

5 May 2009

Press release

digitaluk

LOGIE BAIRD UNVEILS OLDEST DIGITAL TELLY

A 72-year-old TV becomes the oldest digital set in Scotland today – thanks to the grandson of John Logie Baird, the Scot who invented the very first television.

Iain Logie Baird will today convert a 1938 HMV 905 television to digital with a set-top box, proving that nobody needs to throw their old TV away when Scotland goes completely digital over the next two years.

The owner of the TV is Michael Bennett-Levy, from Musselburgh, who wins the 'Hunt for Scotland's Oldest Working TV', a competition launched by switchover body Digital UK last December.

Iain Logie Baird, Curator of Television at the National Media Museum, said: "We hoped the competition would unearth some great examples of historical interest, and it certainly has. Michael's television is not only the oldest working TV we have found in Scotland, but also one of the earliest electronic TVs in the world.

"Every analogue TV viewer in Scotland will need to go digital over the next two years. Converting Michael's TV to digital demonstrates that viewers don't need to replace their television. Analogue viewers need to change the way they receive their signal – not their television."

Michael Bennett-Levy, 62, added: "I'm a spring chicken compared to my television. Surviving pre war television sets worldwide are rarer than Stradivarius violins. I'm thrilled that my HMV 905 will now be able to receive a digital signal, and that Iain Logie Baird will be returning to Scotland to conduct my switchover personally."

Paul Hughes, Digital UK's national manager in Scotland, explained: "We held the competition to highlight that all TV's can be converted to digital. Switchover will make digital terrestrial television (Freeview) available to virtually every home in Scotland – including, for the first time, hundreds of thousands of viewers served by local 'relay' transmitters.

"Our work with Iain proves there's no need to go out and spend large amounts of money on a new TV, and that older sets can be converted easily for little cost."

Although Michael's entry was not the oldest television entered into the competition, it wins by virtue of being able to receive current broadcasts. An older set was submitted by Colin Mackenzie, of East Lothian, who entered an original Baird Televisor.

Nine out of ten households in the STV Central region are now watching digital TV, while 94 per cent of viewers are aware of the digital switchover, according to research.¹

Scottish Borders became the first region successfully to complete switchover last November. Switchover will now progress to south-west Scotland on 24 June, continuing to the north of Scotland throughout 2010 and finishing in Lothian, parts of Edinburgh and Fife by June 2011.

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Notes to editors

¹ Digital UK/Ofcom Switchover Tracker survey (to December 2008).

Digital television 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 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.

Images and video clips are available to media free of charge from vismedia.co.uk

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