

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/

'A History Of North Regional Broadcasting' - INTERVIEW 41

VIVIAN DANIELS (Now Blind).

First of all would you like to tell me a little about 'Life Before the BBC' ?

Radio

To whom were you working when you first joined ?

Until 1951 - **James (Dick) Gregson** - former Manager of the Theatre Royal, Huddersfield, who started a School for radio Playwrights when Regional broadcasting came back into being in 1945.

Back in 1934, Dick had formed, **The Yorkshire Radio Players'**, amongst them being our former BBC colleague in the North, **Philip Robinson**. He'd been Manager of the Bradford Civic Theatre and did stage design for several of the early J.B.Priestley plays.

Rex Tucker - Was he working to Dick or vice versa ?

Your first impression of 'the BBC' ?

Describe the Leeds Drama studio when you arrived ?

Your early productions ?

Did you work through the Manchester head Office - or direct to London - and to whom.

Were they easy relationships ?

What do you consider to have been your main achievements on the Radio side ?

Television

- 2 -

Does the 25th of October, 1954 ring a bell ?

(Date of his first Production Credit as a producer of Television Drama from the North region. It was for **The Blue Suit**', a Tyneside comedy. Directing the cameras was **Barney Colehan**.)

Was that before the region acquired Dickinson Road from what had been 'Mancunian Films' ?- (if so, from where did the Region's first television play originate ?) - and was the play done with the aid of the Outside broadcast Unit vans ?

There is then a gap until July 1956, when you do the first Regional television play production from the refurbished and more adequately equipped Dickenson Road studio - that being the BBC's first Tv studio outside London.

The author, **Ken Horton** - the play, **'Tomorrow May be Fine'**

Your Designer - in fact our designer, since he was also working for Barney Colehan and for myself in those early Studio days, was **Kenneth Lawson**.

Five full-length plays come from Dickinson Road in 1957 - you produce four of them, the fifth, **'The Two Mrs Carrolls'** by the distinguished **George Foa**.

You produce another four in 1958 - the fifth is produced by another former Manchester colleague, famed more for radio Features than for television Drama, **Douglas G. Bridson** - ('The Christmas Child', his own play.)

Tell me about the **William Marchant** play you did; **'The Desk Set'**. Was that the one with that huge Computer ?

1959 begins with another technical feather in your cap. The **Cyril Abraham** play, **'Ice Blink'**. (By now you have **Muriel Schofield** as your Production Assistant, and **Mike Milone** as your Floor Manager.?)

What about the rest of your 'Team' ?

(Gordon Addison, Barry Bevins ... cameras **Tommy Mottram**, Lighting?)

- 3 -

Your Technical Operations Manager ?

During 1959, some nine television plays come from Dickenson Road. That's the year in which **Alfred Bradley** joins the BBC in Leeds. You send me a note saying 'Don't call him 'Alf', he doesn't like it'! - 1960 includes the North's first tv series with '**Yorkie**'.

There are eleven play productions in 1961. A year later, you have **Alan Plater** and **Henry Livings** writing for you; '**A Smashing Day**', and '**Nil Carborundum**'

Didn't the Henry Livings play feature a young, then almost unknown lad from Salford ? (Or was that with '**See The Pretty Lights**'?) And wasn't **June Barry** your leading lady ?

Tim Harvey, later to collect many Drama Design awards, is working with you on most of your 1963 productions.

After Alan Plater's '**Pretty Lights**' - darkness descends as far as your television production credits go from the North. That's at the end of 1963. You are now working from the new **BBC Television Centre**; you did the very first drama from there.

Your final tv production credit comes almost two and a half years later, with '**Seeing The Beauty Queen Home**'.

I mentioned 'darkness descending'. Is that what was beginning to happen to you and to your own sight ?

I've left until last my own favourite North regional tv Play production.

You did it. It was **Dennis Driscoll's** Lancashire comedy, '**Job For The Boy**' in which you cast two of our very best Radio performers, **Fred Fairclough** as the chap who spends most of his time with his hens, - and **Violet Carson** as his wife, Maggie.

Looking at this 'Still', Vi stands on the step of 'No 2', her hair bundled

under a short scarfe, arms akimbo on a patterned pinafore.

- 4 -

Fred, in rolled up shirt sleeves and braces, is just slipping out to 'them 'ens'. It looks as if you filmed parts of the play on location.

I once asked **TONY SIMPSON/TONY WARREN** if it was this play which, two and a half years later, gave him the idea for 'Coronation Street'.

He maintains that it was probably Vi singing that splendid Lancashire song, '**Bolton's Yard**', whilst he and others were waiting to go 'on the air' for me in Children's Hour, that spawned England's most successful 'soap'.

"At No 1 in Bowton's yard, me Granny keeps a school...

At No 3, reet facin' pub ", et cetera.

Did you know Tony called the first script '**Florielle Street**' and sent it off in the first instance to Barney Colehan.?

Barney tells me in the 'History Of North Regional Broadcasting' that he thought it sounded like some bathroom disinfectant and, what's more, was far too 'working class' to become a series.

Well we can't win em all.

What gave you the most satisfaction in your BBC career ?

(Vivian A Daniels - Interview 41)

April 1991.