

## **NATIONWIDE HUNT UNEARTH'S 'UK'S OLDEST WORKING TV'** *...and it's ready for the digital age*

A 73-year-old television has won a nationwide search to find the country's oldest working set. It was organised by Digital UK - the body leading the switch to digital TV.

The Marconiphone TV, dating from 1936, the dawn of the all-electronic analogue television era, is still in full working order. More recently it's been brought bang up to date with the addition of a set top box – proving that virtually any set of any age can be made ready for the switch to digital television.

The set was located as part of a competition to find the country's oldest working TV launched by Digital UK in conjunction with Iain Logie Baird, Curator of Television at the National Media Museum in Bradford and grandson of TV inventor, John Logie Baird.

The Marconiphone 702 has a 12in screen and is estimated to have been manufactured around November 1936, the same month as the regular BBC television service from Alexandra Palace was first broadcast. When new, it cost 60 Guineas - the equivalent of about £11,000 today<sup>1</sup>. It is likely to have screened landmark broadcasts, including King George VI's Coronation Procession in 1937, the 1948 London Olympic Games and the Queen's Coronation in 1953.

Owner of the television, Jeffrey Borinsky, a consultant engineer from North London, has owned the set for ten years. He said: "I still enjoy watching my Marconiphone occasionally, especially cartoons from the 1930s, which the original owner might also have seen on the set. Converting the set to digital means I can continue to watch it for many years to come."

Jon Steel, of Digital UK, said: "We want to remind viewers that age is no barrier to getting your old TV ready for switchover. This unique example from the very earliest days of television is proof that even the oldest sets can continue to work long after analogue signals have been switched off."

Iain Logie Baird believes this is an unusual find: "A small fraction of pre-war tellies still exist – many fell into disrepair or were simply thrown out when a newer set arrived, and we know about 3,000 were lost in the London bombings. Today, most surviving pre-war sets are found in museums or in private collections. It's wonderful to find a Marconiphone 702 still in private ownership and in full working order, more than half a century after it was first manufactured."

Digital UK's search was launched in May and prompted a large number of entries from all parts of the country, including several pre-war sets.

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<sup>1</sup> Accounting for changes in average earnings

A variety of televisions from throughout the ages are on display in the Experience TV Gallery at the National Media Museum in Bradford.

### **Notes for editors**

Pictures of the oldest TV with owner Jeffrey Borinsky and Iain Logie Baird are available from [vismeida.co.uk](http://vismeida.co.uk).

This competition was launched in association with The Daily Mirror, We Love Telly. Any TV which was entered had to be in working order and held in private hands (ie not museum pieces).

Digital UK would like to thank the National Media Museum, Bradford, and Intellect - the trade association serving the UK technology industry - for their support.

### **Technical notes**

The Marconiphone 702 requires a 405 line signal on the old channel B1; 45MHz vision; and 41.5MHz sound. This was originally broadcast by the BBC at Alexandra Palace from 1936, and then Crystal Palace from the mid 1950s until the last 405 line transmitters were closed down in 1985.

A device, rather like a specialised set top box, is used to convert current 625 line signals. The Aurora 405 converter was developed for this purpose. The Aurora takes standard video and audio from any source, such as a Freeview box, and supplies the signal required by an early TV.

### **Comparisons - TV and National Broadcast – 1936 vs. 2009**

#### Channels

- In 1936 there was one channel – the BBC
- In 2009, in addition to BBC and ITV there are Channel 4 and Five, and more than 300 channels are available through digital TV.

#### Signal Coverage

- 1936 – Greater London was the only part of the UK to receive television signal pre-war. This came from Alexandra Palace transmitters.
- 2009 – There are 5 free-to-air terrestrial channels broadcasting over the entirety of the United Kingdom, plus satellite, cable and broadband TV.

#### Length of ownership

- 1936 – The average TV was owned for 10-15 years. It was a financial investment for a household and was not disposed of regularly.
- 2009 – The average household owns a TV on a more cyclical basis – choosing to upgrade every 2-3 years.

#### Manufacture

- 1936 – No pre-war TV set was made outside of Britain. Largest brands were Marconi and HMV (both manufactured in Middlesex), Baird, Decca, Cossor (London).
- 2009 – 99% of TV's in Britain are manufactured overseas. There is only one TV set manufacturer, (The Toshiba factory in Plymouth) remaining in Britain today.

Hours of transmission

- 1936 – Monday to Saturday 3pm-4pm and 9pm-10pm.
- 2009 – 24 hour transmission

### **About the National Media Museum**

The National Media Museum in Bradford, West Yorkshire, opened as the National Museum of Photography, Film & Television in Bradford in 1983, with a remit to explore the art and science of the image and image-making, and has since become one of the most visited UK museums outside London.

The Museum is devoted to film, photography, television, radio and the web and looks after the National Photography, Photographic Technology and Cinematography Collections. Its Television Collection incorporates an unrivalled collection of objects relating to the history and development of television, including John Logie Baird's 1923 experimental apparatus.

Attractions at the Museum include a host of galleries including permanent galleries Experience TV, a hands-on visitor experience about the history, present and past of television, featuring TV Heaven, the Kodak gallery charting the history of photography, the Animation gallery, and the Magic Factory for the young and young at heart. Learning activities for families and schools bring the Museum's subject matter to life and there are regular cultural events for adults to complement the Museum's changing programme.

The Museum organises four major film events every year – Bradford International Film Festival and Bradford Animation Festival, plus Bite the Mango and Fantastic Films Weekend. It also hosts three cinemas and shows films in all of the major formats from Cinerama three-strip, to digital, to IMAX 3D.

The Museum is home to two temporary exhibition spaces and recent programme highlights include the Museum securing the only UK venue for *Henri Cartier-Bresson's Scrapbook, Photographs 1932-46*, and the Museum-generated shows *Don McCullin – In England* and *Live by the Lens. Die by the Lens: Film Stars and Photographers*. Entry to exhibitions at the National Media Museum is free. For more information visit

[www.nationalmediamuseum.org.uk](http://www.nationalmediamuseum.org.uk)

### **About digital switchover**

**Digital TV switchover** is the process of converting the UK's terrestrial television system to digital. Between now and 2012, analogue channels will be switched off region by region and replaced with free-to-air digital TV and radio services (Freeview). Switchover will extend Freeview coverage to the whole of the UK and free up airwaves for new services such as ultra-fast wireless broadband and mobile television. Digital services are also available via broadband, cable and satellite.

**Digital UK** is the independent, not-for-profit organisation established in 2005 to lead the implementation of digital switchover. It is jointly owned and funded by the public-service broadcasters (BBC, ITV, Channel 4, Five, S4C and Teletext), and the digital multiplex operators.

**The Switchover Help Scheme** is run by the BBC under an agreement with the Government to help older and disabled people make the change to digital TV. Every eligible person will be offered practical help to convert one of their TV sets to digital in the run-up to switchover in each region. People are eligible if they are aged 75 years or more, have lived in a care

home for six months or more, get (or could get) certain disability benefits, or are registered blind or partially sighted. Most people will be asked to contribute £40 towards the help but for those on certain income-related benefits, it's free.

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