

# Northumbria Research Link

Citation: Irwin, Mary (2015) BBC's Wednesday magazine and arts television for women. Media History, 21 (2). pp. 162-177. ISSN 1368-8804

Published by: UNSPECIFIED

URL:

This version was downloaded from Northumbria Research Link: <http://northumbria-test.eprints-hosting.org/id/eprint/48359/>

Northumbria University has developed Northumbria Research Link (NRL) to enable users to access the University's research output. Copyright © and moral rights for items on NRL are retained by the individual author(s) and/or other copyright owners. Single copies of full items can be reproduced, displayed or performed, and given to third parties in any format or medium for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, provided the authors, title and full bibliographic details are given, as well as a hyperlink and/or URL to the original metadata page. The content must not be changed in any way. Full items must not be sold commercially in any format or medium without formal permission of the copyright holder. The full policy is available online: <http://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/policies.html>

This document may differ from the final, published version of the research and has been made available online in accordance with publisher policies. To read and/or cite from the published version of the research, please visit the publisher's website (a subscription may be required.)



**Northumbria  
University**  
NEWCASTLE



**UniversityLibrary**

# Northumbria Research Link

Citation: Irwin, Mary (2015) BBC's Wednesday magazine and arts television for women. *Media History*, 21 (2). pp. 162-177. ISSN 1368-8804

Published by: Taylor & Francis

URL: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13688804.2015.1025728>  
<<http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/13688804.2015.1025728>>

This version was downloaded from Northumbria Research Link:  
<http://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/21620/>

Northumbria University has developed Northumbria Research Link (NRL) to enable users to access the University's research output. Copyright © and moral rights for items on NRL are retained by the individual author(s) and/or other copyright owners. Single copies of full items can be reproduced, displayed or performed, and given to third parties in any format or medium for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge, provided the authors, title and full bibliographic details are given, as well as a hyperlink and/or URL to the original metadata page. The content must not be changed in any way. Full items must not be sold commercially in any format or medium without formal permission of the copyright holder. The full policy is available online: <http://nrl.northumbria.ac.uk/policies.html>

This document may differ from the final, published version of the research and has been made available online in accordance with publisher policies. To read and/or cite from the published version of the research, please visit the publisher's website (a subscription may be required.)

[www.northumbria.ac.uk/nrl](http://www.northumbria.ac.uk/nrl)



## Abstract

*Wednesday Magazine* (1958- 63) was an innovative BBC television afternoon arts and culture strand produced by the specialist BBC women's programme unit, which had been built up and nurtured by the first dedicated head of women's programmes Doreen Stephens, who was appointed in 1953. Stephens was responsible for the development of a diverse and extensive range of women's programming; highly ambitious in the offering that it presented to its female viewers. This article will examine the series *Wednesday Magazine* exploring the wealth of arts and culture items broadcast, whilst considering the programme's significance in critical histories of both women's programming and arts television. The article will also make an intervention into historical debates around what constituted women's television in Britain.

## Keywords

*Wednesday Magazine*, women's television, Doreen Stephens, arts television, BBC

## BBC'S WEDNESDAY MAGAZINE AND ARTS TELEVISION FOR WOMEN

'*Wednesday Magazine* long ago exploded the myth that a woman's programme must inevitably suggest a cosy session over crumpets and croquet'<sup>1</sup>

### **Early television for women**

When the BBC resumed television broadcast in 1946, after wartime closedown in 1939, specialist afternoon magazine programmes for women was one area of expanded broadcast provision. This consisted initially of a modest diet of domestically focused magazine titles which concentrated on home and family life<sup>2</sup>. It was the appointment of Doreen Stephens as the first dedicated head of BBC television programmes for women in 1953 which led to a significant growth in the range and significance of television for women. Stephens "built up a specialist women's programmes unit, creating and producing a highly diverse and ambitious weekly roster of television for women"<sup>3</sup>. This article considers one of those programme strands *Wednesday Magazine*, an innovative BBC television afternoon arts and culture strand (1958-1963). This article provides a detailed analysis of *Wednesday Magazine* as a text exploring its significance in the histories of both women's programming and arts television. It also makes an intervention into historical debates around what constituted women's television in Britain.<sup>4</sup>

Recent social and cultural histories of post war Britain from historians such as Kynaston and Sandbrook have offered detailed nuanced accounts of British public and private life from the early years of austerity, to the impact of prosperity and gradually changing social climate of

the later 1950s<sup>5</sup>. Women's voices can be heard clearly in such histories which chart the spectrum of women's roles and responsibilities in the period. Women's television programmes were engaged in trying to document and respond to the dynamics of changes and continuities in British women's lives. There is a dedicated extant specialist body of research which speaks to this early British women's television. It provides a valuable critical framework within which to situate new scholarship on historic women's television. Leman in *Boxed in: Women and Television* offers an insightful historical analysis of the development of programmes for women within the institutional and cultural context of the BBC from the late 1930s until the mid-1960s<sup>6</sup>. Thumim has written extensively on the growth, development and direction of television of the 1950s and 1960s including her collection *Small Screens, Big Ideas: Television in the 1950s and Inventing Television Culture: Men, Women and the Box*. She has looked in some depth at both television strands for women and the on screen representation of women at this time. Most notably, Thumim has considered *Wednesday Magazine*. She chronicles the origins and makeup of the series, making the point that the programme's broad spectrum of items compared favourably with what the contemporaneous early evening current affairs programme *Tonight* (BBC 1957-1964) had to offer.<sup>7</sup> This article builds its argument on the foundations laid by Thumim.

More recently, Andrews' *Domesticating the Airwaves* (2012) has considered the relationships between the post war domestic sphere, the media and the media's role in constructions of domestic femininities. Andrews' work is helpful when configuring *Wednesday Magazine's* address to women which in contrast to 'traditional' women's programmes identifies feminine interests outwith of those of home and family. The notion of the relationship between the afternoon time slot and women's television has been given particular consideration in Moseley, Wheatley and Wood's 2014 *Critical Studies in Television* collection: "Television in the Afternoon". In their introduction they write that this collection will:

take the afternoon as a specific scheduling slot through which there has been, and continues to be, a deliberate and shifting address to women at home. This allows a particular purchase on the historically struggled-over category of woman and the related, often contradictory, discourses of feminism and femininity<sup>8</sup>

They continue that the work contained within the collection "allows us some historical purchase on how the slot has changed over time, as well as helping us to 'unearth significant programming activities that seem to have faded from memory'" (*ibid.*). This includes articles from Forster and Boyce Kaye respectively on British magazine strands *House Party* (1972–81) and *Good Afternoon!* (1971-1988) which consider the complex fare such series, oscillating between discourses of feminism and femininity, offered to women viewing in the 1970s and 1980s. In similar vein, the work this article does on *Wednesday Magazine* reflects on the programme's engagement with late 1950s and early 1960s discourses around domestic feminine, female citizenship and women's relationships with the public sphere.

## What was *Wednesday Magazine*?

*Wednesday Magazine* was a weekly television arts and culture magazine programme, developed as part of the women's programme department's strand of complementary 'Mainly for Women' specialist afternoon programming which the BBC broadcast from the early 1950s until the early 1960s. Irwin explains Stephens' strategy for this strand, making clear that it had to consider the practical domestic responsibilities that sat at the centre of most women's lives, while at the same time to provide programmes such as *Wednesday Magazine* which engaged audiences with ideas and issues beyond the home.<sup>9</sup> Skoog writes that 'studies show that the postwar woman was considered a significant citizen crucial for the rebuilding of Britain both as a worker and a mother.'<sup>10</sup> In her conclusion, she points out that, 'In Britain the female audience was important as citizens and voters', and further, 'In contrast to women's magazines of the period the BBC had an involvement, a responsibility to nurture the citizen rather than a purely domestic or consumerist identity.'<sup>11</sup> In the case of *Wednesday Magazine* there was an implicit understanding and conceptualisation of a female audience who had an informed, discerning and constantly evolving enthusiasm for the public world of the arts. The series sought to build on, develop and cultivate such interests. Indeed in this respect the programme's aims are congruent with Reithian definitions of broadcasting as providing a public service; programmes serving to educate and inform audiences<sup>12</sup>.

*Wednesday Magazine* was broadcast in the then designated women's programmes early afternoon slot between 2.45 and 3.30pm and generally ran for forty to forty-five minutes, followed by a later afternoon diet of children's programmes. It deployed a mix of live and filmed studio interviews, studio round-table discussions, film clips, short thematic film essays, sketches and literary readings all linked by the presenter. John Lindsay was the series' first host, followed briefly by others such as John Whitty and Leslie Sachs, but it was established broadcaster and presenter David Jacobs who became *Wednesday Magazine*'s permanent compère. The programme was put together by a women's department production team which consisted initially of producer Monica Sims, and director Joyce Bullen. Lorna Pegram<sup>13</sup> joined in 1959 as a producer, eventually becoming the programme's main producer, remaining with the series until it finished in 1963. Richard Gilbert, Richard Evans and Richard Francis variously took on directing duties from 1958 with Bryan Izzard joining them in 1960.

The programme files contain a wealth of information about the enormous range of material that *Wednesday Magazine* covered. Guests included actors, writers and artists alongside well-respected thinkers and commentators of the day. There is no explicit information given in the programme documentation about the background of programme staff and the source of their expertise in the development of such rich arts coverage. Irwin's account of the history of Sunday night arts magazine *Monitor* (BBC 1958-1964) highlights the combination of production and research staffs' enthusiasms and interests which synthesised to fuel the series's wide range of arts subjects. There is little concrete evidence in the *Wednesday Magazine* archives to substantiate an equivalent set of processes, nevertheless it seems

reasonable to intuit that in a similar fashion staff expertise and interests underpinned *Wednesday Magazine*'s rich cultural diet. For example producer Pegram had evidently marked interests in the arts, going on to develop a successful career in arts television, most notably, working as a producer for Australian arts critic Robert Hughes' celebrated documentary arts series *The Shock of The New* (BBC 1980), which considered modern art from the Impressionists to Pop Art.

The topics covered included the contemporary arts, theatre, music, literature and film. There were also items on architecture, art and design, and history, as well as current social issues. Representative examples of such items broadcast throughout the course of the series preserved by the BFI and documented in the BBC's institutional production files include an item in which Arnold Wesker, Peter Hall and Ralph Richardson debated a proposed National Theatre for Britain, and Harold Pinter, John Mortimer and N.F. Simpson challenged the use of the term 'kitchen sink' drama, not least in relation to their own work in the theatre. In another episode, director Joan Littlewood is interviewed by MP and journalist Tom Driberg about her current work, and Jacobs interviews the singer Eartha Kitt about both her music and the challenges of being a black American female performer in the early 1960s. There were also features on a wide range of writers such as Jean Cocteau, H.E. Bates, Alain Robbe Grillet, Shelagh Delaney and Dominic Behan, and clips of newly released and classic feature films such as *An American in Paris* (1951), *The Young Ones* (1961) and *The Innocents* (1961).<sup>14</sup> *Wednesday Magazine* also broadcast films about the work of important and influential sculptors and architects such as Barbara Hepworth and Nikolaus Pevsner alongside thematic films about topics of broad cultural interest: Stratford-upon-Avon and Shakespeare, the poetry and cultural significance of Robert Burns, the life and work of Leonardo da Vinci, Victorian architecture, the history of the Greenwich Maritime Museum and art critic John Berger's film on the artist Modigliani<sup>15</sup>.

Textual analysis is used to explore the three remaining full editions which sit at different points in the series' timeline. These episodes demonstrate *Wednesday Magazine*'s ongoing complex synthesis of arts content with afternoon magazine format which through its reworkings of programme form and content interrogated notions of television for women. While information on the topics and people *Wednesday Magazine* featured, and potential subjects for future editions runs to over forty well-stuffed production files it is very difficult to uncover an explicit institutional rationale for the ongoing design and development of the series<sup>16</sup>. These are working files in every sense. The focus in the archived material is consistently on the ongoing practical process of writing, producing, directing and broadcasting the series, managing guests and resources and possible future items. The experience of working with the files is to encounter both the everyday immediacy of putting each programme together along with an infectious enthusiasm and ambition for the arts coverage that *Wednesday Magazine* could provide.

## **Watching *Wednesday Magazine***

The first full episode of the series available to view in the National Film and Television Archive was broadcast on 12 November 1958. Although both the set design and the presenter changed from this initial setup, the essential construction of an edition of *Wednesday Magazine* remained broadly consistent: a balance of interviews, filmed inserts and discussions, linked by a presenter. The episode opens in a studio dressed to resemble an art gallery or museum with light classical music playing in the background. The set design situates *Wednesday Magazine* in the facsimile of a public exhibition space, a stark contrast to the then established studio set for women's television series in this period. Early women's magazine formats like *Designed for Women* (1947) and *Leisure and Pleasure* (1951) were customarily located in sets dressed as comfortable, middle-class living rooms, presented by well-spoken, well-dressed women. Here the viewer is constructed as a public gallery visitor consuming art. After the opening sequence, the music fades, and the camera closes in on presenter John Lindsay. The selection of a male host for *Wednesday Magazine* is interesting, as women's magazine series had most usually been presented by women in this period, so the selection of a male host for *Wednesday Magazine* suggests that producers were perhaps choosing at this early stage in its existence to imply a qualitative seriousness of intent, contrasting with existing magazine formats. Further, this use of Lindsay reflects the traditional alignment of the authoritative male presenter with the spheres of art and culture such as Huw Wheldon, *Monitor's* presenter and editor. Lindsay's tone is authoritative but not patronising, with no sense that in talking to a female audience he has a need to make his material more accessible. In fact his approach is no different to that which one would assume he would adopt for any intelligent general audience. In this particular episode of *Wednesday Magazine* the topics covered included a themed suite of items on ballet, a selection of films and discussions about Australia, a film about the newly built home of then famous bandleader and musician Edmundo Ros and his family, and a concluding story told by poet and humorist Alistair Sampson. The selection of ballet as the programme's opening subject, a topic with a strong feminine appeal seems a choice made specifically for a female arts audience. The ballet sequence synthesises an interesting combination of glamorous visual spectacle, and seriousness of purpose which appears designed to appeal to an enthusiastic and intelligent female audience. There may also of course be a strategy of containment in place here: ballet is a very 'suitable' art form for a female audience.

The sequence opens with a short film documenting a home reception given by ballerina Margot Fonteyn in honour of a gala ballet performance of the English National Ballet for Queen Elizabeth and Princess Margaret. The camera lingers on the visual detail of Fonteyn's impressive Kensington flat, subtly suggesting a desirable lifestyle. We catch glimpses of tastefully furnished rooms, extensive well-tended gardens, and a uniformed maid hovering just in shot. The film delivers a glamorous take on the world of ballet; the aspirational focuses on interiors and the glamour and celebrity of the reception have the distinctly

feminine appeal to be found, for example, in home and interior, lifestyle and celebrity magazines. Women's magazines of the period providing such coverage were *House and Garden*, which published lavish picture spreads of desirable home interiors, and *Woman*, which printed features on the lifestyles of celebrities of the day such as Princess Margaret, Dickie Valentine and Jannette Scott.<sup>17</sup>

A filmed interview with Fonteyn and colleague Anton Dolin about the Royal Academy's approach to training young dancers follows. The ballet segment concludes with a formal studio lecture by presenter George Hall on historical ballet artefacts, an interview with dancer Phyllis Beddoes about her ballet career and professional friendship with Anna Pavlova, and a short film clip of Pavlova herself. The area of the studio set up for Hall's brief lecture resembles the setting for a formal television art lecture, such as those given by noted art historian Sir Kenneth Clark in his early Independent Television lectures<sup>18</sup>. Clark would stand behind a lectern and address the audience in the formal academic style would use with a group of university students.

The inclusion of the sequence which follows, on Australia, is reminiscent of items to be found on the earlier and more general television magazine formats which preceded *Wednesday Magazine* and on whose foundations it built. The sequence also references the ongoing interest and investment that women's magazine programmes of the period had in tackling broader social issues. This sense of social responsibility was engendered by Doreen Stephens who was always concerned with making her department's output relevant to the lives and concerns of the 'ordinary' women who watched the programmes.<sup>19</sup> Short films highlighting Australia's obvious assets - sea, sunshine, wide open spaces and outdoor lifestyle - open this section, followed by a light-hearted panel discussion featuring Australians discussing how expatriates adapt to their country. Against the ongoing political backdrop of Australia's postwar drive to boost immigration are interviews with two women who were about to emigrate in the coming weeks. As the women, a teenage typist and a housewife and mother in her early thirties, talk about their hopes and fears for the months to come, *Wednesday Magazine* presents distinctly female perspectives on the issue of emigration. Their main concern is for family life and the kind of reception and opportunities awaiting their families in Australia. The teenager talks about her family's desire for better opportunities and her own anxieties about finding a shorthand typing position. The other woman discusses her hope that her husband, a baker, can find suitable work, while she talks nervously about her own anxieties about coping with life in the new country. The latter part of the sequence on Australia would seem to make a better fit with the social affairs agenda of the women's department. However it is contained within a larger-themed item broadly concerned with the distinctive cultural landscape of Australia, and operates simply as one strand of this overview of Australian life and experience: in this case the expectations of new Australians.

The episode then turns to a film about the then very popular bandleader and musician Edmundo Ros and his beautiful, aristocratic wife, model Britt Johansson<sup>20</sup>, which explores the imposing new modernist house, Edritt House, they have designed and built in Mill Hill in north London. This item resembles features that would appear in a modern aspirational

property development series such as Channel 4's *Grand Designs* strand (1999-) which documents ambitious and generally extremely demanding housebuilding projects<sup>21</sup>. The topic of architecture is re-situated for the female audience within a domestic context and reworked to fit with the demands of a magazine programme for women.

The item tells us much about the planning and construction of Edrith House. The commentary details the design decision-making process behind the house, describing the practical choices needed to bring the ideas to life. At the same time much of the pleasure of the item lies in the chance simply to see inside a beautiful, affluent and unique contemporary home. The visual spectacle of the house is revealed as the camera follows Britt leading a guided tour of the property (statuesque blonde Britt is herself, perhaps yet another of the beautiful 'features' of Ros's glamorous life).

The house offers a look at a very aspirational and affluent lifestyle, especially so in a late 1950s Britain just emerging from a period of scarcity and austerity. The house has spacious, low-rise proportions with much wood, glass and exposed brick in evidence. Such a luxurious home represents a standard of living likely to be beyond even the most affluent of middle class viewers who would be watching the programme. As with the earlier film of Fonteyn's Kensington flat the emphasis here is on the house's abundant visual charms; it is the kind of dream home to be encountered in the glossy pages of upmarket women's magazines. The edition concludes with Alastair Sampson sitting in an upright chair reading his own story to camera in medium close up and the programme plays out with an image of ballet shoes, rearticulating one of the programme's key themes, and the accompaniment of light classical music as before.

Viewed as a whole, this edition of *Wednesday Magazine's* combination of live interviews, discussions, filmed inserts and film clips replicates something of the experience of watching the programme at home. What comes across is the programme's balance of serious and more light-hearted material; a blend of information and entertainment. The demands of the complex transitions between live film, studio interviews and presentations can make the transmission a little rough and uneven, however we see host Lindsay working hard to hold all the disparate sections together. His manner is calm, sometimes a little formal; he seems to be striving to find the right tone to present this embryonic combination of women's television and arts and culture. The liveness of the programme is evident; there are obvious gaps between Lindsay's announcement of cued films and their transmission. George Hall looks very anxiously to the camera as he waits for the film he has just announced of Anna Pavlova. This is eventually played several seconds later than anticipated. However, the historical significance of this first edition of *Wednesday Magazine* is the new ground that it breaks for women's television. The use of the 'gallery' studio set, and the choice of subjects covered in the programme, take the female audience out of its then customary location in the home and the domestic, relocating and situating them in more public worlds of ballet and theatre, architecture and debates surrounding starting a new life in a foreign country. The analysis of this episode offered shows within it an oscillation between the domestic and private and cultural and public which frequently brings cultural topics back round to the domestic. This is a transitional stage in the process of establishing a style of cultural television for a female

audience. At this early stage, there are also the visible outlines of a women's television series which will go on to offer and develop for women a specific and specialised arts and culture strand.

Comparison here with *Monitor*, which itself began only a few months earlier in February 1958, is useful. There are similarities to be drawn in terms of the structure of the series and programme content. Again Irwin's work on *Monitor*, mentioned earlier, is a useful source giving a detailed account of the series' creation as well as the development of the British Arts television documentary more broadly. Although *Wednesday Magazine* does not feature in this history, both it and *Monitor* featured a similar combination of studio and filmed interview and short specialised films focused broadly on arts and culture, anchored by a studio host. Where *Monitor* differs from *Wednesday Magazine* is in its clarity of purpose and evident sense of itself as a specialist series. Additionally, *Monitor* was surrounded by an aura of credibility, a dedicated arts review magazine produced by the powerful and influential Television Talks department and presented by well-respected host Huw Wheldon. *Monitor* was broadcast in a prestigious late Sunday evening slot, where it customarily followed the *Sunday Night Theatre* strand of high quality televised plays. In contrast, the women's department team producing *Wednesday Magazine* and working within the far more frugal and restrictive parameters afforded afternoon women's television was involved in a complex and ongoing implicit negotiation of the programme synthesis of arts, culture and women's television. This negotiation was to move *Wednesday Magazine* consistently forward: to refine, polish and develop the arts coverage that it offered, and to produce from within the unlikely environment of afternoon programmes arts television that could bear comparison with work being made in the *Monitor* strand.

The two other extant episodes of *Wednesday Magazine* illustrate the way in which the series began to further develop in the next few years of its existence, the arts content beginning to assume an ever more important role in the focus of the programme. In the episode from 10 February 1960 we find a change in both the opening titles and choice of presenter. Upbeat, contemporary jazz music - Dave Brubeck's 'Three to Get Ready' - introduces a changed set of opening titles. A series of images cut from a magazine follow, denoting something perhaps of the range and scope of the series contents: - a yacht, a rider on horseback, a portcullis bearing the image of the historic stones of London, a black star and finally a gloved hand which points at the name of the new presenter David Jacobs. Both sound and image are light hearted in tone, in marked contrast to the formality of the gallery setting and the classical music of the opening episode.

The programme opens with Jacobs seated in a comfortable armchair in a spacious studio, the overall effect far more relaxed than the art gallery set from the first edition. The space is furnished with large, free standing, slatted screens which simulate window views, tall, open, wood and iron shelving units. The effect is of a spacious living area in a prosperous, comfortable, and rather stylishly furnished, upper middle class house. This new, seemingly more domestic, studio arrangement of course problematises the notion, proposed earlier, that *Wednesday Magazine*, with its 'public gallery' setting, illustrated the programme's role in linking the female audience with the public sphere.

However, this is not the rather more 'cosy' and 'feminised' domestic living room studio set which we see in the earlier women's magazine programmes evocative of a very traditional middle-class life style which for women centred around the home. Perhaps rather, this is implicitly a living space which in its arrangement and furnishing suggests a lifestyle in which participation in the outside cultural sphere is evident. That is, it suggests an environment where women (and men) might very easily come together to discuss ideas and opinions; the home as a place of cultural interaction synthesising ideas and artistic endeavour within the private domestic sphere. This is perhaps the best possible definition of what *Wednesday Magazine* hoped to deliver.

Perhaps more practically the series' 'brand values' were also clearer by this point, two years into its existence, and there was simply less need to demonstrate quite so forcibly what the programme was about. This would be articulated in a more informal approach to presenting the programme's contents. Jacobs is noticeably a relaxed presence throughout, smoothly anchoring and managing the programme's introductions, transitions and links and conducting interviews. The programme's arts agenda is made clear from the opening. Jacobs holds a copy of writer Laurie Lee's then recently published autobiographical work *Cider with Rosie* (1959) from which, Jacobs tells us, Lee will be reading at the end of the programme. Jacobs also reminds viewers in passing of the last programme's guests— important up and coming writers John Mortimer and Arnold Wesker; Wesker, in particular, was then at the height of his very early success with his plays about Jewish life in post war Britain, *Chicken Soup with Barley* (1958) and *Roots* (1958). This makes an implicit link when mentioned in connection with Lee of the programme's literary pedigree. The casual reference to Wesker and Mortimer gives an indication of the quality of literary guests who were then being invited onto the programme, and also suggests a regular viewer familiar with, or certainly interested in, up and coming figures from the world of arts and culture.

In this episode, the development and articulation of *Wednesday Magazine's* arts agenda for its female audience appears to have developed somewhat, though it still offers a combination of arts coverage with the kind of material seen in the earlier, more general, women's magazine programme: an item on choosing clothes for the office, and a light-hearted comedy exchange between Jacobs and some fellow BBC announcers about trends in gentlemen's dinner jackets. However, this time the bulk of the programme is focused on arts coverage. The episode features a film on a works based community theatre project, a clip from an award winning Disney documentary on animal survival in the Arctic, *White Wilderness*, and interviews with three well known actresses. The first interview conducted by Duff Newton features Sarah Churchill, actress and daughter of Winston Churchill. It begins with the negative press responses to her latest play, Gloria Russell's *Nightlife of a Virile Potato*, moving to some searching questions about her relationship with her father, her public status as something of a rebel against the aristocratic circumstances into which she was born and her own rather mixed professional experiences in Hollywood. The interview makes uncomfortable viewing. Churchill is very defensive, the interviewer confrontational; this is not the kind of gentle sympathetic domestic chat that might be expected in an afternoon women's magazine programme. Rather, this direct, probing approach is in fact more like late

Sunday evening encounters to be found in *Monitor* between an authoritative Huw Wheldon and his guests from the arts. The other interview is in the form of a roundtable discussion chaired by Jacobs with the classical actress Sybil Thorndike and the younger Barbara Jefford, then currently at the Young Vic theatre in productions of Shaw's *Saint Joan* and Wilde's *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Thorndike recalls her own experience of playing Saint Joan. As a woman's arts and culture magazine strand, the choice to focus on three female performers articulates resonates with the programme's specialised agenda of appealing to a female audience.

The film about a community theatre production is noteworthy for its synthesis of the social and community impulse of the women's television department, earlier remarked on in the item about Australia in the first edition of the series. Such a film represents a fusion of the department's established interest in the social context of viewers' lives and experiences with an ongoing agenda which devoted increasing space to arts-related items. The film documents a Guildford engineering firm's production of a yearly amateur pantomime, written and performed by staff drawn from all parts of the workforce. Interviews with members of the team reveal women playing key roles in the production process – involved with costume design, organisation of props, stage management and acting. Notably the women interviewed about their roles in the production can be seen combining their pantomime tasks with their professional duties. One woman is seated at her typewriter; completed forms are visible underneath the half-finished pantomime costume she is showing to the camera. The “principal boy”, is collecting and checking documents which she can be seen distributing to colleagues at the same time as giving viewers a production tour. The film also offers viewers a view of women working in the outside world which is congruent with *Wednesday Magazine*'s focus on offering representations of women in roles beyond the domestic – in this case we see them as administrators in a thriving local business.

The final surviving full edition of the programme dates from 30 November 1960. The opening titles are once again slightly changed, featuring visual images of decorated flowered panels. These give way to a montage of words on screen: theatre, magazines, shows, films, travel, expeditions, news and sport. This sequence depicts the mix of content, with the arts focus of the programme now quite clear. The sequence finishes with a picture of a woman's wide, open eye which grows to dominate the screen, and then blinks shut. The eye represents the series and its production team's role in watching what is happening in the world of arts, culture and entertainment and bringing it, through the programme, to the viewer. It is also suggestive of the positioning of the female viewer who watches *Wednesday Magazine*, absorbing the ideas information and experiences it has to offer.

Jacobs presents and, as before, acts as host and interviewer, switching fluently between introducing items, conducting interviews and chairing discussions. Of the three surviving programmes this edition has the clearest and most concentrated focus on the arts. There are interviews with Raphaela Seideman, a Turkish scholar, about historical artefacts she had brought back from a trip to Turkey and Australian painter Judy Cassab speaks about the studio display of her painting. There is a clip of a new version of *The Three Worlds of Gulliver* (1960) which had just had its premiere, and a short documentary film presented by

the poet John Betjeman about the decline of Marylebone railway station, at the time under threat of demolition. Finally, there is an interview with the actor Stephen Boyd, one of the stars of the 1959 film *Ben Hur*. However, there is also an item on the subject of unmarried mothers and illegitimacy in this edition. This, with its clear link to a social affairs agenda, is the only section of the programme remaining which is congruent with the general magazine formats from which *Wednesday Magazine* developed.

Seideman's presentation of her Turkish artefacts is scholarly, with much reference to folkloric traditions and assumes an audience likely to have some level of interest in Turkish culture and Turkish history, but also presents the women viewing with the experience of a female expert, drawn from the public sphere of academia and bringing this expertise into the domestic space. The interviews, with Boyd on his successful film career and life in Hollywood, and Cassab on her painting, are very much akin to the topics one would expect to be covered in an established television arts and culture strand. Cassab's exposition of her collection of paintings to Jacobs and their subsequent discussion is the stuff of an upmarket arts review. As a successful and highly regarded woman working in the world of fine art, Cassab is a particularly apt subject for a woman's art magazine.<sup>22</sup>

Betjeman's authored film, about the decline and possible demolition of Marylebone station, suggests the closest parallel not only with the arts review genre of *Monitor*, but indeed with the aesthetic developments which the latter series was then initiating and developing. The Marylebone item is a complex, textured piece of film overlaid with Betjeman's rich reflective commentary. Using an observational documentary form, the camera follows in Betjeman's footsteps as he wanders around the station offering his thoughts on its current condition. The film intersperses well-observed documentary footage of Betjeman's journey around the station with striking rostrum camera work; shots of detailed pictures, maps and sketches which feature the station's glory days. The film's commentary mixes Betjeman's ideas about history, art and architecture with his own personal poetic elegy for 'a lost and more gracious' Victorian England, somehow exemplified in the decline of a station which saw its heyday in the Victorian era<sup>23</sup>. Betjeman is an engaging presence, his passion for architecture and history evident, his tone wry and mordantly humorous as he makes rueful observations both on the fate of Marylebone as decreed by city planners and the ever increasing pace of modern life. The Marylebone film, with its combination of filmic techniques and crafted poetic commentary, embodies the kind of specialist arts appeal which was then attracting the late night Sunday audience for arts, and demonstrates the standard of work which the women's television department team behind *Wednesday Magazine* were producing.

The film resembles two earlier films made in the same period for *Monitor*, by Betjeman and then *Monitor* director Ken Russell. *A Poet in London* (1959) is a visual essay on the emergence of a 'new' city of London from out of the damage and destruction of the war, whilst the second, *A Journey into a Lost World* (1960), also shows Betjeman exploring various London locations and reminiscing about their past, reconstructed through photographs, archive films and music. These films offer a similar blend of idiosyncratic reflection and commentary to Betjeman's Marylebone film and would most certainly have been of interest to a regular *Monitor* viewer. On the other hand, there is the item on

unmarried mothers and illegitimacy hosted by television doctor and personality Isabella Barnett, featuring contributions from those currently working with young women and their children, as well as an anonymous interview conducted with a young female single parent. A worthy and weighty topic with much important contemporary reflection on a complex social issue, its presence within *Wednesday Magazine* mitigates against offering a simple definition of the series as exclusively an arts format. It demonstrates that, while the overall shape and progression of the series was moving more and more towards the arts, the programme was still connected to more general magazine formats, and that tackling social issues remained very much part of the afternoon magazine agenda. Of course the choice of this particular topic seems to have been made very clearly with the female audience in mind and the approach is one which offers practical suggestion and guidance to women.

### ***Wednesday Magazine* 1961-63**

*Wednesday Magazine* went from strength to strength throughout the early 1960s, regularly broadcasting a stimulating and diverse diet of arts and culture features. While there are no full surviving editions to view from this period, the institutional programme files, combined with the listings information in the *Radio Times*, provide a workable indication of the weekly programme structure and overview of its content<sup>24</sup>. The weekly description of the programme in the listings, foregrounding Jacobs' role as presenter and the continuing presence of producer Pegram, is consistent enough with the descriptions of the earlier programmes to suggest that the format and structure of an edition remained broadly the same. (The appendix mentioned earlier in the article provides an overview of *Wednesday Magazine*'s arts coverage, and there are a number of examples of the range and variety of arts items broadcast in the period 1961-3.)

*Wednesday Magazine* was by this time offering women watching afternoon television access to arts and culture coverage which would not have looked out of place in the more 'prestigious' slots in the television schedules. As Pegram had written of the series' developmental arch in an article for *Radio Times* in November 1960, "At first it [*Wednesday Magazine*] was mainly for women, but it was born of the conviction that women were interested in more than so-called women's subjects". This is a significant statement, certainly in terms of the kind of arts television for women which Pegram considered that the *Wednesday Magazine* production team was now making, and also in terms of the way in which thinking around the series had continued to evolve. It is also a potentially problematic statement.

For Pegram, the series' onward trajectory moved from the earliest form of arts television for women grounded in tangibly 'womanly' or 'feminine' concerns (as in the early episodes of the series explored in this article), moving towards the possibilities of developing a genre of women's arts television which did not need to anchor its coverage of arts and culture in such traditional tropes of femininity to be of interest to its female audience. Pegram's statement also substantiates the notion developed earlier that *Wednesday Magazine*'s address to its audience was to women as citizens, with investment in matters outwith their domestic and

familial roles: an audience ready for material which offers interest and challenges beyond a domestic agenda.

The definition of what constituted arts television for women had by the early 1960s, come to mean, certainly for Pegram, simply good quality arts coverage, understanding and responding to the audience's intelligence and imagination, rather than making programmes which took a distinctively 'feminine' approach to the arts, whether by explicitly featuring female artists, or considering issues from a feminine perspective. In fact this was now an arts strand which might well appeal as much to a male as well as a female audience. This move, from making women's arts television which foregrounded a 'feminine' relationship with the arts, to a focus on representing the arts without recourse to an explicit address to gender, foreshadowed the development and conceptualisation of women's afternoon programmes from late 1961 on.

In October 1961 it was announced in *Radio Times* that the women's afternoon programmes slot was to be rebranded as a strand of programmes for a general audience. The programmes would continue however to be made by the women's department and managed by Doreen Stephens. Called *New at 1.30* this change was called "a broadening of the women's slot" which was "designed to interest not only women but men who are having lunch at home". *Wednesday Magazine* was now no longer designated as an arts magazine aimed specifically at a female audience; instead it had become a general afternoon arts magazine. In the light of Pegram's earlier statement about arts television for women and her desire to move beyond 'female' subjects, making *Wednesday Magazine* a 'general' arts magazine strand was in fact congruent with what she felt she and her department had been producing anyway.

The particular narrative documented here around *Wednesday Magazine* represents one negotiation of what arts television for women might mean, or indeed what might constitute television for women. In this negotiation general women's television magazine formats were built upon to develop a more specialist approach to the arts, which would attract and appeal to a female audience. Mobilising an implicit understanding that women could and should be addressed beyond their domestic and feminine roles, *Wednesday Magazine* then focused on providing intelligent stimulating arts coverage which would not underestimate or stereotype what women would enjoy.

This interpretation of arts television for women however does carry with it a reading of an arts strand for women in which foregrounding 'women's subjects' would somehow deprive viewers of the full range of topics that they would enjoy. These seem to assume firstly that 'women's subjects' are primarily limited to the domestic, or related to fashion and beauty, and that to enjoy anything beyond such things necessitates a move outwith the feminine realm. This notion also underestimates the quality of the very female centred arts coverage which *Wednesday Magazine* offered, as in for example the early episodes of the series which this article has already discussed. It also discounts the possibilities which might have been

offered by an arts strand which gave precedence to women in the arts and to a distinctively female perspective on the arts.

### Conclusion

*Wednesday Magazine* is an unjustly neglected and now largely forgotten slice of historical women's and arts television. The output of a vigorous and highly creative women's television department, it demonstrates the ambition and vision that women making television in the late 1950s and early 1960s had, both for their programmes and their female audience. It assumed an intelligent and intellectually curious female audience with enthusiasm for, and conversancy with, topics outside of the home and kitchen. In its eagerness to move beyond possible underestimations of women's television, however, *Wednesday Magazine's* interpretation of arts television for women was underpinned by its producer's desire to make clear that the coverage of the arts offered was not limited to 'women's things'.

Additionally, *Wednesday Magazine* as women's television and as afternoon television, two very low status television genres, has suffered from occupying categories of limited interest to television historians and archivists. Re-exploration of such television as in the case here has extremely important implications for women's historical television scholarship, and television scholarship more generally. The re-discovery of *Wednesday Magazine* brings to light and develops an unknown narrative strand in the history of women's television. More specifically, this history of the programme examines the history of the development of a new women's arts programme, tracing its progress from general television magazine format to a specialised arts strand. In this process its makers' desire to eschew content which stereotyped its audience's interests as confined solely to the stuff of 'hearth and home' meant that an arts television for women practice developed which sought to move away from material which had a distinctly feminine focus. Good, credible arts television for women, it seemed here, actually meant arts television which most closely resembled a general arts strand, of appeal to the broad arts audience. *Monitor* has been treated as the sole example of dedicated British arts television in earlier critical work such as that by Wyver and Walker on the genre's history. *Wednesday Magazine's* rediscovery reveals another hitherto unknown television strand, full of unexplored coverage and footage of many key figures in the postwar British arts scene. Its absence from critical television histories of arts programming has meant up to now not only an incomplete history of women's television but also an incomplete history of early television's relationship with the arts. The existence of *Wednesday Magazine* highlights the range and ambition of women's television and demonstrates that lively intelligent coverage of the arts was not the sole preserve of prestigious evening television.

**Appendix – Illustrative table of broadcast items from *Wednesday Magazine* not cited in this article**

<i>Interviews/Performances</i>	<i>Date</i>
Peter Finch	07/01/59
Diana Dors	02/09/59
Michael Redgrave	04/11/59
Marius Goring	11/11/59
Spike Milligan monologue	18/11/59
John Mills	18/11/59
Compton McKenzie	16/03/60
Leslie Caron	27/04/60
Herbert Lom	18/05/60
Michael Macliammoir	09/11/60
Dorothy Tutin	25/01/61
Al Alvarez	04/11/61
Michael Tippet	08/11/61
Rita Tushingham	14/11/61
Vanessa Redgrave	29/11/61
Judi Dench	31/12/61
Christopher Plummer	24/01/62
Margaret Rutherford	31/01/62
David Niven	21/02/62
Billie Whitelaw	28/02/62
Lionel Bart	28/02/62
Georges Simenon and his wife	21/03/62
Ian Carmichael	02/05/62
Diane Cilento	16/05/62
Peter O'Toole	03/04/63
Charlton Heston	03/04/63
Wolf Mankowitz	10/04/63
Wilfred Brambell	24/04/63
John Mills	24/04/63
<i>Feature Films/Short Documentary Films</i>	<i>Date</i>
A Kind of Loving	1962
Lawrence of Arabia	1962
Covent Garden	18/01/61
John Betjeman on London Coal Exchange	21/04/61
Portobello Market	11/10/61

## References

- Andrews, Maggie. *Domesticating the Airwaves*. London: Continuum, 2012.
- Boyce Kaye, Jilly. 'The *Sunday Times* Among Them': *Good Afternoon!* and the Gendering of Afternoon Television in the 1970s'. *Critical Studies in Television* 9:2 (2014).
- Briggs, Asa. *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom: Volume I*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Briggs, Asa. *The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom: Volume II*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995.
- Cardiff, David and Scannell, Paddy. *A Social History of British Broadcasting 1922-39 - Serving the Nation v. I*. London: Wiley Blackwell, 1991.
- Forster, Laurel. 'Everything that Makes Up a Woman's Life' Feminism and Femininity in Houseparty' *Critical Studies in Television* 9:2 (2014).
- Irwin, Mary. "Monitor: The Creation of the Television Arts Documentary". *Journal of British Cinema and Television*, 8:3, 2011.
- Irwin, Mary. "What Women want on Television: Doreen Stephens and BBC Television Programmes for Women 1953-64". *Westminster Papers in Communication and Culture* 8:3, 2011.
- Kynaston, David. *Austerity Britain*, London, Bloomsbury, 2008.
- Kynaston, David. *Family Britain, 1951-1957: Tales of a New Jerusalem*. London: Bloomsbury, 2010
- Kynaston, David. *Modernity Britain: Book One: Opening the Box, 1957-1959*. London: Bloomsbury, 2013.
- Kynaston, David. *Modernity Britain: Book Two: A Shake of the Dice 1959-62*, London: Bloomsbury, 2014.
- Leman, Joy. "Women's programmes: why not?" In *Boxed in: Women and Television*, edited by Helen Baehr and Gillian Dyer. London: Pandora, 1987.
- Moseley, Rachel, Wheatley, Helen, and Helen Wood. 2014. "Introduction: Television in the Afternoon". *Critical Studies in Television* 9:2 (2014): 1-2.
- Skoog, Kristin. "Focus on the Housewife: The BBC and the Post-War Woman 1945-1955". *Networking Knowledge, Journal of the MeCCSA Post Graduate Network* (2009) 2:1.
- Sandbrook, Dominic. *Never Had It So Good: A History of Britain from Suez to the Beatles*. London: Abacus, 2010.

Thumim, Janet, "Mrs Knight *Must* be Balanced: Methodological Problems in Researching early British Television". In *News, Gender and Power*, edited by Gillian Branson, Cynthia Carter, and Stuart Allen, London: Routledge, 1998.

Thumim, Janet. *Men, Women and the Box: Inventing Early TV Culture*. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004: 90.

Walker, John A. *Arts TV: A History of Arts Television in Britain*. London: John Libbey and Company, 1993.

Wyver, John. *Vision On: History of Arts Broadcasting*, London: Wallflower, 2007.

---

<sup>1</sup> Unattributed (1962) 'Whatever Next? The Attitude of the Wednesday Magazine Team' Radio Times 26th of February p.35

<sup>2</sup> "Programmes produced by the BBC for women in this first postwar period were Designed for Women (1947), For the Housewife (1948), Leisure and Pleasure (1951), About the Home (1951) and Women's Viewpoint (1951). These series were broadcast in an early-afternoon slot (most usually on or around three o'clock) and customarily ran for thirty to forty minutes". (Irwin 2014, Maggie Andrews compilation)

<sup>3</sup> Irwin, "What Women want on Television: Doreen Stephens and BBC Television Programmes for Women 1953-64", 101

<sup>4</sup> This article forms part of the research undertaken for the AHRC-funded joint project (2010-13) carried out by Warwick and De Montfort Universities: A History of Television for Women in Britain 1947-1989. Project's principal investigators were Dr Rachel Moseley (Warwick), Dr Helen Wheatley (Warwick), Prof Helen Wood (Leicester), postdoctoral researcher Dr Mary Irwin (Northumbria) and doctoral researcher Dr Hazel Collie (De Montfort).

<sup>5</sup> David Kynaston has so far produced four volumes in his series on post war Britain -Austerity Britain. Dominic Sandbrook covers this period in his volumes Never had it so Good and White Heat.

<sup>6</sup> Women's specialised programmes ran only for a brief period on ITV in the mid 1950s.

<sup>7</sup> Thumim J, Men, *Women and the Box: Inventing Early TV Culture*, 90

<sup>8</sup> Moseley, Wheatley, Wood, Introduction: "Television in the Afternoon", 1-2

<sup>9</sup> Irwin, "Monitor: The Creation of the Television Arts Documentary"

<sup>10</sup> Skoog, K, "Focus on the Housewife: The BBC and the Post-War Woman 1945-1955", 9

<sup>11</sup> Skoog, K, "Focus on the Housewife: The BBC and the Post-War Woman 1945-1955", 10

<sup>12</sup> Discussions of the BBC as an improving/educating source can be found in for example Briggs, Smith and Scannell.

<sup>14</sup> Wesker, Richardson and Hall (15/1/61, Pinter Mortimer and Simpson (3/4/63), Littlewoods and Driberg (6/12/61) Eartha Kitt (6/6/62), Jean Cocteau (27/4/60), H.E.Bates (2/9/59), Alain Robbe-Grillet (28/2/62), Shelagh Delaney (4/2/59), Dominic Behan (8/11/61)

<sup>15</sup> Hepworth (24/4/63), Pevsner (2/2/62), Shakespeare and Stratford upon Avon (30/3/60), Burns (21/8/59), Da Vinci (13/6/62), Victorian architecture(2/2/62), Greenwich Maritime Museum (13/3/63), Berger (26/6/58)

<sup>16</sup> The size, number and complexity of the files which contain periodic gaps and omissions mean that it is very difficult to build a coherent chronological account of the programme and contents from start to finish. The grid at the end of the article is intended to give a flavour of the quality of material that *Wednesday Magazine* contained

<sup>17</sup> Princess Margaret 'Woman' 7/5/55, Dickie Valentine, 'Woman' 11/6/55 Janette Scott 'Woman' 2/7/55

<sup>18</sup> Sir Kenneth Clark, the noted art historian and writer and presenter of the acclaimed BBC2 documentary series on art *Civilisation*, delivered rather formal television lectures on art on for Independent Television in the late 1950s and early 1960s.

---

<sup>19</sup> Irwin, "What Women want on Television: Doreen Stephens and BBC Television Programmes for Women 1953-64"

<sup>20</sup> Edmundo Ros was born of mixed race parentage in Port of Spain, Trinidad and came to London in 1937 to study at the Royal College of Music. He went on to build an extremely successful career leading dance bands and running clubs and is credited with introducing Latin American music to the UK.

<sup>21</sup> Grand Designs (1999-) is a Channel Four series presented by Kevin McCloud which featured ambitious architectural projects for home building or redesign

<sup>22</sup> Australian Judy Cassab received a CBE in 1969. She has received many Australian awards including the Archibald art prize and an honorary doctorate from Sydney University

<sup>23</sup> Betjeman was a founding member of the Victorian Society which was established in 1958 to promote the study and protection of Victorian and Edwardian architecture and other arts in Britain.

<sup>24</sup> The programme listings are variable and frequently do not provide full details of contents.