

## Peter Adams



Peter Adams died on May 31<sup>st</sup> 2018 aged 89.

He was Manager Communications and Engineering Services in Wales when he retired in 1988.

His interest in technology was fostered when, as a small boy, his father had taken him to visit the pumping station for the Severn Tunnel at Pilning. His father, writing in 1948, said that Peter *“had a decided bent for wireless”* who *“made up his mind that he was going to join the BBC”*

Peter first applied to join the BBC in 1944 and was finally recruited in 1945 at the age of 17. After training at Bristol and Evesham Peter went to work as a Technical Assistant in overseas broadcasting at Aldenham House Elstree.



Peter at Aldenham in 1946

Disaster struck in December 1948 when he was made redundant. He filled in his time working as a recording and installation engineer for a Bristol firm until, in January 1950, he re-joined the BBC as a TA in Transmitters. He was there for three years, subsequently moving to “Lines” department in London where he gained promotion to engineer. He came to Cardiff in 1956 as Switching Centre supervisor.

Peter met his future wife Margaret in the BBC in Cardiff and they were married in 1957.

I first met Peter in 1967 when I, as a junior TA, was lying on the floor of a cable riser duct in Broadcasting House at Llandaff trying to work out the connections on a tag block. A large bespectacled figure appeared in the doorway and enquired if he could help. This was Peter, by that time Engineer in Charge Communications. I learnt that this was the person who had an *“encyclopaedic knowledge”* of the (then new) building.

When Communications was combined with Services in 1971, it wasn't surprising that Peter was appointed as the manager, becoming accountable for just about everything technical in Llandaff, Communications, Broadcast Engineering, Building Services, Mechanical Maintenance and, of course, all the major developments in BBC Wales.

He also had responsibility for capital planning, the ongoing nightmare when engineers attempted to match the ambitions of the programme makers with the reality of funding. In the days before word processors this resulted in a lot of retyping and Peter generated much work for the departments' secretaries.

His office door was usually open, there would be a friendly welcome and he was always ready to proffer advice if requested.

An imposing figure, usually wearing his *“trademark”* white shirt and a tie. Peter has been described as having had a *“somewhat shy personality”*. Certainly in comparison with the ebullient and demanding characters that he had to deal with in BBC Wales this description may have been correct.

Highly regarded professionally, in Wales as well as the wider community of BBC engineering, he quietly got on with the job with outstanding dedication. He cared for the welfare of his staff.

Peter trusted his managers to run their departments more or less as they thought fit. If we made a mistake and something went wrong Peter would step in and sort things out, never complaining. Perhaps occasionally he gave a firm but gentle word of admonishment for the manager who had let him down.

Gareth Price, a controller of BBC Wales, said:

*“Peter Adams I respected enormously, we were always terrified when he went on holiday because he knew where all the switches were and the wires led to. I insisted that he name his substitute.”*

After official retirement Peter worked on contract for a year or so managing the BBC fit out of Ty Oldfield.

He is fondly remembered for supporting the campaign for the first workplace nursery in the BBC. It has been said that *“Peter fought hard for working parents to have that space for a nursery even before we had been given the go-ahead”*

After Peter left the BBC he carried out some work for the Thomson Foundation alongside former colleagues Andrew McCabe and Gareth Price. During that time he made a very

important contribution to a project undertaken by Thomson for the United Nations Development Department. This was a Masterplan for broadcasting in Tanzania and Peter's role was to tour the country seeking transmitter sites and also plan the layout of the broadcasting centre. At the time in the early nineties travel in the country was very difficult on dirt roads only possible in four-wheel drive vehicles. The team faced not only difficult travel conditions but violent storms, wild animals and sparse accommodation. Needless to say they pulled through and the resulting Report was acclaimed by the UNDP.

At home he was supported by his wife Margaret and was obviously immensely proud of her and his three daughters, always described to us as *"the girls"*.

He was a volunteer with the RNIB for over 50 years. For much of this time he serviced talking book machines.

Peter moved to a nursing home in Devon after his wife Margaret passed away in March 2016 and subsequently to another nursing home in Lytham St Anne's near to his daughter Kathy.

A service of thanksgiving for his life was held at St Isan's church in Llanishen in Cardiff on June 18<sup>th</sup> attended by many of his family, friends and ex-colleagues.

Roger Farmer, M.C.E.S Wales 1988-1992

*With thanks to Peter's daughter Kathy, Gareth Price, Andrew and Pearl McCabe and Gill Owen.*