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Introduction

My working life began aged 16, in 1940, in the thick of London's blitz. I was lucky – I got a job as a rewind-boy in the projection box of London's large Dominion Cinema. It turned out to be my lucky break, although it was to be interrupted by four years army service which, in 1944, took me in a tank from Normandy to Berlin.

With peace came demobilisation. The army had not blunted my desire to pursue a career in films, and film editing was on top of the agenda. But I was thwarted by the film union, the ACT – no job without a ticket, no ticket without a job. A bleak prospect. So back to being a projectionist, but this time with a difference – with a job in the preview theatre of the The Film Producers Guild, a group of documentary film companies. It took eighteen months to talk my way into the union and I joined a group of these film makers as a cutting-room runner. I learned a great deal by watching and screening rushes, assemblies, rough-cuts and final prints of the latest documentaries – much influenced by luminaries such as Humphrey Jennings, John Grierson, Jill Craigie and Paul Rotha. This soon led to film editing, scripting and finally to directing.

Sadly, I have never kept a diary but I have an attic full of letters, scripts, press cuttings, brochures and tons of photographs. This motley collection, plus a fairly crisp memory of the years gone by, has made it possible for me to catalogue – I trust with not too many inaccuracies – the main incidents of a fairly eventful life. By 1955, with a good number of documentaries under my belt which I had written, edited and directed, I got a call from a colleague: "Why don't you have a go at television? It sounds like a lot of fun". And I did.

The Start of ITV



2nd September 1955. Associated - Rediffusion went on the air for the first time. The new independent television companies took on huge risks in starting up from scratch, and having to sustain a permanent television service, competing with the BBC.

Those of us lucky enough to be in at the beginning were embarking on a great adventure. There was excitement in the air, and we felt compelled to take the plunge – we dived in at the deep end. There was no yardstick to measure our work by, it was all so new. There were not many around at Associated-Rediffusion to show you how to do it. We just got on with it. No matter how good or dreadful the programme, the chances of not having seen or done anything like it before were considerable. That really was the excitement at the time.

Soon our dramas, documentaries and news coverage were starting to have an impact on the BBC, causing television historians and pundits to declare a year or two later, that the competition presented by ITV motivated and inspired the BBC to develop and achieve its worldwide reputation as the leading purveyor of television.

At the time some outsiders might have thought that programme-making was a bit of an experiment – not for us, though – the reality was the pressure to get on and to stay on the air. We endeavoured to throw light on something new and intriguing, using freshly recruited writers, directors, and technicians, plus the latest film and television cameras, in an untried manner – often breaking some of the traditional rules. That was the challenge.

These memoirs trace the output of a fairly eclectic range of programmes by just one practitioner – but I was certainly not alone – there were quite a few of us who can claim similar experiences in our shared adventures.

I include here twelve examples of my many programmes, with brief descriptions.

1956 Fan Fever

Fan worship and hysteria – a group of young fans at a pop concert – a very early TV investigation into human behaviour – exploring a novel style of film–making. For ITV it was all so very new.

New Statesman -Tom Driberg:

"Oblivious of the camera, they screamed, writhed, gasped, beat their pretty but clammy brows, suffered the delicious agonies of divine possession. All this made vital television. It was refreshing to see on commercial television so vigorous and objective a social document."



1959 Tyranny – The Years of Adolf Hitler

ITV's first one-hour documentary was made only 14 years after the end of World War 2. Kenneth Harris interviewed Alan Bullock, Sefton Delmer and Lord Strang in the studio. At the time it achieved the top ITV audience rating.



Munich - interviewing Hitler's sister Paula Wolf

This was a 'live' programme with filmed inserts I secretly shot in Munich with Hitler's sister, Paula Wolf, his adjutant, his pilot, and his chauffeur, who claimed that he had incinerated the bodies of Hitler and Eva Braun outside their Berlin bunker. These prefilmed interviews were thought lost, but were rediscovered in 2005 and, with some stills I took at the time, are the only record of the existence of this unique material.

1959 The Turn of the Screw

This original 4-camera 'live' television studio production of Benjamin Britten's opera was ITV's first, and also marked his first adventure into television.

Britten readily agreed to collaborate in my live 1959 television production. He was intrigued by this novel challenge which inevitably presented innovative methods with obvious technical risks.

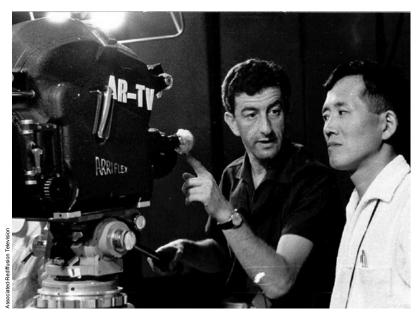
After the broadcast Sir Kenneth Clark, Chairman of The Arts Council of Great Britain, wrote: "As a work of art I think it is the best thing the medium has ever produced."



"What have we done between us?"

1960 The Two Faces of Japan

Another early one-hour documentary – two months filming in Japan to see how deep the imposed post-war 'Coca-Cola culture' had taken root.



We filmed this only 15 years after Hiroshima. It has by now become intriguing archive material in its own right. We knew so little about Japan and this was ITV's first experience of this 'far-off island'. For a westerner in 1960 it was like landing on Mars. After two months on location we delivered to the ITV network a huge audience.

1960 - 63 This Week

ITV's weekly long-running Current Affairs programme.

Brian Connell was the presenter. We had a large team of reporters including Desmond Wilcox, Jeremy Thorpe, James Cameron, Paul Johnson, Bryan Magee.



With Cyril Bennett as editor we produced over 100 editions.



Prime Minister Harold Macmillan in the *This Week* Studio for a rare live 30 minute interview.

1964 Black Marries White – the Last Barrier

A highly controversial documentary featuring several couples, each one with a black husband and a white wife. This was a rare, early example of television dealing with race relations.



"If one day Beverly comes home from school and said to you 'Daddy why do they call me a nigger girl?' – what would you say to her?"

A novel technique was tried.

I persuaded husband and wife to engage in conversation and argument with each other. The only words spoken were by the mixed couples themselves. The programme's contents and its surprising style attracted a huge TV audience with predictably mixed reactions. The result was controversial. sometimes moving, often disturbing.

1965 The State Funeral of Sir Winston Churchill

The BBC had always been the sole broadcaster of State Occasions but now Associated-Rediffusion on behalf of the whole ITV Network took up the challenge and went on the air with this award-winning outside-broadcast.



For five hours, employing 45 cameras, and with the pre-recorded voices of Laurence Olivier, Paul Schofield, Joseph Harsh and Churchill's himself, we created word-pictures investing the occasion with a clear recall of what he had stood for and stood against. It was a celebration of the man to whom London and the whole nation was saying farewell.



With finger on the 'omnibus talkback' button, speaking to 45 cameramen.

1965 LSO The Music Men

This Documentary features the London Symphony Orchestra and highlights the dedication of the men who make the music.



Knussen's 12 year-old son Oliver.

This film shows what it takes to belong to a group of hard-working orchestral musicians as seen through the eyes of its principal bass player, Stuart Knussen, proud member of the London Symphony Orchestra. This is an impressionistic picture of a dedicated bunch of very talented musicians. It features Colin Davis, Istvan Kertesz and Knussen's 12-year-old son Oliver, a budding composer. The documentary style of this all-filmed programme includes a great deal of music-making. There is no narration.

1965 – 69 The Life and Times of Lord Mountbatten

Twelve programmes made for Rediffusion Television. After his retirement in 1965 we filmed Lord Mountbatten in key locations which featured in his life including Malta, Burma, Singapore, Thailand, Sri Lanka and India.

This series is a TV history and a biography with a sharp autobiographical edge. For historian John Terraine, writing this script of a young Naval Cadet, dashing Destroyer Captain, Chief of Combined Operations, Supreme Allied Commander South East Asia, India's last Viceroy, Chief of the Defence Staff, was a huge task.

The rich mixture of location filming with Mountbatten, a mass of archive footage, and the participation of over thirty eye-witnesses has left a valuable historical legacy.



Burma: the ruins of Fort Dufferin in Mandalay. The Earl Mountbatten of Burma explains its capture by the 14th Army

1971 – 73 The Mighty Continent

A TV history of Europe from 1900 to 1975 in thirteen episodes for BBC-1, written and narrated by John Terraine and embellished by Peter Ustinov with on-screen anecdotes



With Peter Ustinov and my BBC crew filming the Berlin Wall in the Bernauer Strasse

This portrait of Europe in the 20th Century was three years in the making and was filmed in ten European Countries, providing a fascinating backdrop to the century's upheavals on this continent. Two major acts of conflagration, two major German defeats, the Holocaust, the Common Market, the Cold War and beyond. 'The Mighty Continent' presented a broad sweep of history, politics and the arts, with a solid grounding starting in the year 1900 – a story that is being constantly redefined.

1978 – 79 Women of Courage

This quartet of remarkable women came from Norway, Poland, Britain and Germany, sharing an instinctive compulsion to fight the Nazis. With great modesty they recall their clandestine experiences. Unsung heroines.

The German:
Helped to save the lives of 1200
Scandinavian captives in German camps. Twice arrested.





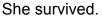
The Norwegian:
Brought out and
saved 37 Jewish
children from Nazioccupied Prague.
Finally escaped
across a frozen lake
to Sweden.

She survived.

She survived.

The Brit:

Fearlessly ran an escape line in France for shot-down Allied airmen. Shot escaping, arrested and sentenced to death.







The Pole:
Secret radio operator
parachuted into
German-occupied
Warsaw. Caught,
tortured and
sentenced to death.
She survived.

1978 - 79 Kitty - Return to Auschwitz

Thirty-five years after her miraculous survival, Kitty Hart returned with her son. Her emotional reactions on going back to Auschwitz-Birkenau, desperate to tell him what happened, were recorded using a technique which was both innovative and startling.



This 90-minute film, shot in 1978, differs from others dealing with the Holocaust because of its style, best described as 'observational'. I did not speak to Kitty once during the three days we were filming — she was oblivious of the camera. We simply followed her. With memories flooding back she impatiently described to her son every minute detail of what happened to her thirty-five years earlier. Time and again she surprised him, and us, with the most dreadful revelations. The raw and uncompromising style of this award-winning film established a cruel truth about Auschwitz-Birkenau which is unchallengeable.

Afterthoughts

No one could have guessed, when faced with competition, how the BBC would react to the launch of ITV in 1955. The Corporation was confident that its broadcasting ethos was secure – fierce public arguments in the press and in Parliament broke out. But these were not the talking points in Associated-Rediffusion's club bar – we were much too busy satisfying the voracious appetite of a brand-new national network, helping to sustain a daily diet of programmes.

It was in this climate that I started making programmes – and took the chance in those early few years to contribute to both mass and minority audience programmes that some thought could only be made by the BBC. In 1959, the peak-time documentary *Tyranny* – the Years of Adolf Hitler and the opera *The Turn of the Screw* typify these early examples.

I have often wondered what made me tick at the time. There was no yardstick to go by; there was hardly any time to watch other people's programmes – video recording had yet to be invented. The documentaries I had been making before 1955 suddenly seemed dated. Now the chances were that you could achieve something entirely new – such was the primitive state of the medium.

Over the years I have directed a great variety of programmes, about 200, and I hope that *A Life Rewound* might be of interest especially to media students who may wish to find out more about the background and the growing pains of this extraordinary industry – as recalled in the book version of these memoirs.

It is now seventy years since I started as a rewind-boy in the projection box of the Dominion, Tottenham Court Road. Needless to say, it never occurred to me at the time that one day I might sit down, put pen to paper, and chronicle these events — but I have now done with rewinding.

Acknowledgements

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I want to pay tribute to everyone who has assisted in the task of helping to identify these photographs and wish to stress that every effort has been made to establish the owners' rights. If there are any regrettable omissions or mistaken attributions I will be pleased to rectify them.

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A Life Rewound (120.000 words and over 230 illustrations) is published by Bank House Books. It is available from www.bankhousebooks.com and all good bookshops.

Awards

1963 BAFTA Current Affairs Award - This Week

1965 BAFTA Outside Broadcasts Award - Churchill State Funeral

1965 Cannes Grand Prix - Churchill State Funeral

1969 Royal Television Society Silver Medal - Mountbatten Series

1973 Columbia Film Festival Award – The Mighty Continent

1978 Sapporo Documentary Award - Women of Courage

1978 Kitty – Return to Auschwitz:

Royal Television Society Documentary Award Berlin Prix Futura World Television Tokyo Prize

VVOIId Television Tokyo Pilze

Clarion Award - Best US Network Programme

Commonwealth Film & Television Award