thought I'd go to Twickenham because-

Brian Johnston: 1:15 lunch will be here.

Mike Henderson: That's fine. I'd go to Twickenham because, although Quinn playing a club match it was being televised and that's my interest. I walked up later to an unfamiliar van and there was a cameraman outside on the tripod just pointing it at team captions. I happened to notice that two of the people on there were unfit in the morning's papers and therefore they were incorrect. I mentioned this to the cameraman and he said, "Well, I'm not interested but the producer might be, knock on the door."

So I knocked on the door of the van. Ian Orr Ewing appeared and I told him. And he said, "Would you like to have a look inside?" So I looked inside and of course at that he then realised that I was actually on the staff of the corporation. He said, "Would you like to sit up in a commentary position?" So I went up to the commentary position and they were only televising the first half as you mentioned. There was a chap called Ken Best who was a swimmer, who was a staff commentator who was trying to do a rugby commentary and I'm afraid it wasn't awfully good to be quite frank and he knew that.

And at half time they went and signed off and I was asked to put cans on. Ian said, "We're going to do a practice. We'll swap all the cameramen around and I need to practice the production. The lights good enough for the time being for us to practice with and it would help if there was a commentary going and would you like to have a go?"

So I had a go and at the end he had me down for a drink and for the next 15 years I was the BBC's rugby television commentator.

Brian Johnston: : We've all been very lucky. I didn't know [____ 00:09:52].

Mike Henderson: You couldn't do that nowadays, could you? I mean I don't think get away with it.

Robert Hudson: I think you always need a bit of a luck, don't you.

00:10:10

Mike Henderson: Yes, when people say how do you get into television I say organised coincidence. How did you start?

Raymond Baxter: Well, I started via forces broadcasting in Cairo. When at the end of the war a great mate and I applied for permanent commissions and at that time the air council said, "We won't give VR or auxiliary officers permanent commissions. You can have four on and seven off." I thought I should be 27, an old man and unemployed, that won't do at all.

So I walked down the road in Cairo to the forces broadcasting station and I said, "Got any jobs?" And they said, "Read this." And it was the [NAFE News 00:10:52], so I read that and three weeks later I was the CEO because I was the only officer which is a very good way to learn.

So when I was demobbed I thought I would try seriously to make broadcasting my career. And there is a side light on that, when my posting came through from my squadron we were flying Dakotas and it was a very distinguished bomber pilot who was the squadron commander and my little mob ex-fighter pilot said there was a certain amount of, shall we say, friendly tension in the unit.

Anyway he said, "There's a posting come through for you." And I said, "Has it come through already, sir?" And he said, "Yes, to HQ [Medmi 00:11:44] Welfare." I said, "Oh, it comes under that, does it?" And he said, "Something about broadcasting." And I said, "Yes, sir." And he said, "You're not thinking of making that a career, are you?" I said, "Well, I am as a matter of fact, sir." He said, "Hmm, scarcely a job for a man, I would have thought."

Anyway despite that discussion I persisted.

Robert Hudson: Everybody in the BBC was queer.

Raymond Baxter: Then I was demobbed and by this time I was married to an American lady and still am, the same one. We decided to retire before we started work. So we went and lived in a cottage in the Wye Valley for six months which was very incredible.

Then I started kicking on the backdoor of Broadcasting House and was taken on by the BBC for immediate secondment to

BFN in Hamburg. Went there from '47 to '49, came back, was interviewed by Charles Max-Muller and who had interviewed me for the forces broadcasting job at BFM incidentally.

Then Sylvia and I were invited out to lunch because you couldn't be considered seriously for a job in those days, you remember, unless the little woman was given - a going over would be an unfortunate choice of expression - but you know what I mean.

Brian Johnston: Use the right fork at the right time.

Raymond Baxter: Yes, all that. So then I did the staff course which lasted six weeks and was a wonderful education in broadcasting. You mentioned Ken Best, he was on the same course as me.

00:13:45

Robert Hudson: Was that Eileen Macleod and Basil Grey?

Raymond Baxter: Yes, amazing people and Wynford Vaughan-Thomas did the lecture on outside broadcasting and I did a dummy commentary on a black and white film of the Lord Mayor's Show.

Brian Johnston: All I can say that you're jolly lucky. I never went on any course at all. The only person who taught me was Lobby.

Raymond Baxter: Lobby taught us all.

Brian Johnston: He taught us all but I never went on a course and said what you had to do and I'm afraid-

Raymond Baxter: It showed.

Brian Johnston: Well, it did, you see and they suffered. There weren't many of them though, in those days, only just in the London area.

Mike Henderson: They were extraordinarily supportive considering we were making our mistakes at them.

Brian Johnston: That's right, it was an adventure for them and adventure for them and an adventure for us that was why at that time it was absolutely marvellous, you were creative. They done television cricket before the war and they probably done it very well but after the war no one knew about it and Jim Swanton who had done it a bit before the war was doing radio. So they just said the one thing which we've all been told only speak when you can add to the picture, which none of us ever did of course, but that was the right concept. We tried to follow it.

00:14:53

Mike Henderson: In Raymond's preliminary we didn't actually get to the point of what was your first television.

Raymond Baxter: Well, it happened by accident because I was in outside broadcast radio and then Lobby was for a short while head of both. So various of us were invited to do a bit of television commentary. The first one I ever did was interviews in the pits

at the world's speedway championship at Wide City. And Dennis Monger was the producer I think. It must have been almost his first production. Then it kind of went on from there.

Robert Hudson: I did one with you in the very early days. You've probably forgotten it but I didn't do very many in vision but it was shedding the load at Stratham Power station.

Raymond Baxter: I remember it. I remember it, it was about the National Grid and in the days of power cuts. That's really what it was about.

00:15:57

Mike Henderson: What date was that, do you know?

Robert Hudson: Yes, I do know as a matter of fact, it was 1951.

Raymond Baxter: I would have guessed '51.

Robert Hudson: I formed the impression that Raymond knew everything about shedding the load and I knew absolutely nothing but between us we managed to get along.

Brian Johnston: Raymond knew all about it of course, didn't you?

Robert Hudson: Raymond knew all about it. The producer was Alan Chivers.

00:16:20

Raymond Baxter: Are we only talking about television because-

Mike Henderson: I'm afraid so, yes.

Raymond Baxter: Never mind.

00:16:28

Mike Henderson: The only thing I think would be interesting would be we've all done radio, we've all done television, what the difference is in why we prefer to do one rather than the other. I think that would be an interesting discussion at a later point or now if you like.

Brian Johnston: Well, I mean there's no question that radio is far easier, television is very, very difficult to please anybody any of the time. You have to edit yourself while you go along. Shall I say that, shan't I? Is it obvious, isn't it obvious? You have the chap talking into your headphones and he wants a picture of something and you may want something else. On radio you can be yourself which I think is the secret of radio that all the commentators are different. And they are themselves who are in a sense produced on television.

So there's no question that radio is far the easier-

Robert Hudson: Yes, I agree with that. I think one probably gets more satisfaction out of television actually, at least I think I do. Perhaps it's because I'm a masochist.

Brian Johnston: In a way because on radio you are creating the thing, on television, nowadays it's so technical, it's more technical than commentary now. The camera is producing a lot of the stuff. You're explaining what's going on but you're creating on radio but you don't on television.

Robert Hudson: I actually don't agree with that although it's interesting.

Mike Henderson: Well, you chose to go in the direction of sound only.

Robert Hudson: I think radio is much more difficult. I don't agree with that and certainly much more satisfying to me if you are creating, you are creating in a very particular way which Lobby was the pass master as a teacher. And I think to do a really good radio commentary is extremely difficult. I also agree of course to do a really good television is difficult as well.

I think, put it this way, I think you can get away with television but you can get away with radio.

Brian Johnston: I don't think we'd get away with television.

Raymond Baxter: I don't know, there are so many different kinds of outside broadcast, aren't there? I mean there is no, in my view, comparison, between doing an outside broadcast like the Festival of Remembrance and doing the boat race. You know, and from the commentator's point of view the two jobs are a million miles apart. With great respect, I think one has to be as creative in a situation like that in television as one has to be in

radio with the additional discipline of the fact you aren't in sole control of your destiny.

Brian Johnston: But you certainly are to things like the Lord Mayor's Show. I think I did eight of those and they're the most impossible things to do. You can't create, it's just what suddenly is produced in front of you, they all get out of order. They're all [____ 00:19:35] the thing you've got on your list is coming next, it's broken down and you have to rush back and say, "Can the Lord Mayor cut out some of the things and come in, because he's not going to be there in time for the close with Paul ____." I don't know, I think that was the most difficult of all, television broadcast.

Mike Henderson: I remember Richard Dimpleby saying to me, sort of, fairly early on that he was awfully good to youngsters who were coming up, he was always to discuss the art. He said that he felt doing both that to a large extent you could prepare your own ground with a radio commentary in advance and know that you were going to use most of the material. Whereas in television to feel safe you needed to have three times much material as you would need and you never knew which third you were going to have to produce because it depended on the pictures that were thrown out by the producer and you had to match with it. I think to my way of reckoning I think that is right, that you had to be over prepared in research and detail for a television commentary.

Brian Johnston: The judgement you need in television of when to speak and when not, I mean it is extraordinary, perhaps the great

commentators, Henry Longhurst was one of the greatest I think of sports, he just came in at the right moment. And the modern people who say the most of them doing a running commentary but someone like Richie Benaud just says the right thing at the right time. I think that's the difference. That's why I think it's so much harder.

Mike Henderson: We used to have the thing if in doubt say nowt.

Brian Johnston: But then how can you explain, and this happens in cricket, we know that a tremendous number watch pictures and they switch on to the radio. If we talked as much on radio as in television commentary it would be wrong. What's the explanation there? They're not trying to catch you out? I don't know what it is.

Raymond Baxter: I think you have created a cult following, you and your mates on cricket. I mean your audience is paying as much attention when there is no play. I have described you as the sports commentator who has made his reputation during those periods when nothing is happening on the field. I mean that in the most flattering sense.

Brian Johnston: Alright, but doesn't it happen on any sport?

Raymond Baxter: No.

00:22:12

Brian Johnston: When they're watching rugby do they listen to the rugby commentator or do they-

Raymond Baxter: I have never heard of any evidence of that and that is why I say it is peculiar to you.

[APTS_Television_OB_Commentators_1 – Ends]

[APTS_Television_OB_Commentators_2 – Starts]

Robert Hudson: Ring him tonight to see if it's okay. I'll strike a blow.

Mike Henderson: He kind of just turned us over so we're on the other side of the tape. I think we were getting on to quite an interesting point about the differences between radio and television commentary and such like and the cult of Radio Three cricket.

I think myself that in the days when Brian was commentating on television and I used to be producing, there was a certain element of fun. I mean we didn't rack jokes all the time but there's an element of fun that to me is missing nowadays.

They brought in people who should be nameless who were professional cricketers but not, to my mind, the ideal commentator. Have you any-

Brian Johnston: They're much more technical now. They concentrate whether the ball goes this way or that or does this. I don't know if Robert agrees, I think this is what's going to happen on radio in that you will get the ex-players because certainly in cricket they've had intelligent people like David Gower, Mike Berwick

who sits down and do it, because we now no longer have the advantage. In the old days we used to practice our commentary doing county cricket and we had it on the radio and we had to do half an hour in the morning, half an hour in the afternoon.

So we had an advantage over the ex-test player because we were used to talking, he wasn't. But now we start from scratch. There's no practice for any commentator. Even on telly, we used to do county matches on telly regularly with Robert and everything else, didn't we?

Robert Hudson: Oh yes.

Brian Johnston: But they don't do it now so you can go to the big time and learn doing test matches which isn't quite the ideal thing.

Robert Hudson: When we had regions of course that was when you had a lot of commentary. I mean in the north region where I was we used to do a lot of our own county matches and do three half hour periods every day. You got terrific amount of experience that way.

The other point I would just like to make about the television commentary, I didn't want to imply it wasn't difficult because it is. But if you listen to Richard Dimbleby's commentaries on television, to the soundtrack, you'll find that he talked nearly all the time because he had the brilliant gift of extracting from any picture exactly what you wanted to know. He talked an awful lot, you know, almost continuously, extraordinary.

Mike Henderson: I think you would find that he wouldn't be just describing what you could see in the picture.

Robert Hudson: Of course not, that's the whole point but he had that gift. Bringing out of the picture exactly what you wanted to know.

Mike Henderson: And a gift that was supported by an enormous amount of preparation and hard work beforehand. It was quite incredible right up to the end, the amount of work that he did preparatory.

00:02:50

I wonder if we can switch to another topic, I expect we've all got stories about the peculiar positions that we got placed in to do television. I mean I can think of some but I mean it was live, you had to rehearse things and then actually stand waiting for a cue, can you remember any particular- I'll start the thing off, I can remember having to do a thing for Keith Rogers as producer. We were doing some sort of fait up in North Finchley or something and the RAF had- I think they called it the fan where you stepped off and it arrested your fall and was meant to be like parachute drop. Keith had the wonderful idea that I should stand at the top of the tower and open the programme from there.

So I was standing up there waiting and of course in those days programmes overran ahead of you because they were live. So it dragged on and dragged on and it seemed to be getting darker. The camera was supposed to pan around when I did the scene set of the thing and then discover me there and I'm supposed to say good evening and drop off the thing and land in front of the camera at the bottom as if nothing had happened. And then proceed to give a rundown of what they were going to see. It was a fairly severe test.

Brian Johnston: Don't mention Keith Rogers, I mean he ruined my commentary on the king's funeral when I had written it out beforehand what was going to happen which is fatal, I never done it again. I wrote, "Here comes the procession now, led by five metropolitan police and mounted on white horses of Scotland Yard." I took the trouble to ring them up. They said, they will be on white horses.

So when Richard Dimbleby who was down at St James handed over to me at Hyde Park Corner, Keith said, "Go ahead, Brian, good luck." So I start off, "Here comes the procession now led by five metropolitan police and mounted-" and I looked up as they were coming around the bend and the crowd and of course they weren't on white horses, they were on black horses. There was at least black and white in those days so very lame, I said mounted on horsebacks. The bugger Keith said, "What on earth do you think they're mounted on, camels?" This was at the beginning of a funeral. So I've never forgiven him for that. That was an extraordinary event.

It was so lucky to pursue those things. We mentioned Richard, I mean we're all going to mention Richard because he to me was the greatest and the saddest thing ever that we never got him knighted before he died and how we tried. There was the great and I was very lucky to work with him on funerals and coronations. And the famous time when 1954 when the Queen and Prince Philip came back from their first tour abroad and we were going to cover their return as they came down from Tower Bridge and the Royal Launch, land at Westminster Bridge and he was ascribing everything then. I was half way down Whitehall [____ 00:05:53] Buckingham Palace.

We all worked out what we were going to say and my job was to describe the coach, the horses and the escort and all that.

Of course there was a mist and the usual thing happened. The Queen was a bit late at the moment but I can see all the people waiting. He went through all his thing which he agreed and he still said, "I can't see the Queen. It's very misty out there." I think I better do something about the coach. He went through the coach, so I crossed that off my list. Now I can't see her. Think about the horses given by the Queen of Holland, one is called Monty and one is called [___ 00:06:24]. I cross that out. He said the escort, the day we got the blues, the lifeguards, the lieutenant Parker Smith, blah, blah, breast blades and white- the whole lot.

He said oh here comes the Queen and then did his thing and as she gets into the coach over to Brian Johnston. I swear to you that what I said was absolutely nothing until they got under [___ 00:06:45] which I saw on my own, they were going up there and I said, "As they approach their home Buckingham Palace, over to Parker Smith and I didn't say a word because they knew exactly the whole thing which was the best example of what a television commentary should be.

Mike Henderson: Exactly, yes.

Brian Johnston: I wasn't being paid so I didn't worry very much. I didn't speak any word but that's an example.

Raymond Baxter: I was involved in a series called Now which was the invention of that mad genius Peter Webber. Do you remember?

Brian Johnston: Did the Dover.

Raymond Baxter: Well, it was called- he went to Dover afterwards actually but that's by the way. He was a passionate believer in live outside broadcasting. And this Now series was a live, I think it was 45 minutes adventure, an outside broadcast adventure but you say about starting a programme. We did one of these Now programmes about the submarine escape tower at Gosport which is a 90 foot tower full of water in which chaps were taught about diving bells and compression chambers and indeed how to get out of a submarine.

I was to start the programme by breaking surface from the 45 foot bell and the preceding programme was Gala Performance in Paris and the Queen was there and Richard Dimbleby was doing the commentary and it overran by 20 minutes. And by the time I got my cue via a flashing light, I was way beyond my compression time. So out I came and the frogman punched me in the stomach to make sure I was blowing out all the way. When I broke surface literally I had a pink periphery to my image.

So that was an interesting stunt to the programme. Also links what we were saying about television outside broadcast to Richard Dimbleby and overrunning but we'll let that pass.

Robert Hudson: I remember when Brian and I did a test match at Trent Bridge in 1950, England against the West Indies and the billing in Radio Times said 11:30 was start. In actual act of course the umpires come out, as many people know, at 11:25. Someone who will be nameless said, "Right, we must slip the umpires £5 and they'll come out at 11:30." Needless to say they didn't.

Brian Johnston: It was Hardstaff and Jester, and he said, "Perfectly alright," and I said, "You can't do that because it's not according-" "Perfectly alright, all settled." And of course at 25 past, "Stop the bloody [___ 00:09:57], send them back, they shouldn't be out."

It was absolutely marvellous.

Robert Hudson: It was.

Brian Johnston: The power of television it didn't quite work there.

Mike Henderson: Not in those days. I'm afraid it does now.

Brian Johnston: I'm afraid it does now, they've gone back and said when do you want us to come out.

Mike Henderson: You have to watch the boxing match at 1:00 in the morning because of American television it happened the other day.

Brian Johnston: Certainly, I remember that one.

Robert Hudson: Also at the same match you probably remember that we said anyone watching television in the houses around the ground come out on the balcony and wave. All sorts of people came out.

Brian Johnston: Number 7 Fox Road.

Robert Hudson: And went and had tea with them.

Brian Johnston: Yes, we went and had tea. The first contact I think probably in broadcasting with the outside people and we used to say, "Give us a thumbs up if you're hearing us well". They waved and we did go and have tea at number 7 Fox Road. It's not there anymore.

Mike Henderson: Particularly good at The Oval, is that what you're talking about?

Brian Johnston: No, there was a balcony.

Mike Henderson: The balcony is on the right at The Oval and if there was a 10 minute interval between innings I can remember you were commentating, Brian, and I was producing one of the first times we did it and we panned along the balconies. There were people sitting out there watching of course. Then they came to one where they weren't people and you said, "I wonder whether they're watching television." Immediately the window was filled all waving at you.

Brian Johnston: That one of Trent Bridge, do you remember, that was when weeks of Worrall put on [___ 00:11:17] and something like that and about 4:00 one of us said this very awkward, Norman Yardley I wonder what he's going to do about it, let's have a

look and he was standing it on, as we went over he's scratching his private parts. We were quick enough to say, "Obviously very ticklish problem." He got a hell of a rocket from his wife when he got home.

Robert Hudson: There's another ticklish problem, I once did the commentary on a women's test match and the other commentators were Max Robertson and Marjorie Pollard who was a great hockey player, I don't know about cricket. She was good cricketer as well.

Brian Johnston: Powerful lady.

Robert Hudson: Yes, very powerful lady. Anyway what they hadn't realised was that the lunch interval of 40 minutes wasn't sufficient because of the plumbing difficulties in the Pavilion. This was extended to an hour, the interval, but nobody had told us on television. So nothing happened when we came on air, nobody came out of the Pavilion for 20 minutes. We were panning around the ground time and time again.

Mike Henderson: There always are queues for ladies, perhaps that was what caused it.

Raymond Baxter: I'll tell you another thing that's just occurred to me, I went to the television outside broadcast exhibition, I think it was last year. It was open to the public and it was a display dedicated totally to the outside broadcast department of the BBC and it was absolutely fascinating. And Peter Dimmock and I were

there together and we were both interviewed by some young fellow. He said, "What do you feel looking at all this kit?" And I said, "Intense jealousy because the technology available to contemporary outside broadcasters makes what we had as antique as the ark itself."

Then the minute remote control cameras in the boat race, for example, actually mounted on the boat or on a chap's hat when he's skiing down a mountain or on a motorcycle or in a grand prix racing car in the middle of a race. It's just unbelievable and, of course, the whole technology has dictated an entirely different pattern in television outside broadcasting in my view.

Brian Johnston: Commentary positions, I mean we used to climb up these scaffolding, absolutely terrified. There was one at Old Trafford which was very high and I mean the crowd used to assemble there at about 11:30, about 10:45 or something like that, just to see Roy Webber and Jim Swanton climb this ladder. It was absolutely- luckily they were both up there, it was very windy and sometimes I think they swayed and things but they kept the weight down. And dear old Roy Webber would not go down at lunchtime, how he- when he did about spending pennies, he would not do it more than once a day. It was absolutely terrifying.

Mike Henderson: I mean golf was even worse because the weather, we used to get absolutely soaked and Henry Longhurst, who you mentioned, and I used to have to climb up this rickety scaffolding towers. Old Henry clutching a bottle which he sipped from through the day which just kept him beautifully in voice.

Robert Hudson: Mellow.

Mike Henderson: I always worried about him coming down at the end of the day because it really was very rickety and no cover, of course.

Brian Johnston: There's two famous things about that, Swanton at Headingly had to hand over to- who we're talking about?

Mike Henderson: Henry.

Brian Johnston: Henry, and so he said, "I'm leaving Trent Bridge now, and over to Henry Longhurst at the top of his tower, whatever he does." He turns up and said, "I know you've got a bottle of gin alongside him," and they hadn't turned the microphone off. If he hadn't been Swanton he would have sued the BBC, I don't blame him.

00:15:24

Mike Henderson: I'll tell you something else which perhaps we ought at least to touch on if in the interest of history, and that is the impact of the video tape recording technique, which again has totally revolutionised outside broadcasting. Actually there isn't a great deal of live television left including outside broadcast not least because of the ability to shoot and edit and put the commentary on afterwards.

Robert Hudson: Flashbacks and everything.

Mike Henderson: And all that. And we have all lived through that period. Farnborough is a striking example in my experience. I mean when I first did Farnborough it was live, full stop. Then we started recording on film the rehearsal the day before in case the weather was bad. And that was the only reason. So then we started chopping in bits which we had recorded from the previous day and then tape came in but then it cost £90 I remember every time you cut the tape which put a big inhibition on editing. But once that had gone then the outside broadcast cameras spent the whole week recording pictures and I put the commentary on sometimes live as it went out. Then finally we overcame that and the whole thing-

Robert Hudson: I sometimes wonder, perhaps I'm sort of idealistic from the early days, but television is the only thing that can give you, in sound and picture, something is happening at that moment. I think it's not altogether coincidence that things like coronations and Olympics and things that happened live get such big audiences it's because they are happening live. And I think to some extent- I mean I watch golf which I like a lot but I never know whether I'm watching actuality or whether it's something that happened 10 minutes ago. Sometimes you realise because the honour is wrong that you actually see somebody drive off live and then his partner drive off actually before him in flashback. And just simply don't know where you are.

I can remember when Lobby, as you mentioned, had both, we had very serious discussions about honesty with the viewer, that we should always be clear as to whether we were live or recording and this sort of thing.

Mike Henderson: He was very hot on that.

Brian Johnston: Well, there's no honesty now. I mean Radio Times used to put a little star if it had been recorded. Now nobody does. This is the joy of doing anything live like a boat race or like cricket or like rugby that it is actually happening. I loathe watching boxing but I don't mind watching if I know if it's happening at that moment but to see a recording is terrible. If it's happening, anything happening, you're absolutely right, it's instant.

Robert Hudson: To me nowadays programmes are so polished because they're often made two years before. I mean we were putting out live programmes in OBs on an average one a week.

Raymond Baxter: At least I should think, wasn't it?

Robert Hudson: I'm not talking about commentary, I'm talking about productions. Your output was as producer.

Raymond Baxter: Producer.

Robert Hudson: I was a producer and commentator, you see, so each producer- I remember if you had a built programme as it was called which involved element of scripting, like your Chivers one at the power station, you were allowed to deduct one off your ration of things. One built programme you can do actualities. Again, you get a whole list of credits now of assistant directors, script writers, researchers and everything

and you had to do the lot in those days. You wrote your own script and everything.

Brian Johnston: If you're talking Alexander Palace which comes into all this, I mean the entertainment is a perfect example, I was very lucky when Lizzie Mitchell was away, I did four of the stooges for Terry Thomas's little piece he used to do and he was the chap who beat the gong and ranks and he was captain someone, the lion tamer. The remarkable thing was he was down in one studio and he had started in one corner and say, "How do you do?" and show his teeth and tell a story and introduce a singer. He would rush down one side of the studio, the studio in the far corner with the singer was saying he was then ready for the sketch with an orchestra in the middle and it was all done live, live.

You then saw the marvellous Morecombe and Wise and they took two days. If the joke didn't go well, we'd do it again. The lighting is not right, now let's go into that.

The people in the old days I think it was absolutely sensational.

Raymond Baxter: When they used to Zed Cars live when it started.

Mike Henderson: That's a drama.

Brian Johnston: I mean any professional actor will tell you that that was the most terrifying thing in the world, doing a play live. It's not like old days, you had to know exactly where you had to stand and all this. It was ghastly.

Mike Henderson: They used to do three hour Shakespeare live using both studio A and B but that's not really our problem. While we're talking about the studios we must have all briefly done something in the studios up there. I know you did, Brian, you did one.

Robert Hudson: I did one.

00:21:02

Mike Henderson: Tell us about yours, Robert?

Robert Hudson: It was a very small one. It was when they introduced new laws into rugby and there was a short programme showing what the new laws meant in terms of the vision. I did the commentary on that programme. That's my only experience in the studio. I'm glad I did one anyway.

Raymond Baxter: Are we talking about Alexander Palace?

Male 1: Sorry, can you just hold it there, while I get the tape changed.

Raymond Baxter: We'll come back to that.

Robert Hudson: Did you want to mention the royal family?

[APTS_Television_OB_Commentators_2 – Ends]

Brian Johnston: I used to do the commentary on the cricket on the television newsreel which is a terrifying thing. We talk of development, I mean in those days I think it ran 25 minutes or something like that. If you made a mistake in the 23rd minute, they had to go right back at the start. It was absolutely terrifying as you got towards the end, you think, “Am I going to get it right?” Dear old Edward Halliday who did the commentary, I mean he made a mistake on the 24th minute back and you had to do it all again.

I used to sit there, it is unbelievable now, with Paul Fox sitting alongside me, he had written out the script because he had seen the pictures which I hadn't seen and I sat there and he would sit alongside and when it was time for me to speak he pressed my thigh like that. And when there was a noise or a cricket ball or should have been, I'd take my bat in there and a ball and he would have that alongside the microphone [____ 00:00:52] speaking and he would go like that. And sometimes of course he hit the pad and it made a noise like a ball on the bat. This is unbelievable. That was the great Paul Fox just sitting there touching my- low light, nothing-

Robert Hudson: I used to do that when I was BBC motoring correspondent and whenever a new car came out, I would drive it and that would be filmed. And that night because of the release time of a new car which we never violated I would rush from Broadcasting House to Ally Pally and go through exactly the same technique except that I had written the words but Paul still had to cue me which was sharing-

Brian Johnston: He had a very gentle touch on the- a little pressure.

Mike Henderson: I'm going to claim to have also had the same touch because I was the Here and There chap with Halliday. Philip Dorte brought me in because he felt that he wanted some quick heres and theres at the end or anything. Ted, sort of, did the rather laboured pieces, perhaps that's a bit unfair, but what's the word I want?

Raymond Baxter: The great Tour de France.

Mike Henderson: Oh yes, very good but not quite the right voice for Here and There. So I had to do these and they were usually the ones that came in at the last minute and they were quick. So I got lots of knee taps from Paul.

Some people won't believe that the great Sir Paul as he is now started off as a script writer. I remember him arriving.

Brian Johnston: But knocking the ball against the bat in the same microphone in which I was, unbelievable.

What we were talking also, we might as well get it in because I was going to mention about positions and how things have changed. We talked about the scaffolding and all that but when we did, Robert knows this well, when we went to the Pavilions, we used to be on the roof of the Pavilion in the open over the table and we did that at Lords. We sat out on the stone balcony was where Webber kept his scorebook, it if rained, absolutely pelted down. And the famous one at the Oval were

John Woodcock who later became the Times key correspondent was secretary to Swanton at the time.

So he was our scorer as you remember. So we used to say how many balls approximately he had left and all that because he never scored very well. There was a famous occasion where Swanton always had his thermos of tea, and he would like, "I'll just have a cup of tea." Of course it was balanced on this table and one day someone by mistake tipped it up and it fell over the balustrade and we looked down, it hit a member on the back of his head and he collapsed.

So someone said, "Go, go down." I rushed down there. I think I stopped to get a glass of brandy on the way down and there was this chap who was semi-conscious lying there all around the broken thermos and a very strong smell of whisky coming out of it.

So I told this chap, I said, "Are you alright?" I said, "Well, it belonged to Mr Swanton." He said, "That's good." He saw it all broken but the smell of whisky gave away Swanton the most little cup of tea.

00:04:14

Mike Henderson: Jim as he was known, wasn't he?

Brian Johnston: Jim Swanton.

Mike Henderson: Gentleman also known as the bishop.

Brian Johnston: And the bishop, I mean all the [___ 00:04:22] is a famous one. I might as well just add, the one in 1963, they were electing the

Pope in Rome and there were tens of thousands people waiting at St Peter's Square and they said if this happens during the test match, doing the television with Jim and it will go over to Father ___ Andrew who will say who the new Pope is and they're waiting for that white puff of smoke which comes out the chimney from the Vatican to say a new pope has been elected. And it didn't happen and at the corner of my eye I saw the Old Tavern was there and the chimney caught fire and black smoke belted out. I think it was Crackers, honestly, put the camera on. He put the camera on, he said, "There you are, Jim Swanton's been elected pope."

You could do those sorts of things. We used to pick people out from the crowd. There was John War with his fiancé once and we got the camera on to them and said, "There you are, war and peace." I think you can pick things out in those days.

Crackers was very good, wasn't he, Bob, with being out the little extra things.

Robert Hudson: He was marvellous, yes.

Brian Johnston: The only thing in the end he began to do the commentary himself.

Robert Hudson: Yes he did, he told you want to say more or less.

Brian Johnston: He was saying, "Oh that was a good ball, that, and it looked as if it was moving from the-" we said, "For God's sake, shut up."

Robert Hudson: I think the funniest thing was when Jim Swanton was giving a summary at the close of play at Edgbaston and he had forgotten to write down the score on his electric score board and he said, "Just finally I'll give you the close of play score." And he looked up at the score board and they'd wiped the whole thing off. Nobody knew what the score was. It was absolute chaos.

Brian Johnston: He would stop in his summary, if someone was moving, he was saying probably a fine- "Do you mind, stop moving behind there, I'm trying to do my summary, where was I?"

Mike Henderson: We used to rather sort of pull Jim Swanton's leg behind his back, didn't we? But I think it should be placed on record as far as I'm aware that he was very highly regarded in prisoner war camp and this is one of the reasons why he got the nick name Bishop, he gave enormous stability to fellow prisoners.

Brian Johnston: He had his wisdom, he used to play cricket matches in the evening, through the-

Mike Henderson: There were people that I've spoken to, perhaps you have, who were there with him and said what an enormous [____ 00:06:30] he was.

Brian Johnston: Since you say that ____ and chap said, "Do you know a chap called Jim Swanton?" I said. "Very well." He said, "He was in the prisoner of war camp with us and we were doing the railway there and the Bridge of Crown." He said, "We came

back one day, we were in the compound, they had thrown us some rice and suddenly there was a fan fair of trumpets and the gates opened and in came four Japanese struggling in this Sedan chair in which Swanton was sitting. He was carried on the thing.”

I’ve asked him about it and he said, “I have to carry my wisdoms around.”

This man didn’t know I had known Jim, he just said this happened, so I still believe it. Four struggling Japanese with Jim in a Sedan chair.

Raymond Baxter: I’d much do broadcasting.

00:07:08

Mike Henderson: Before we run out of tape, can we have- I’m sure we have all got examples, let’s try and be as early as we can think of the royal family’s interest in television and radio and also we’ve all got our royal family stories, I’m sure.

Robert Hudson: Can I give a quick one, it won’t take up much of the tape.

Mike Henderson: Yes, do, Robert.

Robert Hudson: This was Middlesex and Surrey 1949, I was doing the commentary and Brian was also- we were both doing it and I looked around to my left where Brian had been sitting a moment before and there was Prince Philip to my astonishment. I can assure it’s very difficult to bow with

headphones on and a mic. I sort of half got up and did a sort of little bob and Prince Philip said, "Sit down, don't worry."

That was a good example, I think of his great interest in sport and television and I think I'm right in saying that he also went into the scanner when you were producing.

Mike Henderson: That's right, this was at Lords, you were talking about Lords?

Robert Hudson: Yes, I was talking about Lords.

Mike Henderson: I had a whisper from the, [Estelle 00:08:20], the senior engineer from behind me, I was vision mixing myself as I like to do on the cricket that Prince Philip was in the band behind. So I looked around and, again, tried to rise and a restraining hand came on my shoulder and we came to the end and handed over to Wimbledon or whatever it was. He was still there quite fascinated and he seemed to have a question he wanted to ask. He said, "At the lunch interval were you televising when the teams who are presented to me outside the Pavilion?" I said, "Yes sir." "Good," he said, "I wanted the wife to see that I was on the job."

It was at the time that the Queen was pregnant with Anne and the tabloids were giving Philip hell, if you remember, for dallying with other ladies. This was his wry comment, he wanted his wife to see that he was actually at work rather than dallying.

Brian Johnston: Keen for Robert to tell his story about it, presentation to the Queen at Lords.

Robert Hudson: Oh well, yes, England beat New Zealand at Lords but the team presented to the Queen. I described what was happening and I said that's a moment they'll always forget.

Brian Johnston: Oh well, we got some good ones there, Barclay Smith, do you remember, who said, "The Queen Mother is wearing a beautiful awful hat face."

Raymond Baxter: Max Robertson.

Brian Johnston: And Audrey Russell the Queen Mum was looking very beautiful in dark black.

Robert Hudson: Yes, dark black.

Brian Johnston: That's an interesting colour. And Henry Riddle said it was too late the Queen has just gone around the bend. This was the opening apartment. There are a lot of roles.

Robert Hudson: Somebody else here comes the Queen, I can see her motorcycle.

Brian Johnston: That was John [Snay 00:10:11], with her motorcycle. All the shots at 2:00, that was John Snay, Queen Mary ____.

Raymond Baxter: It wasn't you who said here comes the main body of the procession ____ funeral

Brian Johnston: No, I said to myself don't say it because that's a phrase everybody uses.

Robert Hudson: Somebody said it, didn't they?

Brian Johnston: No, they didn't. I've always said that when I saw the cortege come, I said, "Don't say it, don't say it," which is here comes the main body, I would have got the sack if I had. No, I didn't say it.

Robert Hudson: You didn't say it.

Brian Johnston: It is a sort of expression, I knew, Lord Mayor's Show.

00:10:52

Mike Henderson: The famous one we all know of, I was producing and Richard was commentating, Royal School of Needlework Exhibition in St James's Palace and the programme was quite a small room really and there was not a lot to show. So the drill was quarter of an hour showing that and then the Queen Mum, as she had then become, was walking across from Warborough House opposite, just across the road. She didn't come and she didn't come and eventually she did appear and marched straight up not to anybody else but to Richard who stuck the microphone behind his back. In those days you weren't meant to hear royalty while she apologised.

After the programme was over she asked us both to go in and had kicked off her shoes and had a glass of champagne and, “Gentlemen, I hope you’ll join me, I owe you an apologise.” We were watching the programme and eventually my lady in waiting said, “Shouldn’t we be over there?”

Raymond Baxter: I had a similar experience, not on television but on radio in Canada, when we were covering the Queen’s, I think it must have been her first visit to Canada. Anyway the Queen and the Duke were coming assure, Lake Ontario I think it was, and I was broadcasting all by myself about six or eight feet from the red carpet. And the Queen and the Duke came along and saw me and to my horror approached and I did exactly the same thing.

There’s only one thing one can do and that is put one’s microphone behind one’s back and bow. And the Queen said, “Good grief, Mr Baxter, what are you doing?” So I said, “Broadcasting ma’am.” And the Duke said, “Where’s your microphone?” I said, “Well, it’s actually behind my back, sir.” I mean you know what does one say or do? It was very-

Brian Johnston: Hopefully as in my story the sound engineer had been instructed or had already done turning the game down anyway.

Raymond Baxter: Things that advance of course are slightly different but I think I’m right in saying, Brian, at the silver jubilee didn’t you ask Prince Philip if he’d say a word and what did he say?

Robert Hudson: Oh yes, I remember that.

Brian Johnston: I can't hear myself thinking, he said because I was allowed on radio to follow in 10 yards behind the Queen and the Lord Mayor and walk about from St Paul. The television, I kept in the way of their thing, but what happened was very interesting because I used to ask everybody, "The Queen's here, what time did you get here, where do you come from?" It's always the same questions and years later at a party she gave for the press and radio she missed one of the radio producers and she said, "Brian Johnston was following me and I suddenly realised I had to begin asking different questions because it was the same question every time." So she had to think I had new questions she heard me asking what they had said.

He was way behind her, you know, chatting up all the girls and he began rushing past me and I said, "How's it going, sir, how's it going?" Never, you should never do that type of thing. I said, "I can't hear myself thinking," of something like that but he rushed past me.

The Wynford one has been recorded I suppose.

Mike Henderson: No.

Brian Johnston: Yes.

Mike Henderson: Belt and braces we better have it twice I don't think we have though.

Brian Johnston: Certainly many of us were doing the Ark Royal for the Queen Mum launching it and with Ray Leyton and they went through all what was going to happen. They had four cameras or three cameras. The first one would show the Queen Mum breaking the champagne, don't talk during that, Wynford. The next one will show the chucks being knocked away and gliding down, don't talk doing that. So the next one will show marine band playing flags waving don't talk yet, wait until it hits the water and then go into our commentary.

All this was going to plan and accept that after the flag waving Ray Leyton looked in his monitor and he saw the most lovely picture of the Queen Mum waving and without remembering what he told her that he put that up on our screens just as after I hit the water, Wynford not watching his monitor said, "There she is, the huge fast [___ 00:15:21]." And there was the Queen Mum, it was a famous one and she loved it, of course, she would do.

Mike Henderson: A perfect example,, sorry just before you- the perfect example of the essential thing of watching the monitor so you know what the viewer is seeing and also not being pre-conceived in what you're going to say. I mean this is the difference really, isn't it? You can get away with it to some extent on radio.

Brian Johnston: Just while you're on that, I mean the central thing, and we all know that is the combination between the producer and the commentator because the producer can cart you by somebody showing somebody up and you can cart him by mentioning something which isn't being shown. So the great thing is a partnership and that was really what television commentary was all about.

Robert Hudson: And Tony Craxton was so good at ait.

Brian Johnston: Crackers was brilliant.

Robert Hudson: I was just going to say [____ 00:16:12], I said the guards are drawn up a square rectangle and follow that ready to be inspected by the Queen in the bare skins, rather a nice picture.

00:16:27

Mike Henderson: I don't know whether any of you got anything but certainly in the early days of television, George VI and the present Queen Mum were seemed to be exceptionally interested in television. The fact that they, perhaps, sort of, it struck me that perhaps being in Buckingham Palace they didn't get the walkabouts that they used to get. It wasn't the same contact and that perhaps television was rather exceptional interest to them.

Anyway they were very alive and interested to the extent that we used to get phone calls from the palace on the day so that the king and queen can be briefed as to where our camera crew were going to be so that they could actually- and there was a note in the coach to say which way to turn and so on.

Brian Johnston: One of us, I don't know, it wasn't me, someone got an awful rocket because he rang up in the middle of a broadcast and someone had said Equiri instead of Equiri, didn't they? He was very upset about that. "Please tell the commentator s it's not Equiri, it's Equiri."

Raymond Baxter: There's another change in that context and going back curiously enough to the Festival of Remembrance, years ago we were allowed one brief shot of the royal box and that was it, period, full stop.

Brian Johnston: At the festival.

Raymond Baxter: At the festival, or anywhere else but superficially at the full stop. And that's all gone away now.

Brian Johnston: And the Royal Variety Performance, we weren't allowed to see the queen.

Raymond Baxter: That's right too.

Brian Johnston: In fact you don't see her now. We've seen her at the start, you don't see them recording in case they're not laughing at a joke, so they don't show that.

Raymond Baxter: But the attitude of the Queen and the royal family to being in vision when they attend an event has changed markedly.

Mike Henderson: I can think back to the days of doing, this is as a producer, when the King and Queen, all visiting royalty or presidents and things used to arrive at Victoria Station. You'll remember this rather than at Heathrow. And there had to be a guard train on the other track which was empty and the platform on the other

side had to be empty except for secret police or whatever. So it was quite impossible to have a camera at reverse angle to pick up the king and queen who it could only be the people as they stepped out of the coach until they turned to come out to inspection.

The thing came through which reached my desk at Alexander Palace. There's an enquiry from the King as to why this was so and so I had to reply and explain that we would very much like to have a camera on the other side but security didn't allow it. Back came the thing apply again and from then on we were allowed a camera on the roof of the guard train and whenever I ordered it from the engineers it was always called the King's Camera Position. They did have a very definite input in that way. I don't know whether anybody else got any other examples.

Brian Johnston: There was a six [___ 00:19:45] that drew the open cage of the Queen, the President and they were going along Buckingham Palace Road, the Queen waving to one side, president the other. One ___ tremendous fart and the Queen said, "Sorry about that." And the president said, "The honesty of the British, had you not have apologised they would have thought it was one of the horses."

Raymond Baxter: [___ 00:20:06] with television.

Robert Hudson: You can't keep a man down, can you?

Brian Johnston: Anyone getting thirsty?

Mike Henderson: Yes, Johnny know it. How are we doing? Have we got a bit more tape on this one to go?

Male 1: We're about half way through a 45, so we have another 20 minutes I suppose on this tape.

Mike Henderson: Do you want a break?

Brian Johnston: No, we're alright.

Mike Henderson: Shall we kill that one?

Brian Johnston: Yes.

00:20:32

Mike Henderson: Funny situations, I mean I think back to the early days of television OBs that unlike now where the young Turks of television expect people to bow down and say, "Please will you televise me." In those days you had to go out and jolly well work for your bread and butter to persuade people to be televised. Therefore there were all sorts of things of programme fill ups.

I mean I can remember we did Through Fire and Water where I had to go in a diving tank and Joan Gilbert, I don't whether you remember her, was in an asbestos suit and she got into a rather a panic in the middle of a fire. We did a couple of

programmes in the London sewers which was quite surprisingly well.

Brian Johnston: They smell beautiful because of all the bath salts.

Mike Henderson: Not bad.

Brian Johnston: The ones down the Strand are beautiful, nothing but bath salts.

Mike Henderson: As long you got into a big enough one, this was sort of Clapham Junction, the sewers that they had found because that was where you would get the cameras in. It was very interesting because the chaps down there, apart from other stories about cygnet rings and things, it was quite good pickings. They reckon that they were the best audience research, much better than BBC, because they could always tell when a good programme finished and a bad programme because of the flush tidal flow. Sort of people doing the washing up and baths and other things.

Brian Johnston: One of the things you were saying about the difference in politeness. We were very polite in those days. You didn't cut an interview short. Nowadays, "Sorry, time's up." In those days you had the old wind up, didn't you, and then you went like that as if to try and cut but you never-you waited for the chap to finish and all that. I suppose time, I don't know, it was important those days but nowadays they're ruthless.

Mike Henderson: I mean in the days of live I mean over runs you almost expected the previous programme to overrun, didn't you?

Raymond Baxter: And it usually did but if you told presentation, half way through a programme the producer would ring up presentation department and say, "Can I have a two and a half minute overrun," or, "I am going to overrun by two and a half minutes." Unless it was a fixed point, like, the news, absolutely no problem.

You talk about unexpected situations live and all that, in Tomorrow's World, which we always did live, we did outside broadcasts whenever it became appropriate. Indeed in the case of Mike Latham when he was editor whenever it was possible. On one of these things we went outside the television centre and I shot a chap with a 45 magnum live. He was wearing a new type of bullet proof vest but I just shot him like that.

I was shaking so much that I was really quite afraid of not hitting the right place.

Brian Johnston: Not good.

Raymond Baxter: It worked.

00:23:48

Mike Henderson: Tomorrow's World live, I mean there were all sorts of possibilities of things not functioning presumably. Any good stories?

Raymond Baxter: Oh legion, but I always took the view that if something went wrong it was very popular with the audience because the audience loves nothing better than to see a computer bite the hand that programmed it and so on. So the advantage of doing that programme live was self-evident, although it was risky.

Mike Henderson: Of course, there was an element in the early days even after the war of the viewer being behind you and they didn't mind the odd breakdown. It almost seem to add to the miracle of it really and it struck me the other day that in the circus, they go through a juggle of actually the most difficult trick dropping a ball deliberately and then getting an extra round of applause for succeeding the second time. I mean there was a sort of element of that in early television I felt that the viewer appreciated it more because of the things that went wrong.

Raymond Baxter: Going back to that Now series and other programmes of that era, the sole objective was to get pictures from somewhere which the viewers hadn't seen before, like, off the deck of a ship at sea or a ship under sail or out of an aeroplane or out of a helicopter. I did quite a few of those and the problem there was that everyone was so intent on getting the picture which was the end in itself. Nobody bothered to think about the storyline. We'll just chat away for a bit, Raymond, you know, it will be alright, you're fine.

Brian Johnston: Things go wrong in 1942 Worcester, India against Worcester pelting with rain, we're doing the telly there and it could have been you, Mike, I don't know, somebody said, "Right, go out under an umbrella and interview Mr Gupta, the India manager." He's a volatile man. I don't think he understood

much about English. He spoke quite quickly. I said, "Mr Gupta, what sort of team you got?" "Oh we got some very good batsmen." I said, "What about the bowlers?" "We got six very good bowlers." I thought this was getting a bit boring, so I said what about yourself, are you [___ 00:26:21]?" He said, "No, I'm a Christian."

I can picture our self silly, so he went on to- I couldn't laugh. So you had to say, "Well, tell me something about the keepers." Mr Gupta, I remember that well, '52, India. We had some good television that year because we went up to Leeds for the first time where the transmitter Holme Moss was open and we got that remarkable score on [Ultra Four 00:26:48] with India which was pretty ___.

So that was a great year for television spreading the gospel of cricket up in the north.

00:26:57

Mike Henderson: Did you have to do some in front of camera OBs, Brian, I'm sure you did? I mean apart from the odd interview like that, I mean actual-

Brian Johnston: I did the same with Raymond on Saturday Night Out where one lay in a, what is it, a Turkish bath and stuff, I remember it was a bit embarrassing. We did a lot of that and I did a lot of children's stuff of course in the studio in the early days. The thing with Peter West we used to do, it was quite fun.

Raymond Baxter: The most startling experience I ever had at doing a piece to camera on a live outside broadcast was when we transmitted from a submarine at sea, which has, to the best of my knowledge, never been repeated. Technologically it was a very

clever trick. Anyway this was a naval exercise and I was doing my piece to camera and in a very restricted environment and the cameraman was Bill Wright. He was the senior cameraman and so he had what was laughingly known as the portable camera which, of course, in those days weighed about a tonne and a half.

Bill had this thing hung on him literally. I launched my piece and I heard over the tannoy the captain's voice, "Dive, dive, dive," and the hooter went, "Whoo, whoo, whoo," and the bar of the submarine went down at an angle of 45 degrees and Bill Wright and the camera went past me at about 25 miles an hour. Bill, bless him, turned around and I followed like that and afterwards Peter Dimmock said, "That was a bloody clever shot." He probably thought you paid the captain to do it.

Robert Hudson: I didn't do much to camera but I did have one occasion which was interesting. It was Songs of Praise which I introduced believe it or not on one occasion and Monty, Phil Montgomery was reading the lesson. He arrived for the rehearsal and Monty said, "I have two versions of the lesson, the shorter version, one minute ten seconds or the longer version, two minutes twenty seconds, now which do you want?" And the producer was Barry Edgar. And Barry with great presence of mind said, "We don't really hear you read the lesson [____ 00:29:35], we think we should have the longer version." Monty said, "Very good decision."

Raymond Baxter: I thought you were going to tell the one about Monty at reading the lesson or something when he said, "And the Lord said, and I'm bound to say I entirely agree with him."

Robert Hudson: And Monty also was talking about various generals and he said what school was I at and I said Shrewsbury. And I couldn't think of a single general who came from there but Monty said, "Ah Dempsey, Miles Dempsey was GOC second army." I thought he would say something about how good a general he was, whatever. But what he actually said was, "Very good cricketer." Actually Dempsey played for Sussex.

Brian Johnston: I asked Monty once at an interview at Lords, I said, "Were you any good at cricket?" "Very good indeed, went in first made a lot of runs." And that was it, there was no other sort of statement at all, very good indeed, went in first made a lot of runs.

Robert Hudson: He was [___ 00:30:37] as well.

Brian Johnston: Was he?

Robert Hudson: Yes.

00:30:42

Mike Henderson: Why do we go on and people enjoy watching the trooping the colour the Cenotaph, the remembrance services? Doing it one had to be rather careful that if one did it year after year to try and not make it just- it's interesting that- I mean Robert, you did the-

Brian Johnston: Robert was brilliant because basically the thing is the same every year but Robert did the whole thing of research and he

used to go and find out whether the sergeant and wife had just had a baby or whatever it was and bring all these little things in and so it was different every year except that the thing was the same. I know it sounds stupid. It's research, research, research which one of the idle research there's ever been and I think Robert was one of the best.

00:31:28

Mike Henderson: Is it familiarity, I mean from the audience point of view, they just loved the-

Brian Johnston: They want them live, people like secrets happening out there.

Raymond Baxter: : These programmes get very good figures which is surprising but we do try to do them differently every year. I mean we all have done this I think but again I'm sorry to be boring about the Festival of Remembrance but it was only a couple of weeks ago, so it's fresh in my mind. And every year there is the moment when the Chelsea pensioners come down the steps and march across the arena and get on the stage. And it's a very much in a moment. And of course there's some of the better band masters, I'm reminded of this by their accompaniment in the background from BJ. They would in rehearsal play double quick time gradually going faster and faster as the army marched on to the stage.

Anyway the point of all this is that this year we tried to do it different. So instead of giving their combined age and combined service, which is a rather stupid thing to have done for years and years, we didn't do that. We did it differently and it worked very well. I had a very nice letter from the secretary of the Royal British Legion saying, "PS, we have had a

complaint from the families of the Chelsea pensioners because you didn't give their combined age and they don't know who won the sweepstake on it."

Brian Johnston: Lovely.

Raymond Baxter: So I wrote and gave them the figure.

Mike Henderson: I think there is this enormous element, I'm sorry to go back to it, but I mean television is to me anything that can give you picture and sound of what's happening at the moment and it's not really a proper use of it to have something that's been recorded two years ago and call it a live programme. Of course, I think the element is that, you were saying just now, that the big audience figures for these live things and there is the element of at a royal wedding that somebody might run out of the crowd and shoot Charles or something, you know. You don't think of that but in the back of your mind there is the possibility that it could happen and you would see it.

Brian Johnston: Why do people watch high wire acts?

Mike Henderson: Yes. Now there's another one, early on I can remember one of our weekly meetings in the Palace of Arts Wembley OBs and it was just before we done a circus at Mills and I think you, was it, on sound had done I think before and a chap had-

Raymond Baxter: Yes, Brian and me.

Mike Henderson: And he'd fallen out and killed, wasn't he?

Raymond Baxter: And I cued to Brian backstage before he actually hit the ground or near enough. Then I got rebuked for not covering it.

Brian Johnston: We realised a lot of children listening would have been rather- I luckily had said to Bertram Mills, look we better standby you never know you get something and he had ordinary old white horse out.

Raymond Baxter: Interviewed the horse.

Brian Johnston: While they were clearing this chap up, I said let's look at its front legs and teeth and all that, but it was like [__ 00:34:56], and then suddenly we heard in the thing about Raymond is ready for you again, we went back for the next act but they cleared the chap up but he died, didn't he?

Raymond Baxter: We had a discussion just after this as to what producers do on television, because it had never happened to us before. We had a discussion about whether we should just go to a blank screen and hand back to the studio or whether we should get on to the audience or whatever and so on. Eventually Peter Dimmock needless to say said, "Well, I'd tell him to go one wider and keep on it."

Absolutely but that was the drill and it was relevant at Farnborough because there were one or two crashes at

Farnborough and provided you didn't see someone on fire, it was hold the shot. Of course then it became steeple chasing jockeys coming off and so on. We came to realise that it was important that the viewer should see the jockey getting up or being carried away if possible. You're getting hungry.

Brian Johnston: I think probably the food is ready and also are we topping up? Now, would you like gin and tonics or would you like straight into vino.

Raymond Baxter: Vino for me.

Brian Johnston: Vino, are you a Vino? Do you want white or red, we're having some lamb, there's some red and some white, I'm having white?

Mike Henderson: White.

Brian Johnston: Would you like red?

Raymond Baxter: I would prefer red. I'll have red.

Brian Johnston: What would you like?

Raymond Baxter: Timetable gents.

[APTS_Television_OB_Commentators_3 – Ends]

END AUDIO

www.uktranscription.com

Under copyright