

SERIES LEVEL DESCRIPTION
TELEVISION DRAMA (T5)**Scope & Content**

The papers relate to the creation of individual television drama programmes, potentially covering items from the initial proposal, through to the arrangements for filming and editing to the broadcast stage. Some files are more complete in this respect than others. The bulk of material in the files consists of the standard forms necessary for the completion of programmes including wardrobe and props requisitions, copies of casting forms and contracts; graphics requirements, cost estimates and Programmes as Broadcast. There is also accompanying correspondence in the form of memos and letters covering all aspects of production from negotiations with artists and writers, to finding locations to queries about the quality of the transmitted films. There may also occasionally be scripts or parts of scripts and audience research reports.

The papers come mainly from the following sources: Head of Drama, Television; Assistant Head of Drama, Television; Head of Series, Drama Television; Head of Serials, Drama, Television; Drama Group Organiser; Organiser, Series, Drama, Television; Drama Script Supervisor, Television; Head of Films, Television; Television Programme Organiser; Controller, Programmes, Television; Television Bookings Manager; Copyright department; Studio Manager; Wardrobe & Makeup department; Property Master; Design Manager; Assistant Design Manager; Presentation department; Television Publicity Organiser; Picture Publicity; Studio Bookings; Supply Manager; Transport department; Programme Planning department; Television Accountants; Television Programmes Director; designers; Scene Master's Office; Artists Bookings department; actors; actors' agents; writers; directors; producers; script editors.

Archival History

The papers were originally filed in the TV Central Registry. The initial sequence of drama material covering the period 1937-1955 were transferred to the Written Archives direct from Registry in March 1974. These were refiled under programme titles in October of the same year.

Subsequent sequences were first transferred to the Records Management Centre, and later the Records And Programme Information Centres (RAPIC), before being sent on to the Written Archives Centre. The sequence covering 1955-1964 was transferred to the Records Centre from Registry in October 1979, and a review of these files was begun there in 1982. This was discontinued with only the A-E sequence completed. The material chosen for retention from this group was sent on to the Written Archives Centre in September 1990, along with the Th-Z sequence from the 1965-1969 files. The remainder of the files covering these two periods (still unreviewed) did not arrive at the Written Archives Centre until February 1992.

These were followed in August, 1992 by further files from the 1965-1969 period, found during a one-year appraisal project at the Records Management Centre. Further files discovered during this project, with dates between 1955-1971, arrived in October 1992.

Files from the period 1970-1978 were sent to the Written Archives Centre from RAPIC in September, 1995, with a further batch of miscellaneous files dating from as early as 1959 to as late as 1985 arriving in November, 1987.

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Arrangement

The files are arranged in several separate sequences that correspond to the dates they arrived in the archives (see above). Please be aware that the sequences often overlap in terms of dates. The initial four sequences are each arranged alphabetically by programme title. Users should be aware that plays were filed under their individual titles, but listed under the title of the strand in which they were broadcast. For example, *Cathy Come Home* is under 'C' in the sequence of actual files, but the printed shelf lists and computer database places it as a sub-heading under the *Wednesday Play*, meaning it must be sought under this title and not *Cathy Come Home*.

- Sequence one (T5/1-606) covers the period 1937-1955
- Sequence two (T5/608-651) are the files whose programme titles begin with the letters A-E from 1955-1964
- Sequence three (T5/652-777) covers the programme titles beginning Th-Z from 1965-1969.
- Sequence four (T5/778-2,044) covers programme titles beginning A-Th from 1965-1969.

Sequence five consists of some randomly arranged files (T5/2,047-2,066), and a further alphabetically arranged sequence (T5/2,062-2,521) which covers titles beginning Ep-Z from 1955-1964.

The remaining four sequences of files are arranged numerically.

- Sequence six (T5/2,522-2,634) are mainly files pertaining to the series *Doctor Who*, *Dr Finlay's Casebook*, and *The Forsyte Saga*, from the years 1965-1969
- Sequence seven (T5/2,535-2,541) is a short sequence covering miscellaneous files from 1955-1971.
- Sequence eight (T5/2,542-2,622) covers files from the period 1970-1978.
- Sequence nine (T5/2,623-2,633) consists of miscellaneous files from between 1959-1985. It can be speculated that the 1985 file should not actually be part of the T5 sequence.

A complete alphabetical listing of the files in this series is available.

Related Areas

The period from the mid-1970s to mid-1990s is covered by the series deposited by the Drama Group (T65), which overlaps slightly with the T5 sequence. For radio drama, see selected files from Entertainment (R19) which covers the early period, Play Library (R71), mainly covering the 1960s and 1970s and Radio Drama (R136) covering 1979-1985.

The Television Script Unit (T48) series of files includes material on script writers. Files on individual Television Artists (up to a date of 1970 only) are also available.

The Audience Research (R9) series includes viewer reaction reports to selected programmes and also audience barometers listing statistics on numbers of viewers.

Scripts are available on microfilm for most programmes.

Files on material produced in the Nations and Regions is listed separately and is available on request.

Administrative History

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Drama productions had been mounted in the early days of television, prior to its closure in September 1939 for the duration World War II, and also in the immediate post-war period (television resumed in June, 1946), but it was not until 1948 that television drama was given its own department within the BBC. The first head of the new department was Robert MacDermot, followed by Val Gielgud (brother of Sir John), who took over in 1949. Gielgud kept his dual role as head of both TV and Radio drama until 1952 when he returned exclusively to sound broadcasting. He had never been happy with the last minute changes required by the television process and lack of an established script unit. A script supervisor was not appointed until 1951 and there was no central script section until 1955. Nevertheless his era established quality as a key factor in the BBC's choice of television drama.

It was when Michael Barry took over as Head of Drama, Television in 1952 that television drama began to become a prominent factor in television schedules. He had already made his name producing TV drama and docu-drama such as *The Crock of Gold* (1948) and *I Want to be an Actor* (1948). He retained the emphasis on quality, but also extended the range and type of drama being produced. Whilst feeling the BBC still had a place in adapting the classics, such as *Nicholas Nickleby* (1957) and *Pride and Prejudice* (1958), he also employed new young writers and directors who would push the existing boundaries. Barry recognised that television was a completely different medium from stage, radio, and even film, requiring different techniques and approaches.

It was during Barry's period that the first serialised science fiction was seen, with Nigel Kneale's *The Quatermass Experiment* (1953). He was also aware of the appeal of detective drama, securing the TV rights to George Simenon's novels – the *Maigret* series ultimately ran from 1960-1963.

By 1955-6 the Script department was handling three hundred scripts a month, of which a hundred and twenty were ultimately produced. There were usually ten plays in the course of active production at any one time. By 1960 three hundred and fifty were being produced, two hundred and four of which were written specifically for TV. Drama was always popular with television audiences.

Barry remained in charge of the department until 1961, to be replaced by Canadian Sidney Newman in 1963 (Assistant Head of Department, Norman Rutherford, ran it in the interim period). It was at this time that the department became known as the Drama Group. Newman split it into three sections – single plays, series and serials, each with its own head of department and small staff. He also disbanded the script department.

Newman was recruited from one of the ITV companies (ABC), where he had been responsible for *Armchair Theatre*. He wanted to produce single plays as well as serials and to employ new writers and encourage innovation. He established regular strands of plays, including *Play of the Month*, *Theatre 625*, *Thirty Minute Theatre* and the sometimes controversial *Wednesday Play*.

The Wednesday Play included plays from writers like Dennis Potter, whose first televised play, *The Confidence Course*, aired in this slot in 1965. Although *The Wednesday Play* often shocked viewers, it still built a large audience. The plays highlighted issues of contemporary Britain, including some still traditionally not seen on television such as pre-marital sex and homosexuality. *Up the Junction* (1965), written by Nell Dunn and directed by Kenneth Loach, included an abortion scene, provoking a somewhat hostile reaction from some viewers, and the play was discussed

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at length by the Board of Governors. *Cathy Come Home* (1966), a story of a family made homeless through circumstances beyond their control also caused a reaction, and encouraged the establishment of the charity Shelter.

Two of Newman's most famous commissions were the long running series *Doctor Who* (beginning 1963) and *Z Cars* (1962). Although some executives were unsure about the prospects for *Doctor Who*, Newman fought hard to have it made, believing that, given the right facilities, it could prove very popular. He put Verity Lambert, the only woman drama producer at the time, in charge of the programme. It ultimately provided even larger audiences than anticipated, and introduced the Daleks. These robotic brainchildren of writer Terry Nation (who would go on to create *Blake's 7* in 1978) were given form by designer Raymond Cusick, who famously took his inspiration for them from a pepper pot.

Z Cars was created by Troy Kennedy Martin and designed to show a more up to date and realistic view of the police force than that given in the more traditional *Dixon of Dock Green* (made by the BBC's Light Entertainment department). Police officers were allowed to be portrayed as having human failings and lives outside of their job. Although ultimately overtaken by even grittier police dramas, it generated its own successful spin-off in 1966, *Softly, Softly*, created by Elwyn Jones.

Continuing the established tradition of detective drama, a new series of Sherlock Holmes adaptations began in 1965, starring Douglas Wilmer in the title role with Nigel Stock as Doctor Watson (Peter Cushing later took over Wilmer's role). These were intended, for the first time, to be more faithful to the original Arthur Conan Doyle stories than their predecessors (a claim also made by later TV adaptations for both ITV and the BBC). Nor was medical drama forgotten, with *Dr Finlay's Casebook* attracting an army of devoted fans.

The beginning of BBC-2 in 1964 offered new opportunities to TV Drama, with the opportunity to explore new types of programme, plus an increased staff and budget. Possibly the most famous drama series to be aired on BBC-2 in its early years, however, was an adaptation of John Galsworthy's *The Forsyte Saga* (1967), which was the last major drama serial to be broadcast in black and white.

When Newman left in 1968 his place was taken by Shaun Sutton, who oversaw such well known programmes as *The Six Wives of Henry VIII* (1970) and *I, Claudius* (1976). The files for this period overlap with those of T65 Drama Group sequence, where files can be found for later popular series, such as *The Onedin Line* and *Colditz*.

c. 273, 600 items
2,850 files
1937 – 1985