

# CONNECTED HISTORIES OF THE BBC: A UNIVERSITY OF SUSSEX RESEARCH PROJECT, FUNDED BY THE AHRC.

Launched on 3 September 2019, to coincide with the 80th anniversary of the start of the Second World War, our latest website: **THE BBC AND WORLD WAR 2** explores the role our national broadcaster played in the Second World War, including its secret role in military activities.

The website features previously unreleased recordings and materials from the BBC's archives which tell the story of how the BBC supported the war effort.

For the first time, a previously unheard account also gives an insight into the secret process of playing certain music at the end of news bulletins – the choice of records giving orders or information to resistance groups in Poland.

This unique collection explores how the BBC supported the Allied cause, yet still remained determined to protect its reputation for truthfulness and accuracy.

## HIGHLIGHTS

- The archive release gives the fullest inside account yet of how the BBC told the world about **D-Day**. John Snagge describes the hours running up to his announcement, when he was locked under armed guard to stop news sneaking out.
- Inside accounts of life under siege at the BBC during the **Blitz** and the camaraderie of 400 staff sleeping every night in the basement of Broadcasting House. Many BBC staff were also dispersed to secret country locations, with archive interviews giving a sense of life in these regional hide-outs.
- Newly-released interviews on the **bombing of Broadcasting House**, including several eye-witness accounts from those inside the building during attacks in October and December 1940, revealing the chaos and confusion and how the BBC kept programmes on the air.
- The archive reveals some of the behind-the-scenes struggles to keep the British people **entertained and informed** during the war, as well as new insights on the BBC's wartime role in soft-power politics and cultural diplomacy.



## NEWS RELEASE SEPT 2019

**THE BBC HAS OPENED UP ITS ARCHIVES, TO EXPLORE THE BBC'S ROLE DURING WORLD WAR TWO:**

<https://www.bbc.com/historyofthebbc/100-voices/ww2>

## PROJECT

The **100 Voices that Made the BBC** series is part of the AHRC-funded **Connected Histories of the BBC** project based at the University of Sussex and running from 2017 to 2021. For background, see:

<https://connectedhistoriesofthebbc.org/>

Image: Olive Shapley (producer) with Mrs Emerson in the colliery village of Craghead, County Durham BBC North Region 01/01/1939

- Details of an operation to replace the live Big Ben chimes with a recorded version in the event of an air attack, to ensure the Luftwaffe did not know their planes were over Westminster.
- The BBC's wartime broadcasting accorded star-status to a small group of men and women who turned out to be exceptional performers before the microphone. Newly-released oral history interviews provide some intimate snapshots – and shatter some iconic reputations.
- How the BBC tried to capture the mood not just of Britain, but of the wider world, on VE day. As these newly-released archives reveal, however, there was in fact no single 'mood' to be captured: joy and relief was mingled with exhaustion, foreboding, and sometimes anger.
- The *Forces Programme* is fondly remembered, but here the archives reveal the less well-known story of the BBC's radio service for American, Canadian and British troops landing on D-Day, and the rows it provoked.

David Hendy, the curator of the collection and Professor of Media and Cultural History at the University of Sussex, said:

*“This new archive release for the BBC’s oral history collection is a really important piece of social history, giving us intriguing and - until now – entirely unheard ‘inside’ accounts of the BBC’s wartime role. It also confirms for the first time several fascinating details of BBC’s role in wartime activities and as a morale-booster in the fight against fascism, along with interviews and documents about events and programmes that remain a huge part of the popular memory of World War Two.”*

## AUTHORS:

The text has been written by David Hendy and Alban Webb from the School of Media, Film and Music at the University of Sussex, and John Escolme (BBC).

## PREVIOUS WEBSITES

in the **100 Voices that Made the BBC** series can be found at: <https://www.bbc.co.uk/historyofthebbc/100-voices>

They include websites about British identity, the history of elections broadcasting, the birth of television, and the reinvention of radio in the 1960s.

## SHARE YOUR MEMORIES:

There is also a section called ‘Share Your Memories’ where you can upload your own thoughts and recollections as a viewer and listener.

## CONTACT

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