

## 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"> <li>• BBC Oral History</li> <li>• BBC History of North Regional Broadcasting</li> <li>• BBC Horizon at 50</li> <li>• BBC World Service Moving Houses Project</li> <li>• Alexandra Palace Television Society Oral History</li> </ul>
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><a href="mailto:historyteam@bbc.co.uk">historyteam@bbc.co.uk</a></p> <p><a href="mailto:apts@apts.org.uk">apts@apts.org.uk</a> (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: <a href="https://chbbc.sussex.ac.uk/">https://chbbc.sussex.ac.uk/</a>

'A History Of North Regional Broadcasting' - BARNEY COLEHAN

(Interview I5 - Notes)

**Trevor Hill** I can't think of any other BBC producer, right from the start of it all in 1922 to the present day, whose name became a National catch-phrase. I first met this army Major in 1946. He'd been O.C. Dover Castle and then arrived to join **Ray Lakeland, Alan Clarke**, the 1950's Sports Commentator, **Ray Martin**, the band-leader/composer, and myself in Forces Broadcasting, Hamburg.

We were all destined to work together again in North regional broadcasting from the late 1940's onwards. And it was during his time as producer of 'Have A Go', that **Wilfred Pickles** coined the phrase which became a bye-word; ..... 'Give 'im th' money, Barney!'.

But if I remember back to those BFN days, didn't a very young **Barney Colehan** set out to study a very differnt kind of alchemy .?

**Barney Colehan** (Mentions a little about his original training as a chemist and, once in the Forces, how he came into broadcasting by way of BFN, Hamburg, and to the BBC's North Region in January 1947, working as a Freelance first of all, before he was appointed that July as a radio producer, based at the BBC's Woodhouse Lane Studios in Leeds).

**Trevor** I mentioned **Alan Clarke** who did commentaries on such things as Speedway at Belle Vue, Soccer and Rugby League - all under the auspices of North Regional Outside Broadcasts and **Victor Smythe**, But the all-time success of North Outside Broadcasts on Radio, must still be, 'Have A Go'.

**Barney** (comments - mentions **Philip Robinson** who relinquished the show as producer when he went to Manchester to take over the Outside broadcast department from **Victor Smythe**. Until then, 'Have A Go' was recorded with the **Jack Jordan** orchestra. You may like to mention that you dropped this idea in favour of a pianist - the most celebrated being **Violet Carson**. Could you mention when the show first went 'Live', and recall some of the 'highlights'?)

Trevor Did the producer have 'Any embarrassing moments' ?

Barney (Recalls a few, please, including any with Wilfred and with 'Management' herself)

Trevor The 'Have A Go' schedules kept you busy right up until 1967 when it finally ended - but you had other radio shows on the air. What about '**Top Town**'. When did you launch that series ?

Barney (To talk about getting it onto the air - and please mention any difficulties you had in getting your ideas for any other radio series accepted by either Regional or by London heads)

Trevor You had **John Salt** as your Regional head of programmes when you first joined.

Barney (To talk a little about John, please. How he brought a show called '**Quiz Bang**' back from the States where he'd been the BBC's New York Representative. How Wilfred encouraged you with 'Family programmes')

Trevor A red-letter day for you and for the North Region was October, 1951 when the **Holme Moss** Television transmitter opened. The ceremony itself, from the Town Hall, Leeds, was televised, but that same night, you produced the North's first TV show.

Barney (to talk about the Variety programme he did and mentions some of the stars. How a version of 'Have A Go' went out within a day or two, and of his early work in Television, including when he started not only to produce the programmes, but also to direct the cameras himself)

Trevor All our early TV programmes were, of course, done as Outside Broadcasts, but I remember 1954 as a landmark. That's when the BBC bought the **Dickenson Road** studios from Mancunian Films. They'd made 'Old Mother Riley', and Frank Randle comedies; a 'burp' in every scene, from there. They became the BBC's first TV studios outside London. What were some of your early shows from this converted chapel ?

**Barney** (Replies, and includes 'Make Way For Music with the Northern Variety orchestra, conducted by Alyn Ainsworth, vocalist, Sheila Buxton, and until that show, a somewhat sedate BBC announcer working in Manchester, Roger Moffat. Please talk about your ideas of creating a completely informal atmosphere, rather than the 'staid' presentation of television shows until that time)

**Trevor** You did a 'Pilot' of 'Make Way For Music' for Eric Maschwitz, the then head of BBC Television Light Entertainment and for Tom Sloan, his assistant, on the one day, and the 'Pilot' of a very different type of show the very next day. Tell me about that.

**Barney** (Talks about the tartan-haired DJ who brought his own equipment and a gang of pals into Dickenson Road in order to present a possible series for a younger audience in, 'The Teen and Twenty' club.

'Make Way For Music' was accepted - the latter was rejected out of hand, and subsequently accepted with the same Jimmy Saville presenting another long-running series which originated from the North, 'Top Of The Pops')

**Trevor** (asks Barney how he got on with Maschwitz and Sloan - they exchange experiences. Trevor then asks Barney if, in view of a remarkable track record, he went through the normal procedure of 'selling' his Television ideas through the Regional Management - or did he go straight to Lime Grove and subsequently to Television Centre.)

**Barney** (a very frank reply to a frank question, please, on his personal relationships with some of the departmental heads and Programme Controllers)

**Trevor** I'd like to talk about Outside Broadcasts again. You had two remarkable successes; the first, after your attachment to Television in London. You had an idea of doing a 'Music Hall' show with the audience dressed in Edwardian costume as they watched various performers from those 'Good Old Days'.

**Barney** (To explain how he launched the series, with **Deryck Guyler** initially, then **Leonard Sachs** the ideal Master-of-ceremonies in the ideal setting of the Leeds City of Varieties. To mention some of the stars who appeared; the waiting list of those who wished to dress up and appear as members of the 'Good Old Days' audience; the fact that it still holds a world record, having run for a period of 30 years)

**Trevor** You opened our Dickenson Road studio with a televised version of 'Top Town' as I recall, and this idea of competing teams from different towns led to a European success.

**Barney** (Explains that due to difficulties of language and of travelling for amateurs, French television abandoned the idea of doing their version of a 'Top Town' talent competition in favour of one involving games. Goes on to say how he and **Robin Scott** were invited over to France to see if the BBC would be interested in the possibility of an International Competition. The outcome - 'It's a Knockout'; the first show, from Morecombe Sands one Sunday in 1966 was introduced by **Ted Ray** and **Charlie Chester**, with the Rugby commentator, **Eddie Waring** as the referee)

**Trevor** That and 'Jeux Sans Frontieres' attracted enormous audiences - yet you met with strong opposition from some BBC quarters.

**Barney** (To be very frank again, please, about the BBC Governors at that time and their attitude to 'Not quite BBC' programmes - in spite of the 18 million audience)

**Trevor** (comments upon Barney as a person ....) You've been one of the BBC Judges at Montreux and a British Judge at the The Monaco Television and Film Festivals, besides receiving an M.B.E. for your services to broadcasting. In other words, a very large number of successes to your credit. No failures ?

**Barney** (Replies)

**Trevor** Unlike some of our colleagues when working amongst the public - especially in latter years, I've never seen you wearing Jeans and pullovers. You always dress like a successful City broker !

**Barney** (Again, to comment freely on current standards of behaviour and of dress amongst BBC staff)

**Trevor** Were you ever offered a 'Management' position within the BBC?

**Barney** (Replies to this )

**Trevor** Any regrets ?

**Barney** (Comments - and ends by mentioning those things which brought him the greatest happiness during the course of his BBC career)

**Trevor** (Signs off)

..... (Interview I5 - End)