

Creative approach to history puts memories at its heart

The BBC Heritage website has been relaunched with expanded content – and in every key section there are windows inviting perspectives and memories from former staff.

The site, which can be accessed at bbc.co.uk/historyofthebbc, includes an ‘anniversary of the week’, with short clips and memories. In addition, an animated timeline lists ten ‘innovation moments’ for each decade.

It’s part of a plan to move away from BBC ‘nostalgia’, and recast the BBC story as one of continuous innovation – in technology, creative formats and relationships with audiences.

‘I’ve been looking at our story, and asking what it tells us about our future as well as the past,’ explains Robert Seatter, head of BBC history. ‘As part of that analysis, I’m focusing every year on particular anniversaries which say something meaningful about where we’ve come from and where we are. Above all, I’m interested in the impact of the BBC on people’s lives and how it’s made a difference in the life of the nation.’

As part of that, BBC History recently held a seminar on the 70th anniversary of

the day that WW2 broke out (September 3 1939), exploring how the war radically changed the BBC’s relationship with government as well as home and international audiences.

‘WW2, more than anything else in our history, defined BBC “voice”, linking it inextricably with Britishness both in the national and international psyche,’ adds Robert.

Looking ahead, next year’s 25th anniversary of *EastEnders*, alongside 60 years of *The Archers*, provides an opportunity to put groundbreaking soaps in a historic context, showing how they have reflected and continue to reflect the story of the UK at a street level.

‘I’m particularly keen to hear from people who have memories of *The Archers* and *EastEnders*,’ he says. ‘We will be marking those anniversaries in partnership with the National Media Museum in Bradford via a season including exhibitions, speaker platforms, learning and community outreach. It would be wonderful to enrich the celebration with first-hand accounts from people directly involved in making the programmes. So please do send us your contributions.’

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How to contribute

Recent anniversaries have included:

- *Terry and June* (October 24 1979)
- Ceefax (September 23 1974)
- *Monty Python* (October 5 1969)
- The Wednesday Play (October 28 1964)
- *The Saga of Noggin the Nog* (September 11 1959)
- BBC Monitoring (August 26 1939)

If any of these anniversaries trigger memories you would like to share, contact *Prospero* (see address bottom left) or go to Robert Seatter direct.

The best way to reach him is by email – robert.seatter@bbc.co.uk.

‘However I know that the people with the longest memories are those least likely to have email. So you can also write to me at BBC History, Room 5126, White City, Wood Lane, London W12 7RJ.’